

Jesus Christ Is the Truth – Enduring to the End (Part Two)

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When someone leaves the Church, especially when many leave, people wonder, especially the follow-the-crowd-crowd wonder, “How can so many people be wrong? What do they know, I don’t?” A better question to ask, however, is “What do I know they don’t?”

Hello, I am Larry Corbridge and this is Episode 26 of the *Stand Forever Series*. In the last episode, we considered the question “what does enduring to the end look like, building up the kingdom of God as an active contributing member of the Church.” In this episode, we will continue to focus on enduring to the end and answer the question “what do I know they don’t.”

Some claim Church culture is driving people away, that members feel unseen, disconnected, empty, unheard, unnourished, and unfulfilled by their involvement and the solution they say is a transformation to a more open, inclusive, transparent, loving, and tolerant culture wherein more people can comfortably gather.

The reasons generally advanced for people leaving the Church are these:

1. They don’t like aspects of Church history.
2. They don’t agree with Church policies and doctrine that collide with emerging social attitudes.
3. They choose a different lifestyle.
4. They think the Church has lost its way lacking confidence in current leadership.
5. Their experience in the Church is unfulfilling and uncomfortable.

How would you respond to those reasons for leaving?

How You View the Church

It depends on how you view the Church. If viewed from the institutional perspective, then the arguments for leaving make sense. If viewed from the kingdom of God perspective, they fall apart.

From the institutional point of view, reason would suggest leaving or stepping back if, as an institution, it does not meet your criteria, your expectations, and your judgment of what the Church should be—if it doesn't click with you. If you don't like the food at a restaurant, you don't go back. If you don't like the Church or some aspect of it, you don't go back.

But if you see the Church as the kingdom of God on earth with sole authority to administer the ordinances of salvation to God's children on both sides of the veil, endow them with power to engage in His work, and thereby bring them back to Him, then you will stay come what may. As I have said before, Darth Vader could be your bishop, the culture like Alcatraz, and it will not drive you away.

Some might say I am assuming the conclusion of the entire argument, i.e., that the Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but only so if the formula for discovering the true Church is your judgment of what you think it should be. But that is a foolish and flawed formula.

Most, if not all, of the reported reasons people are leaving the Church collapse into a single argument, i.e., "the Church isn't what I think it should be therefore, I'm leaving." The underlying and unstated major premise, however, must be unearthed, dusted off, acknowledged, and addressed, which is that "the Church should be what I think it should be."

The reasoning looks/goes like this:

- A. The Church should be this, that, or the other—in other words, what I think it should be.
- B. It isn't.
- C. Therefore, I'm leaving.

That's it, and it is perfectly rational if you hold your nose and swallow as many do the fallacious major premise, i.e., the Church should be what I think it should be. Someone will say, "No, the Church should be what the Lord intended" and I will say, "No, it's your interpretation of what the Lord intends, but in the end it's your judgment that prevails." In the end, it is the arrogance of man who makes himself the master and God the servant, effectively saying, "let me prevail" rather than "let God prevail."

It is the reversal of the parable of the box and the pearl which tells of a beautiful box containing a precious pearl which goes ignored and unappreciated because of people's fascination with the box. But here we turn that parable upside down. Here we have the

box discarded altogether along with the pearl because of a few nicks and scratches, because people don't like the box.

Your judgment of what the box should be may and should be the standard by which you measure the Church (the box)—as well as everything else for that matter—if you are omniscient, if you know everything, if your judgment is infallible. But if you are a mere mortal, like most of us, prone to error, then there is another way to know the primary truths and guide your decisions.

One of the risks of excessive focus on all the Church isn't and should be in one's opinion, locked on perceived shortcomings and deficiencies, is arriving at the false and damning conclusion that the Church is not true. And, although it is a logical fallacy, it is nonetheless a pit into which many people fall.

There will inevitably be some divergence of opinion between what you think the box should be and what it is, some disagreement, dissonance, disappointment, shortfall, disillusionment, and failure in your journey as an active, contributing member striving to build up the kingdom of God on earth and to establish His righteousness.

Converted unto the Lord

In addition to the reasons already advanced as to why people leave the Church, I am offering another: They are not converted unto the Lord. That is the primary reason.

There is a difference between being a cultural convert (which I will call a Church convert) and being "converted unto the Lord." A Church convert will stay as long as the Church is to his liking, but when it isn't (and make no mistake, it will not always be) he is out the door and understandably so. The box and the pearl inside end up in the trash together.

One of the great challenges in life is to see clearly. We are easily and often deceived. Paul said we see through a glass darkly. Lehi's dream was dominated by great mists of darkness which caused many to lose their way. Jacob taught that "**blindness** (comes) by looking beyond the mark" (meaning Christ) adding the sobering conclusion that they "*must* needs fall."¹ It is a stunning statement. He didn't say, "may fall" rather "must needs fall" or will fall.

¹ Jacob 4:13-14; emphasis added

Those who look beyond the mark, beyond Christ and His work, those whose focus is lifestyle, Church history, policies, culture, leadership, or the like, sooner or later must needs fall.

Contrast that sobering statement with these two equally astonishing but encouraging statements. The first is from Helaman and the second from Mormon's editorializing on the record he transcribed.

First: "And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, *a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.*"²

Second: In Alma 18–22 we read about the teachings of Ammon and his brothers, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, and their sufferings and ultimate success bringing "thousands ... *to the knowledge of the Lord*" and as many as "were converted unto the Lord ... *never did fall away.*"³

Ammon began by teaching King Lamoni about God who is our Father. He taught God's Spirit is the source of knowledge and power, the fall of man, and the coming of Christ the Redeemer. The King believed, cried out to the Lord for mercy, was overcome and fell to the earth.⁴ He didn't teach of the path of comfort and ease, the love of the Saints, or culture. Rather he taught of knowledge and power made possible because of Christ.

Aaron later teaches King Lamoni's father following essentially the same lesson plan. He spoke of the Spirit of the Lord. He then said, "Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God. ... and he created all things both in heaven and in earth." He explained that we fall because of transgression and cannot merit anything of ourselves. He taught of Christ and the Atonement and that redemption is available through faith and repentance. The king then asked, "What shall I do?"⁵

² Helaman 5:12

³ Alma 23:5-6; emphasis added

⁴ Alma 18:28-41

⁵ Alma 22:8-15

Following the conversion of King Lamoni and his father, thousands of Lamanites were converted unto the Lord, and they never did fall away. Mormon explained why. He said, “And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and *were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away*. For they became a righteous people Now, *these are they who were converted unto the Lord.*”⁶

This is the same message King Benjamin delivered to his people which had the unequalled effect of convincing everyone who heard it. There “was not one soul ... but who ... entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ.”⁷ His message was the same.

So, in the first instance, those who look beyond the mark (meaning Christ) must needs fall. Those who are converted unto the Lord never fall away (they cannot fall).

What is the difference between a Church convert and one who is converted unto the Lord?

To understand the difference between being a Church convert and converted unto the Lord, we must first understand two things. The first is the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the greatest gift of God in this life made possible by the gift of God’s Son. The second is that conversion begins with the recognition of need.

Those who are Church converts *recognize their need for the Church*, for the youth programs, or the community, fellowship and love of the Saints, the strengthening of families, even eternal families, additional scripture or the need for guidance from living prophets. The beginning of the process of conversion is the recognition of need and if the Church fulfills some important need for them, they join the Church as a Church convert. This is good as far as it goes, but it is not the same as being converted unto the Lord. If one builds on the foundation of the Church, it is not the same and not as secure as the rock of Christ.

Standing in contrast to Church converts are those who are converted unto the Lord. Although they look the same sitting in the pews, they are different. They recognize

⁶ Alma 23:6-8

⁷ Mosiah 6:2

their need for God's power which they cannot have without Christ and His Church. Therefore, they recognize their need for the Lord Jesus Christ as no other. They recognize their need for the power of God which they cannot have because of their inevitable mistakes—mistakes essential to their education but mistakes nonetheless. This leads them to recognize their need for a Savior, even Christ the Lord, *which then leads them to recognize their need for His Church which alone affords the laws, authority and ordinances by which all mankind may be saved*, endowed with power from on high *and which alone engages God's children in His work* to the end of retaining a remission of sins and divine power and ultimately eternal life.

The beginning of the process of conversion is the recognition of need, and our greatest need is for redemption and power made available to all mankind on both sides of the veil by the Lord Jesus Christ, His Church and work.

If one understands that, nothing will drive him away. Not men with big sticks, and not wild horses, not discomfort, dissonance, disagreement or disillusionment, not even Darth Vader as your bishop -- nothing will drag him away.

Opposition in All Things

Should we be surprised or unsettled by some degree of shortfall, imperfection, disappointment, disagreement, dissonance, and discomfort in God's work among His children? No, that has always been the case.

The Lord said: "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come."⁸

Many were disappointed and disaffected by Christ's Bread of Life sermon, so much so that as John recorded, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."⁹ They were cultural converts and when doctrine was taught they didn't like or understand, they were done. They were out the door. They were not converted unto the Lord.

When Christ asked of the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to who shall we go? [That's a good question!] Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹⁰ They didn't

⁸ Luke 16:31 and 17:1

⁹ John 6:66

¹⁰ John 6:66-69

look beyond the mark. They didn't know everything, but they knew the most important things. They were converted unto the Lord and never did fall away despite great hardship except for the one who the Lord knew would betray Him.

There are unending examples of disappointment, disagreement, dissonance, and discomfort in God's work among His children.

Peter was repeatedly and severely rebuked by the Lord. On one occasion, when Jesus told of His coming death, Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," and the Lord replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." Surely that was not a happy moment for Peter. Was he wounded or offended? Probably. Did he leave? No.

It has long been the tendency of God's children to complain that things are not better under His direction. The children of Israel and Lehi's family both complained about the privations of the wilderness. Surely with all the early Saints endured and suffered in this dispensation, some wondered, "if this is God's work, where is He?"

Naaman disagreed and was put off by Elisha's command that he wash seven times in the River Jordan to be healed of his leprosy.¹¹

Neither Paul nor new proselytes felt comfortable in the culture of the New Testament Church that for a time required submission to all the rigors of the law of Moses, including circumcision, putting Paul at odds with other apostles.

There have always been and will always be some degree of shortfall, imperfection, disappointment, disagreement, and dissonance, in a word, problems in God's work among His children, but those who are converted unto the Lord are not disaffected. They stay.

If you were to list the defining characteristics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you would include, priesthood authority and keys to administer the ordinances of salvation and direct the work of salvation on this side of the veil, redemption of sin for all mankind through the Atonement of Jesus Christ by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the same organization as Christ established in the Meridian of Time, living prophets and apostles, temples and the work of salvation for all who have lived and died without the blessings of the gospel in this life, additional scripture, modern day revelation not only

¹¹ 2 Kings 5

for prophets but all Latter-day Saints, and on and on. If you were to continue that exercise long enough, eventually you would need to add two more defining characteristics—lay ministry and intensity.

Not only are members of the Church not trained to assume the roles and responsibilities they are called to shoulder, everyone, not just the most talented or capable, but everyone is invited to engage in the work. That is the genius of lay ministry, which is embedded in the name of the Church, when the Lord put our names next to His—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He made us co-stars with Him, that we become co-workers with Him, that we become co-heirs with Him.

And then we add intensity. Unlike any other organization or religion, the experience of an active, contributing member of the Church is intense, all consuming. It is not sitting comfortably in the pew on Sunday, listening to the pastor sermonize about the beauties of heaven and then return home to your life, rather it is to personally engage each one and everyone in building up the kingdom of God on earth. It is at times being the one giving the sermon or setting up the chairs before the meeting.

The combination and sometimes collision of those two characteristics—lay ministry and intensity—produces problems, some degree of shortfall, imperfection, disappointment, disagreement, and dissonance in God's work among His children. That may be an unfortunate and unavoidable consequence of imperfection, or it may be by design because in the messiness of all that, we find our salvation. "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things,"¹² even in the Church.

I think it was Eugene England who many years ago offered the Church is true in part because of those problems, not in spite of them. He said, "Church involvement teaches us compassion and patience as well as courage and discipline. It makes us responsible for the personal and marital, physical, and spiritual welfare of people we may not already love (or may even heartily dislike), and thus we learn to love them. It stretches and challenges us, though disappointed and exasperated, in ways we would not otherwise choose to be—and thus gives us a chance to be made better than we might choose to be, but ultimately need and want to be."¹³

As I have said before, if the Church is not true, we should all pack our bags and go somewhere else less demanding, find an easier path, because, make no mistake, in the end the Lord requires everything, beginning with you, your will, and then all of your

¹² 2 Nephi 2:11

¹³ Eugene England, "Why the Church is as True as the Gospel," *Sunstone* 22, nos. 3/4 (June 1999), 61-69.

time and talents, all you have or may be blessed with to engage in His work to build up the kingdom of God and establish Zion.

Every challenge you face, every hard thing you confront, every bad thing that happens to you in and out of the Church, every unfairness, every conflict, every sadness, tragedy, every disappointment and heartache, every temptation and every opposition happens for one reason only: to give you opportunity to respond by applying in your life the teachings of Jesus Christ. As you do so, you are changed to become more like Him.

With the singular exception of family, active participation as a member of the Church provides the greatest opportunity to internalize compassion, patience, and charity to name a few, and realize the full measure of your divine potential, engaged in God's work, refined in the crucible of adversity.

Personal Responsibility

Many people view the Church from the perspective of the member as a consumer, i.e., what are members getting out of their association with the Church? That perspective is fine for Kraft Foods but is backwards for evaluating the qualitative experience of members of the Church. The better question regarding God's work on earth is what members are giving to it, and then you will learn what they are getting out of it.

If Church culture is unfulfilling that is on us. We must assume personal responsibility for our individual experience in it.

President Spencer W. Kimball taught,

One good but mistaken man I know claimed he could get more out of a good book on Sunday than he could get in attending church services, saying that the sermons were hardly up to his standards. But we do not go to Sabbath meetings to be entertained or even solely to be instructed. We go to worship the Lord.

It is an individual responsibility, and regardless of what is said from the pulpit, if one wishes to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, he may do so by attending his meetings, partaking of the sacrament, and contemplating the beauties of the gospel. If the service is a failure to you, you have failed. No one can worship for you; you must do your own waiting upon the Lord.¹⁴

¹⁴ Spencer W. Kimball, "The Sabbath—A Delight," *Ensign*, January 1978

That is the law of the harvest, you reap what you sow, and more. It is also what Alma uniquely calls the law of restoration, which he summarized by simply saying, “*For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored.*”¹⁵

Here are a few other examples of the law of restoration.

- “Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”¹⁶
- “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”¹⁷
- “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged: but judge righteous judgement. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”¹⁸
- “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”¹⁹

Ask any dedicated missionary if she feels unfilled or empty by her faithful service. Then listen to her reply and look into her eyes when she does. Missionaries get discouraged for many reasons, but feeling empty and unfulfilled is not one of them. You get what you give and more, sometimes a hundred times more. “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”²⁰

All of this is a variation of the famous statement of John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” Ask not what the Church can do for you, but what you can do for it, and you will learn what the Church can do for you. It’s not so much about being a member *of*, but a member *for*.

¹⁵ Alma 41:15

¹⁶ Matthew 5:7

¹⁷ Matthew 6:12-15

¹⁸ JST Matthew 7:1–2

¹⁹ Mark 8:38

²⁰ Matthew 19:27-30

Better than President Kennedy, the Lord said: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.*”²¹

The Law of Restoration is monumentally important. *Selflessness is in our greatest self-interest.* There is nothing we can do that will draw down into our lives greater blessings individually and be more fulfilling than forgetting ourselves and striving to help others especially helping others receive God’s greatest gifts—His Son, His Spirit and His life—as active, contributing members of His Church. That is the essence of the law of consecration which is the crowning covenant of the endowment and yet gets little attention.

Double Down on Belief

In one area of the Church, the area presidency recently commissioned a research project to determine why members leave and why they stay in the Church. The conclusion of the study was love, acceptance, and comfort. Those who remained felt loved, accepted, and comfortable and those who walked or drifted away did not. The conclusion therefore was double down on love, acceptance, and comfort—a worthy objective to be sure, but a sandy foundation for conviction, nonetheless.

When I served as executive director of the Correlation Research Department of the Church, a similar project was undertaken to evaluate the experience of members in the Church throughout the world and across all dimensions of belief and commitment. That extensive study also revealed a significant degree of discomfort among members, but it also disclosed a higher level of belief.

Belief trumps discomfort. The ultimate question is not “do I fit in, feel loved, accepted, and comfortable,” as important as that question is. Rather “is the Church true?” And the definition of the true Church should not be and is not where I fit in well, feel accepted and fulfilled. Love, acceptance, and comfort are worthy objectives, but if you double down on anything, double down on belief.

The Purpose of the Church Is Not Comfort

Where is it written on the mountain the purpose of the Church is to make all men comfortable? Is that the standard by which truth should be measured?

²¹ Mark 8:34-37

The Lord said we should be “anxiously engaged in a good cause.” He didn’t say, “diligently engaged” or “faithfully engaged” but anxiously engaged. There is a degree of anxiety, especially associated with engagement in the cause of the Lord’s work. The Lord will stretch and pull you in ways you don’t want to be stretched and pulled and would not on your own, and much of that happens as an active disciple striving to build up the kingdom of God on earth, enduring whatever bumps and bruises may be sustained along the way.

One of the central and unique blessings of the Church and possibly the ultimate purpose is to qualify and empower God’s children to engage in His work and ultimately His life, even eternal life. It is not to adapt the Church to God’s children but to help His children adapt to Him.

We have this backward view of things, born out of the arrogance of man, that we are doing God a favor, that we are helping God by engaging in His work. How ludicrous, and yet how common is that notion! The Lord said, “I am able to do mine own work.”²² He does not engage us in His work to help Him but rather to help us. “That every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.”²³

When John the Revelator saw “a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, (who) stood before the throne, before the Lamb, clothed with white robes,” the question arose: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?” And the answer was given: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”²⁴

These are they who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ, which includes His work. That is who you are and who you were prepared to become before you came to earth. The Lord said that you “were among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord *to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.*”²⁵ That is who you are and what you prepared to do before you were born.

²² 2 Nephi 27:20-21; See also Ezekial 34

²³ Doctrine and Covenants 1:20

²⁴ Revelation 7:9, 13-15

²⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 138:55-56

The question is not what will you do when everything is warm, cuddly, and comfortable. Rather, what will you do when it isn't? Not what will you do when everything aligns with your expectations. Rather, what will you do when they don't?

We Should Not be Alarmed

Should we be surprised—or worse yet, alarmed—when people, even when many people, step away from the Church and God's plan for His children? Saddened, yes, but not surprised. It has been the pattern from before the world was. It continues from the beginning of time and has been foretold.

One-third of the hosts of heaven, God's children, turned away from their Father and His plan for His children before the beginning of time, and amazingly this happened in the clear light of day without the limitation of the veil of forgetfulness that now clouds our judgment. God's plan did not meet their expectations either, and so they rejected His plan and in so doing rejected Him.

In three books of scripture, the Lord warned, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."²⁶ He also said: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few."²⁷ And, on another occasion: "there are many called, but few are chosen."²⁸ Follow the data and the go-with-the-crowd crowd does not work here.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Lord draws an analogy that the Lord applied specifically to the kingdom of heaven, meaning the Church, in which only 50% entered in with the bridegroom despite their worthiness.

Speaking of our day, the Lord warned:

- "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."²⁹
- "For in those days [this day] there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant."³⁰

²⁶ Matthew 7:13, 14; See also 3 Nephi 14:14; 27:33; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22

²⁷ Matthew 9:37

²⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 121:14

²⁹ Matthew 24:11

³⁰ JS—Matthew 1:22; See also, Matthew 24:24

As I have said before, a “false Christ” can be more than a person. It may be an idea, a principle (even a true principle), lifestyle, or obsession on anything more than God. It includes anything or anyone that becomes the basis for making choices instead of or above God Our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ or anything which distracts from worship of them.

Paul also gave a similar warning saying, “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”³¹

Those prophecies are not general in nature, speaking of tendencies of people over time; they are prophecies specific to our day, this day. And so, when you see others who “depart from the faith” do not be shaken or surprised. It was specifically predicted long ago in order that you not be shaken or surprised but reassured in your own conviction as you see the word of God fulfilled before your very eyes.

None of this is to say we should stand idly by as people walk out the door with broken and lonely hearts thinking there is “no place for me here. I don’t belong here.” Not hardly! We should not write anyone off thinking, “Well, this has all been predicted.” We must not hide complacency under the pretext of prophecy. Our hearts ache and break for them too. The Lord said “for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return.”³²

As Nephi said, “Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden. ... and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”³³

All Is Not Well in Zion

I am not saying “all is well in Zion.” Surely, there is room for improvement. There always has been, and there always will be. But what I can tell you is this: Church leaders are not oblivious to any of the concerns raised regarding perceived deficiencies and room for improvement. As a general authority, I have been involved in countless discussions with other Church leaders about how to better bless and improve the

³¹ 1 Timothy 4:1

³² 3 Nephi 18:32

³³ 2 Nephi 26:28, 33

experience of its members and all of God's children. There is an organized standing committee of general authorities dedicated solely to that end.

Does it all happen perfectly? No, not any more than anyone's personal efforts to do better and be better, but it's not for want of trying. We all want the Church to be as good as it can be.

It would be helpful if we were to adopt some of the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin from his remarks given at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. As the oldest delegate at the age of 81, he urged approval of the Constitution despite what he perceived as flaws saying:

I confess that I do not entirely approve of this Constitution at present, but sir, I am not sure I shall never approve it: For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise. ... But though many private persons think almost as highly of their own infallibility, as that of their sect, few express it so naturally as a certain French lady, who in a little dispute with her sister, said, I don't know how it happens, sister, but I meet with no body but myself that's always in the right. ...

On the whole ... I cannot help expressing a wish, that every member of the Convention, who may still have objections to it, would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.

And so adopting the words of Brother Franklin, I say: On the whole, I cannot help expressing a wish, that every member of the Church, who may still have objections to it, would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name and shoulder to it.

If culture, or feeling comfortable, loved, and accepted, or fitting in, or agreeing with all that transpires within the Church, or worshipping in my own way, were the pillars of my conviction, I would have been gone a long time ago. But I'm still here for one stubborn reason, i.e., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth today and I can't rationally get around that fact, and I dare not deny it.

And so here I stand come what may. May we all stand forever together and plot an undeviating course to eternal life.

So, what ground have we covered to this point in the *Stand Forever Series*? We have considered the overarching message:

- 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.**

Within that framework, we have looked at the different dimensions of that separation: chaos, darkness and death. We have considered Christ as the Way, offsetting chaos, and we are in the middle of looking at Christ as the Truth, offsetting darkness. I hope you will stay with me in coming episodes as we continue our focus on Christ as the Truth.