

Jesus Christ Is the Way—Choose God's Spirit

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“Stand Forever” Episode 14

Is there something you can do that will make everything else better that can also be done while doing everything else and not at the exclusion of everything else? And if so, what is The One Thing.

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 14 of the *Stand Forever Series*. In past episodes we concluded the supreme expression of intelligence, the crowning achievement of every rational being, is to choose best and the best choices are to receive the gifts of God's Son, Spirit, and life and help others do the same. In the last episode we considered the Gift of God's Son. The focus of this episode is the gift of God's Spirit.

Choose to Receive the Gift of God's Spirit

President Russell M. Nelson has said, “the joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives.”¹ Great achievement is almost always the result of sustained, narrow focus. The narrower and more sustained the focus over the longer time, the greater the outcome.

You get better at things you keep on doing. Michael Phelps, for example, holds the record for Olympic gold medals with an astounding total of 28. From age 14 and throughout his athletic career, he trained in the water several hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days year.² Look behind great achievement in the arts, sports, science, technology and business and you will find a narrow focus, sustained over a long time.

With discipline and sustained effort, you can master one thing over time and maybe learn to do a few things well, but you can't become a master of many things because of “opportunity cost.” When one option is chosen among alternatives, the opportunity cost is the loss of the potential gain from all the alternatives that are not chosen, the benefits forgone by choosing one alternative over another. Rather than trying to do everything, it is far better to learn how to do the most important thing, the One Thing.

This stern reality is rooted in the premise that we can only do one thing at a time. Talents, energy, resources, and time are limited. A dollar spent on one thing is a dollar

¹ Russell M. Nelson, “Joy and Spiritual Survival,” General Conference, October 2016

² Gary Keller & Jay Papasan, *The ONE Thing*, p. 95

not spent on everything else. An hour swimming, watching television, playing a video game, playing basketball, playing the piano, working, building a business, serving others, or studying scripture is at the expense of everything else that could have been done with that same time and energy. When you say yes to one thing, you say no to everything else. Consequently, Ludwig van Beethoven was probably not a great swimmer and Michael Phelps is probably not a great composer.

An Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto is credited with the idea that generally a minority of causes lead to a majority of results. He quantified the idea, asserting that 80% of the results in most endeavors are produced by 20% of the causes. That assertion is now known as the “Pareto principle.”

In light of opportunity costs, focus your efforts somewhere within the 20%, the most effective things, systemic things that will enhance everything else. Physical exercise, for example, has a multiplier-effect, benefiting mind and spirit as well as body. Having dinner regularly with family not only provides nourishment but also gives rise to a sense of security and strengthens love, understanding, communication and relationships around the table.

Given you can only do one thing at a time, be selective in what you do. Take care where you focus. Carefully choose your passion. The experts on this subject ask the question: “Is there one thing you can do that will make everything else better more than anything else?” They say, “figure out what that is and make that your focus” for each facet of your life (physical health, spiritual, personal, family, work, etc.).³

There is, however, a much better question: *Is there something that will make everything else better that can be done not at the exclusion of everything else, rather while doing everything else?* That’s the critical question.

And, the answer is “YES,” there is One Thing that can be done not at the expense of everything else but while doing everything else that will also enhance, instruct and make everything else better—and it is, in fact, the most important thing of all.

To discover that One Thing, we ask another question: *What has the Lord said we should always do?* The answer to that question will reveal the One Thing. Here are some of the answers:

³ Gary Keller & Jay Papasan, *The ONE Thing*.

- “Thou shalt do **all that thou doest** in the name of the Son ... and in that day the **Holy Ghost** fell upon Adam.”⁴
- “Treasure up in your minds **continually** the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man ... and **my Spirit** shall be in your hearts.”⁵
- “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts **unceasingly** ... (and) **the Holy Ghost** shall be thy constant companion.”⁶
- “Pray **always**, and I will pour out **my Spirit** upon you and great shall be your blessing.”⁷
- “**Always** remember him, that they may have **his Spirit** to be with them.”⁸
- “**Look unto me in every thought**; doubt not, fear not. Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and **ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.**”⁹
- “**Let all thy doings be unto the Lord**, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, **let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord**; yea, **let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever. Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings**, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou list down at night **lie down unto the Lord**, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou rises in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, **ye shall be lifted up at the last day.**”¹⁰

All those statements have two things in common. They all recommend a constant, continual, unceasing focus, which of necessity must be something that can be done while doing everything else. Second, they all lead to the same conclusions, the companionship of the Holy Ghost and eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God.

If the Lord has commanded us to do various things all the time, all at once, and if they all lead to the same result, they must be different iterations of the same thing, the One Thing.

Remember Him always that you may have His Spirit to be with you and ultimately inherit the kingdom of heaven. That’s the One Thing. It is the One Thing you can do while doing everything else that will also enhance and make everything else better and clearer. The

⁴ Moses 5:8-9, *emphasis added*

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 84:85, 88, *emphasis added*

⁶ Doctrine and Covenants 121:45-46, *emphasis added*

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 19:38, *emphasis added*

⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 20:79, *emphasis added*

⁹ Doctrine and Covenants 6:36, 37, *emphasis added*

¹⁰ Alma 37:36-37. Do you want to sleep well? This is how to do it.

One Thing “gather(s) together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”¹¹

While the One Thing enhances everything else, focus on anything else diminishes everything else. In the story of Ben Hur, the author Lew Wallace said, “It is not often we have hearts roomy enough for more than one of the absorbing passions at the same time; in its blaze the others may continue to live, but only as lesser lights.”¹² But in the case of the One Thing, our hearts are expanded to make room for all good things. While the One Thing makes everything else clearer, obsession on anything else leads to blindness of everything else.

This One Thing is timeless; not only is it relevant across the broad expanse of time but also, unlike almost every other endeavor, attention devoted to it does not limit attention given to other things. It is not bound by time or the law of opportunity costs. It is the One Thing, the only thing that enhances everything else and requires no time because it should be done all the time while doing everything else.

The supreme expression of intelligence, the crowning achievement of every rational being is to choose best, to make choices that will produce change and growth within us to become most like our Heavenly Father.

The power that produces that kind of change, the power by which lowly, vulgar man may be not only redeemed but also exalted, not only forgiven but also changed, the power that not only reforms but also transforms, the power that not only cleanses but also strengthens, the power that reveals the best choices, the power to carry to a conclusion the best choices, the power that sanctifies, changes and endows us by degrees with the “divine nature,” the power that is life, is God’s power. It is the gift and power of the Holy Ghost.

In this life, God’s presence is His Spirit. Therefore, to always remember Christ that you may always have the Spirit of God with you, is to close the gap; it is reunion with God in this life. More than waiting for eternal life later, it is surmounting the essential problem in life now which is separation from God Our Father.

“Remember Him always” is essentially equivalent to “thou shalt have no other gods before me,” which is essentially equivalent to the central message of the Old Testament:

¹¹ Ephesians 1:10

¹² Lew Wallace, *Ben Hur*, p. 475

- A. Only God can bless us.
- B. He will bless us if we remember Him to keep His commandments.
- C. Therefore, remember Him to keep His commandments.

The supreme expression of intelligence, the crowning achievement of every rational being is to choose best, to make choices that will invite God's Spirit and produce change and growth within you to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father. To choose best is to always remember the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may always have His Spirit to be with you. That's the One Thing. Choose best. Follow Christ. Choose Christ. Choose the Spirit.

The next episode (Episode 15) of *Stand Forever* will focus on choosing the gift of God's Life by engaging in His work. Please join me then.