

Christ is the Measure
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"Stand Forever" Episode 3

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is the *Stand Forever Series*. The focus of the last episode is "believe." The focus today is "Jesus Christ is the Measure." Together they foreshadow the conclusion of the series: *to believe and follow Christ to the end, and help others do the same.*

The Apostle Paul said of our day, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."¹

Popular advice today is "compare yourself with yourself and not with others, each day trying to do and be a little better." That is pretty good advice as far as it goes but it is not enough (in that it doesn't go far enough).

You can't really improve without a standard. You may putter around comparing yourself today with yesterday, but ultimately you must look up and ahead to where you are going and deliberately steer in that direction. Then and only then can you measure your progress.

Paul also said: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number [blending in with the crowd] or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves [people who hold themselves up as a standard]: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." Measuring yourself against the standard of those around you is not a good idea. However good your crowd may be, no one can enable/unlock your full/divine potential. Paul continues, "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule [Christ] which God hath distributed [or given] to us, a measure to reach even unto you. **For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure.**"²

Paul is right, we don't stretch ourselves beyond our measure or goal. Roger Bannister, for example, had a goal, a standard or measure, i.e., the four-minute mile. He didn't run the four-minute mile in 1956 by comparing himself with other runners or even by just comparing himself with himself from day to day. He wasn't trying to win races.

¹ Ephesians 1:10

² 2 Corinthians 10:12-14

He wasn't racing against anyone else on the track. He had a different standard or measure; he was racing against the clock. Yes, he was racing against himself, trying to improve each day, but ultimately, he was racing against the clock. Four minutes was his measure, not other runners, and not even past performance.

We do not surpass whatever our measure is. "We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure" as Paul said, and the measure which God has given us is His Son. The best course is the highest of all human endeavors, i.e., look to Christ and compare yourself with Him.

With that said, alarms are sounding, bugles are blaring, red flags are flying, and a small army of people are rushing forward waving white flags calling out, "look down, look around, anywhere but up." They want to save us from disappointment, anxiety, sacrifice, hardship, and heartache from aiming so high, but they are really trying to save themselves from those same painful tutorials.

The Lord posed what is sometimes viewed as a troubling question. He said, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" Then answering His own question, he said, "Even as I am."³ Equally troubling, Christ also said, "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."⁴

But to "become perfect," to "become like Christ," are words that stick in the throat, and we may cringe a bit when we hear them. For all their grandeur they also seem grandiose, especially if we clearly see where we are and how far we have yet to go. Nothing said by the Lord has created more angst than those statements. They are deemed by many to be socially insensitive, if not inexcusable, harmful to emotional health.

Who are we anyway to think, much less say, such things? One answer might be, "children of God; children of the Almighty, Eternal God." And those words ("even as I am" and "I would that ye should be perfect") aren't our words anyway, they are His. Should we shun the words of God because they are not smooth and easy to swallow?

If you get discouraged, you're not alone—not hardly. When the presence of God withdrew from Moses, when he was again separated from God, he said, "Now, for this

³ 3 Nephi 27:27, *emphasis added*

⁴ 3 Nephi 12:48

cause I know man is nothing.”⁵ When Job saw the Lord he cried out, “I abhor myself.”⁶ When Isaiah saw the Lord he said, “Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.”⁷ Nephi said, “O wretched man that I am.”⁸ Ammon said, “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak.”⁹ King Benjamin said, “remember ... the greatness of God, and your own nothingness,” meaning our utter dependence on God.¹⁰

It is rather the foolish mantra of the self-esteem craze of the past seventy years—“you’re okay just the way you are” or even the better advice, “compare yourself with yourself”—that are harmful more than the brightness of your potential.

So, if you feel low when you see how far you must go, you’re not alone—not hardly. I have felt the same. Anyone earnest and honest about his or her discipleship feels the same. It is part of the process. Don’t be blinded by the brightness of your potential, rather, let it be the beacon that beckons you onward.

We might say “focus on repentance and not perfection,” but you can’t have one without the other. Repentance has no meaning without perfection. There must be a standard to measure human conduct, to see the short-fall and then work to close the gap, which is repentance. Again, as Paul said, “For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure.”¹¹ Without a standard or measure, repentance and self-improvement are only mushy human relativism, comfortable but aimless human development. Without a standard, it leads to chaos.

If the standard be not Christ, then who in the world, who? If the standard be not perfection, then what in the world, what? **Christ is the standard against which we should measure ourselves but not break ourselves.** And He is perfection.

The fact that we do and will fall short does not mean the bar should be lowered to close the gap. There is a different plan for closing the gap. Jesus Christ, as the Way, shows us where to aim. But as the Redeemer, He closes the gap when we miss.

The fact that we do and will fall short should place in perfect focus our desperate need for Jesus Christ, our need for the help and intervention only He, and He alone can

⁵ Moses 1:9-10

⁶ Job 42:5, 6

⁷ Isaiah 6:5

⁸ 2 Nephi 4:17

⁹ Alma 26:12

¹⁰ Mosiah 4:11, 12

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 10:14

provide. **The beginning of the process of becoming converted unto the Lord is the recognition of our absolute need for Him.**¹²

In the same sermon as “I would that ye should be perfect,” Jesus also said, “Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.”¹³ And, “The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be filled with light.”¹⁴

I can’t live without making mistakes. I prove that every day. **But I can and you can hunger and thirst after righteousness and be filled with the Holy Ghost in our weakness and imperfection. We will not live perfectly, but we can have an eye single to the glory of God who is Christ, a singular focus, (want that more than anything else) and be filled with light even in our weakness and imperfection.**

Many years ago, this central and simple truth—to believe and follow Christ to the end—was indelibly revealed to my wife, Jacquelyn. I have asked her to share that experience with you. This is an unfair request because Jacque battles with Alzheimer’s Disease, and when she was given that diagnosis she laughed and said, “If this means I don’t have to give another talk in Church it’s probably worth it.” And yet, here I am asking her to do it again anyway, but at least we’re not in Church. Here is a courageous and good soul, the sunshine of my life, Jacquelyn Gayle Corbridge.

Jacquelyn:

About fifteen years ago, while we were living in Santiago, Chile.... I had a dream. It came to me just before waking ... and it was very vivid. The message of the dream was very clear ... and clearly an answer to a fervent prayer I had offered while kneeling at the side of my bed only a few hours before.

We had a guest in our home at the time. Sister Julie Beck, the General Relief Society President of the Church was staying with us. Elder Corbridge and I had spent the previous four days with her as we accompanied her to various church assignments. I marveled at her many talents and abilities.

But MOST amazing to me was a spiritual gift that seemed to rest upon her whenever she rose to speak. There were no papers in front of her, no notes to read. She taught,

¹² Alma 23:6

¹³ 3 Nephi 12:6

¹⁴ 3 Nephi 13:22-24. See also, Doctrine and Covenants 88:67.

she testified ... all in Spanish. Out on the streets of Santiago, she struggled a bit with the language ... but from the pulpit she asked questions, she understood their responses. She seemed very comfortable. As for myself, learning what Spanish I did know had been a long struggle ... and I wondered why she had been so blessed ... while I was so lacking in those things.

So, in that fervent prayer I mentioned ... I expressed all of this. I asked Heavenly Father why some of His children seem gifted in so many more ways than others. I really wanted to understand why she had been so blessed while I was lacking in those things.

In my dream that night, I saw many brightly colored cute little houses poking above the clouds, high up in the air! Each little house was part of a tall, narrow, shiny black rock! I was hovering above all of this in the air ... then suddenly I was swooped down to look up close at the foundation of one of the little houses. I was surprised to see that this little house was absolutely secure in that black rock. The house WAS the top of the rock. There was no seam, no break between the house's foundation and the rock. A seamless foundation. The house WAS the rock.

I was taken inside the little house just long enough to see that there were no furnishings whatsoever except for a phone on the wall! That was all! I think the phone represented the need to call on Heavenly Father through prayer. Nothing more important ... hence no other thing was in that house!

When I awoke from my dream, I could hardly believe what I had just seen. I was filled with gratitude. I had been given a precious gift. I understood very clearly what the Lord was saying to me. It is written in Helaman chapter 5 verse 12.

"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, 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 woe because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall."

As I mentioned, the house in my dream was very small ... And had no furnishing except a phone! But I understand now that although I might not be blessed with as many talents and abilities as other people, and now as I struggle with the effects of Alzheimer's Disease, I know more than ever that the only thing that really matters is that I make very sure that my foundation is built on the rock of Christ, that He is my foundation. And if so, I never need fear. Trusting Him, serving Him, serving my

fellow men, doing my best to help build up the Kingdom of God, that's all that matters. The floods and storms of life come to every one of us. It is an essential part of our mortal experience, but we will not fall, we cannot fall if our house, however grand or small, becomes part of that shiny black rock with the seamless foundation I saw in my dream.

Larry:

Thank you, Jacque. To build your house on the rock of Christ, to make Him your North Star, to believe and follow Him to the end, is somewhat counterintuitive. As I have said before,¹⁵ you might mistakenly think you can't really follow Him because the standard of His life is so astonishingly high as to appear to be unreachable. You might think it is too hard, too high, too much and beyond your capacity, at least for now. Don't believe that. While the standard of the Lord is the highest, don't ever think it is only reachable by a select few who are most able.

In this singular instance life's experience misleads us. Our experience tells us that the highest achievements in any human endeavor are always the most difficult and, therefore, only achievable by a select few who are most able. The higher the standard, the fewer can reach it. That is not the case here, because unlike every other experience in this life, this is not a human endeavor. It is, rather, the work of the Gods. It is God's work, and it is His "glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man"¹⁶ and those who engage in God's work are entitled to God's power.

There is nothing else like it. Not anywhere. Not ever. No other endeavor, institution, plan, program, or system ever conceived by men has access to the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, while the Lord's invitation to follow Him is the highest of all, it is also achievable by everyone, not because we are able, but because He is, and because He can make us able too. **It is critical that you understand and believe that. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a self-improvement program. You can't improve yourself to realize your full potential on your own. But you are not in this alone. Not hardly.**

¹⁵ Lawrence Corbridge, "The Way," General Conference, October 2008.

¹⁶ Moses 1:39

“We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, **all mankind** [everyone, living and dead] may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”¹⁷ As Paul said, Christ is “a measure to reach even unto you” —to reach everyone.¹⁸

And so, believe, and follow Christ to the end, engaged in His work to be endowed with His power and receive eternal life in the world to come. That’s where we are headed in this series.

I invite you to stay with me on this journey to believe and follow Christ to the end and Stand Forever.

¹⁷ Articles of Faith 1:3, *emphasis added*

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:13