Series Introduction – Will You Stand, or Will You Go Away?

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"Stand Forever" Episode 1

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is the *Stand Forever Series*, which is about believing and following Christ to the end engaged in His work and helping others do the same. This first episode is an introduction and overview of the series.

I served for several years as a General Authority Seventy for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints following a thirty-year career in business and commercial law. When I was given emeritus status as a general authority, I wrote a book titled "Stand Forever" that may or may not ever be published. The book is a broader umbrella to a narrower message I gave at Brigham Young University in 2019, also with the title "Stand Forever."

Through a convergence of events—including a recommendation to present the book content in smaller segments through digital media and the offer of Scripture Central and others to help with that—I stand before you now in this first episode of the *Stand Forever Series*. It is designed to inspire, instruct, encourage, and invite anyone and everyone to believe and follow Christ to the end engaged in His work and help others do the same.

This is not something I would have done on my own. I fear it may be misperceived as self-promotional, as though I didn't get enough attention as a general authority and need to continue to be in the public eye. But heaven knows, I would have preferred to simply publish my book and go fishing.

There is no income motive associated with this. In fact, it appears the project will cost a lot of money without monetary return. But that's okay. Whatever people may think, my only objective is to persuade people to believe and follow Christ as active, contributing members of His Church and help others do the same. If it helps someone to that end, it will be reward enough.

This work overlays and amplifies "Stand Forever," the BYU Devotional. The primary assertions of that talk about how to navigate the sea of disbelief and doubt are critical pieces to a larger puzzle. My intent with this series is to piece together the larger puzzle, the bigger picture.

The big picture is a big deal. Few things provide greater comfort, confidence, and clarity than looking beyond present cares to see and remember the big picture. Except for the Holy Spirit, there may be nothing more helpful to brave life's perils than seeing and remembering the big picture—the whole map.

You may live life in the weeds, but if you don't see beyond them you will think life is *only* weeds. When we stand back, the big picture looks like this:

A. The essential problem in life is separation from God Our Father.
- Without God, chaos, darkness, and death prevail.

B. Jesus Christ bridges the gap if we will believe and follow Him to the end and help others do the same.
- He is the Way offsetting chaos, the Truth offsetting darkness, and the Life offsetting death.

C. Therefore, cross the bridge and close the gap. Believe and follow Christ to the end and help others do the same.

That is the big picture and the primary framework for this series. But before we go there, we need to believe, and so, "Believe" is the focus of the next two episodes. We will then explore the big picture in depth.

The heart of it all is Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. General Authorities are commissioned to be special witnesses of Jesus Christ. That doesn't mean I am better or know more than anyone else. Not hardly. It does mean I have been given a charge to especially "talk of Christ, rejoice in Christ … prophesy of Christ, and … write according to (those) prophesies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins."[1] That charge did not expire with emeritus status. The *Stand Forever Series* is my special witness of Jesus Christ.

The content of this series is grounded in truth. Truth is the standard. The springs from which the BYU Devotional—and, now, this series—flow are the scriptures, words of living prophets, my life experience, and two assignments as a general authority.

The first assignment was the Restoration and Cancellations Committee, comprised of a small group of general authorities who make recommendations to the First Presidency about requests from Church members for a restoration of temple and priesthood blessings previously withdrawn or when circumstances require special permission to be

[1] 2 Nephi 25:26

sealed to a spouse. The First Presidency makes those inspired decisions considering the recommendations of the committee.

Reading those requests almost every day for several years revealed a broad panorama of human drama, heartache, conflict, redemption, truth and triumph out of which clear realities and patterns emerged which are not theory or someone's ideas. Rather, they are the actual lived experiences of thousands of people revealing what works and what doesn't. Some of those patterns and lessons inform the content of this series. In some instances, I have used their own words to describe their experiences. But to preserve their privacy and anonymity, I have no record of their names, domicile, or other identifying information.

The second assignment (which influenced the "Stand Forever" talk and this series), was the Strengthening Church Members Committee. It is comprised of a few people, primarily general authorities, who consider ways the Church may further help and strengthen members. A small part of that charge is to be aware of material antagonistic to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, its members, leaders, history, and teachings.

There may not be anything of that nature to which I have not been exposed. Since that assignment changed, however, I have not returned to wallow in that mire again.

As I said before, reading that material always left me with a feeling of gloom, and one day that sense of darkness inspired me to write a partial response to all such antagonistic claims. Those reflections ultimately became the framework for the "Stand Forever" talk and now influence this series as well. As I said in the devotional address, "Although what I wrote was for my benefit, I hope it will help you as well."

People say, "Life is a journey; enjoy the journey." But life is also about getting to the end, the destination to receive God's greatest gifts—His Son, His Spirit, and His life—and help others do the same. <u>The destination is the fruit which is "desirable to make one happy"[2] even more than the journey</u>.

The course is the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it doesn't matter how far you go, how faithful you once were, or how much you enjoy the journey if you don't get to the end. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."[3] <u>But fighting the good</u>

[2] 1 Nephi 8:10
[3] 2 Timothy 4:7,8

fight is not enough if you don't finish the course and keep the faith. The *Stand Forever Series* is about finishing the course and keeping the faith—finishing what you started when you agreed to come here in the first place.

Smelling the roses along the way is fine, but some are so intent on living the dream and smelling roses they don't go anywhere. They have no idea, or they forget where they are going. The journey, however fragrant, is merely meandering if you don't know where you are going.

Yes, there can and should be joy along the way, but the journey is also fraught with opposition, deception, disillusion, "mists of darkness,"[4] peril, difficulty, suffering, loss, betrayal, disappointment, discouragement, scorn, error, abuse, temptation, pride, and sorrow. It is not the "yellow brick road" we merrily skip along while singing our way to Oz. It is a *strait* and narrow path on which we "press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron"[5] as our life depends on it, and make our way to the tree of life.

While it is not an easy path, it is the only path worth pursuing, and everyone—EVERY last one—is capable of traveling and finishing the course with help of the Lord. We are all weak and incapable of finishing alone, but we are not alone or need not be. The Lord provides the strength to finish if we will but lean on Him.

The Kingdom of God Will Stand Forever. Will you?

God's work will not fail. His kingdom will prevail and stand forever. "For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled."[6]

In our day as well, the Lord revealed: "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth."[7]

The Prophet Daniel said the God of heaven would set up His kingdom in the last days, which would fill the whole earth and "never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not

[4] 1 Nephi 12:17
[5] 1 Nephi 8:24
[6] Mormon 9:22
[7] Doctrine and Covenants 65:2

be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."[8]

The kingdom of God on earth is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It will stand forever, but will you and I?

The day following the miracle of feeding the five thousand, Jesus said to the same people who were fed the day before, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."[9]

When they hear this, along with "Whoever eateth my flesh; and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life"[10] many say, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"[11] And from this time forward many of his disciples go back and walk with him no more. Heartbroken, I think, Jesus turns to the Twelve and tenderly asks: "Will ye also go away?"[12]

That is one of the central questions of life; it echoes down through the ages to our day, "Will you also go away?" Will you?

Peter immediately gives the perfect answer. Impetuous Peter, the Peter who more than once erred in his discipleship, answers instinctively and with stunning clarity cutting through the fog like a sharp knife and says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."[13]

It was simple and clear-cut for Peter. Although he may not have fully understood the Bread of Life Sermon either, although he was troubled and confused from time to time, he knew the primary truth. And, knowing that, he was not disaffected by lesser things. That was the difference between Peter and "the many of (the Lord's) disciples (who) went back and walked no more with him."[14] That was the difference.

The fact that those other disciples once walked with the Lord is of little consequence now because *they didn't finish*. They quit. They turned away, and turning away, they went back. You can't simply step aside from Christ without going back. Peter stayed

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[8] Daniel 2:35, 44
[9] John 6:35
[10] John 6:54
[11] John 6:60
[12] John 6:66, 67
[13] John 6:68-69
[14] John 6:66

the course. Peter finished, not because he knew everything, but because he knew the most important things.

The question is, will you and I stand? Will you stand forever, or will you go away? And if you go, WHERE will you go?

Will you waver like a "wave of the sea driven with the wind"[15] … "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine and the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"?[16]

Or will you rather discern between truth and error, see through deception, and muster the will to live the truth, come what may.

Will you be lukewarm[17] or will you have the Lord's word in your heart "as a burning fire shut up in (your) bones"?[18] Will you know and remember where you're headed and muster the will to go there without quitting, without backing off, away or out, not giving up, in or out, not pulling back or out, not retreating or surrendering, not wimping out? Will you stand firm and unbroken against the winds of opposition? Will you stand now, tomorrow, and forever above the clouds of doubt and disbelief?

Finally, while you may pick and choose among the various episodes of this series, I encourage you to take them in their order. It's up to you, but this is not a random collection of religious musings, rather a carefully orchestrated series that leads to a particular conclusion. And if you take the pick-and-choose approach, you will miss the overarching message because the whole is greater than the random sum of its parts.

I invite you to join me on this journey and *Stand Forever*.

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[15] James 1:6
[16] Ephesians 4:14
[17] Revelation 3:16
[18] Jeremiah 20:9