

Today in church we had a discussion in the High Priest Group. I'll just share this story as we start out. I won't go into what the topic was. It was again an emphasis from the scriptures and from the brethren and from the gospel on what kind of people we should be. Also, on what we should be doing in life in order to be successful spiritually and prosper temporally. The thought came to my mind again that we hear over and over, that we have no problem as members of the Church knowing where we should be, what we should be doing, and what kind of persons we should be. We hear that, and that's very successfully taught. The impression was, to me, is that we never talk about the "how". It seems like how we become that person is, at least in my experience, sadly lacking when we get together as members. I discovered something a few years back that's just a simple little experience. Let's go to 2 Nephi 32 and I'll share with you a big break-through doctrinal moments in my life. It's the "how" do we accomplish. How do we become the man or woman of Christ? We know that we should be humble. We know that we should be meek. We know that we should be lowly in heart. We know that we should have a broken heart and a contrite spirit. We know all of these things. In all of these characteristics and attributes are the criteria for us to rend the veil, be redeemed from the Fall, and have an encounter with that society that dwells on the other side of the veil. The problem is that we never discuss the "how". I think this is one of the great mysteries and the Lord hides it in simplicity in the scriptures. So, by way of context, when you're reading the last chapters of 2 Nephi Chapters 28-31, this is the summary of Nephi's life: What he's learned throughout his life. He's now, we guess, somewhere in his 70's, and a few pages more in the Book of Mormon, we'll see that Nephi dies. So, this is a summary and he's teaching us, basically, how he became a "favorite of heaven", and what we need to do to become one of "heaven's favorites". That term, a "favorite of heaven", is not found anywhere in the scriptures, but it is found in the sixth lecture on faith, and that's where that comes from. So, the formula is simply: ask, seek, and knock. So, if we want to obtain and have these endowments/spiritual gifts in our lives, the secret is to ask. This is a 3-part formula. What is it we ask for and what should we seek for, and where do we knock? And, on what do we knock? Usually we knock on doors, so, what's the door we knock on? If we start to ponder that simple formula: ask, seek and knock, then it opens up a whole vista on how we can become the kinds of persons that the scriptures abundantly tell us that we need to be. So, verse 4 is kind of a summary. Keep in mind, this is Nephi's summary of his lifetime and what he's learned. He says, 4 "Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark."

I remember when I read that, the spirit impressed me. That was a great day for me because that answered my question, the key of "how to" in every gospel subject and topic. You want to have the gift of charity in your life? You have to ask for it. You want to be more humble? You want to be meek and lowly in heart, which are the three criteria to parting the veil, you have to ask for it. Then look what else he says, "Neither do you knock, wherefore, you are not brought into the light but must perish in the dark."

Now look at verse five, "For behold again I say and do you that if you will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost it will showing to you all things what you should do."

So there is the formula. It is so simple and hidden in plain sight that many of us will go our whole lives and miss that. Margie was showing me one in Matthew 21:22 that says, "And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive."

So it's a real simple formula, but it's the one that we skip over and we miss. Now go over to Moroni 7 and I'll show you another place charity is one of those gifts of the Spirit. In fact, it is the ultimate Gift of the Spirit that we need to have in order to obtain anything worthwhile in this life. In Moroni 7:48 the Lord talks about charity. I want to concentrate on one word.

"Wherefore my beloved brethren, pray unto the father with all the energy of heart that you maybe filled with this love which he hath **bestowed** upon all who are true followers of His Son Jesus Christ."

Any of the Gifts of the Spirit, remember that charity is the ultimate gift of the spirit, it's the pure love of Christ, and Moroni points out that if you're in possession of charity, by nature of that attribute, you're in possession of all other gifts. It circumscribes all of the gifts of God. Charity is the greatest of all the gifts. He goes on to say that you may have some of the other gifts without charity and they will fail. But, charity never faileth. Then we are admonished to cleave unto charity (verse 46) which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail.

So the key word there, brothers and sisters, is bestowed. So, if we are asking in faith, with real intent, having a sincere heart, reasoning with the Lord, He will bestow this gift upon you. It's a bestowal. It's an endowment. It's not something you can develop by any criteria on your own. It's something you have to have faith for, and when the timings right, or it's the will of the Lord, He bestows this gift upon you. Not in its fullness as it resides in the Father and the Son, because all of these Gifts of the Spirit can be found in their fullness in the Father and The Son. But we can have a portion of it.

Then Section 88 says if you're in possession of a portion of any of these gifts, the day will come, when you'll be bestowed with a fulness. But, before you can ever have a fullness, you have to have a portion. The portion of these gifts come as a bestowal/endowment, when you ask in faith, nothing doubting, and ask not amiss. Then he bestows these things on you. That's the "how". That's how you become a man or a woman of Christ is that he bestows Christ-like attributes and characteristics upon you. Any comments on that? That was just great eye-opener for me. That forever changed the way I pray, and how I seek for the Gifts of the Spirit, and to become Christlike. Thoughts or impressions? Does that make sense?

Comment from student: Yea, we are lacking in knowing the "how-to". That's why I like your lessons so much. You teach "the how". So thank you for teaching us the "how".

Mike: that's been my observation. I'm not trying to find fault in any way, it's just that it seems like we do well in discussing the what and the who, but we could do a whole lot better on the "how". So I give that for your consideration.

Now tonight I want to talk to you about a title. The title on this podcast will be "Claim the Blessing". Before we start on it I'd like to go to 2 Nephi 2 and look at something Lehi talks about. Again, this is Levi's closing messages because over in chapters 3-5 Lehi dies. So, here we have the benefit of this great prophet's last words and life experience on how he was able to pierce the veil, have an encounter with God, and enter into the "Rest of the Lord". That's what we want to do. The whole purpose of the Book of Mormon is to give us examples of what men and women have done before us so that we can do the same. Since God is no respecter of persons and everything we read in the scriptures that has taken place with others must be available to us now in order for God to be no respecter of persons. We just need to find out what the formulas are, what the patterns are, what the keys are, and the doctrinal truths, so we can apply those same doctrinal truths in our life and have the same results that all these great men and women in the Book of Mormon had.

Let's go to 2 Nephi 2:13. In verse 11 Lehi is talking about the great principle of opposition. We talked about that and we'll probably talk about it in the future. Going along with this law of opposition, because there has to be opposition in all things, in verse 13 we're at the end of that oppositional doctrinal Statement, and he says,

"13 And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away."

(Now this part right here is where I want to come in to for tonight's discussion, and notice the semi-colon, you now have a statement following the semi-colon, that is going to substantiate the rest of verse 13.)

"neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither **to act nor to be acted upon**; wherefore, all things must have vanished away."

The whole purpose of the creation of the telestial world to placement men and woman in a place where they can choose to act or be acted upon.

"14 And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, **both things to act and things to be acted upon.**"

Now in the Garden of Eden he points out two great objects that stand in opposition one to the other.

"15 And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; (there's the 2 opposites--one brings death, and the other which sustains life) the one being sweet and the other bitter."

If you take the sequence of how that's written, the forbidden fruit's the one that's sweet, and the tree of life is the one that's bitter. That's a lesson in and of itself. That last verse:

"16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other."

The principle here is that everything in creation, whether it's in the telestial world or the terrestrial world or I would venture to say in the celestial world, or anywhere in the eternities, there are always things that act and things that are acted upon. To be acted upon ultimately is to forfeit your eternal life. Ultimately, if you remain in a state of being acted upon, you forfeit eternal life. Those who act, in the environment where acting or being acted upon is present, are exercising the seeds of Godhood. So you always need to be in a place where you're doing things without being asked to do them. You need to be able to be in a state of revelation and prophecy so that you know by the Spirit beforehand without been instructed what you should do or should not do and then act.

Remember that verse we just read over there in 2 Nephi 32 it says, "when you obtain the Holy Ghost, The Holy Ghost will tell you all things what you should do." If you have to wait in this life to receive instructions from another mortal being on what you should do on your pathway to godhood, you place yourself in a very serious position of vulnerability because all men are subject to error and are prone to sin and transgression. Now that's not to say that there isn't time in our progression where we need to be acted upon. I'm not saying that at all, because we learn step-by-step, line upon line, precept upon precept.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was visited by the mayor of Boston in Nauvoo. The mayor was impressed with the industry, and the order and beauty of the Nauvoo society. He said to Joseph, who was the mayor of Nauvoo, "How is it that your people are so well ordered? How is it that you have such an industrious people, and such a beautiful city? The prophet made this great statement, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves."

Now that's a wonderful concept. Notice that he teaches them correct principles, and they ACT on the truth that Joseph taught them. That's another one, and by the way, last week I made a mistake in our discussion when I said that this statement: "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior...That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel!" I attributed that to Bruce R McConkie, and it should have been Boyd K. Packer.

If you were to take the pattern of Three Degrees of Glory: the Telestial, the Terrestrial and the Celestial, you can see this principle of acting or being acted upon, in all three of those places. Telestial individuals, by nature, are rebellious and place themselves in a place, more or less, to be acted upon. If you were to take a concept like the Church's teaching these days on "Honor The Sabbath day to keep it holy" and apply it to a Telestial person, that Telestial person might say this concerning the Sabbath Day: "Don't tell me what to do. Sunday's my only day off. I'm going to do what I want and you're not to tell me what to do. Go away." So Telestial people are rebels. That's all of us and the natural man, in an unredeemed state.

The Terrestrial person is a step above. The person would say in regards to the Sabbath Day: "I want to keep the Sabbath day, but I'm not sure what that means. Can you tell me, what should I do on the Sabbath day, and what shouldn't I do on the Sabbath day?" So Terrestrial people rely on lists, but it's a step above.

A Celestial person will say: What's the principle? What should I do to honor the Sabbath Day and keep it holy? Tell me what the principle is and I will govern myself by revelation from the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. You don't need to tell them what to do. They learn the principal, and then God reveals to them how to live the principal, acting and acted upon.

Now, I'd like to read to you a David A Bednar quote. In his ministry, I believe, he will be known, when it's all said and done, as the general authority that pointed our mind towards this doctrine of acting and being acted upon. It's so important. Brother Bednar said, and I'll put it up as a handout on dropbox for this talk, but he said this, (and someone from New Jersey sent this to me, and I'm thankful for that). It's called "In a state of happiness", Given at a BYU Idaho devotional January 6, 2004. Let me read it to you "It is one thing to perform the outward actions of obedience." (I want you to concentrate on outward.) "It is quite a different thing to become inwardly what the commandments are intended to help us become. It is one thing to obey the institutional (Church) public and shared commandments associated with the Lords Kingdom on earth—Commandments such as "the law of chastity", "the law of tithing", "the Word of Wisdom." Now, Brother Bednar takes these commandments: chastity, tithing, and Word of Wisdom, and puts those in the outward action of obedience category in the institutional, public, and shared environment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;" (Isn't that interesting? Now, here's the rest of it.) "It is an even greater thing to receive and respond to the individual, private and personally revealed commandments that result from continual and faithful obedience. So we're looking at two ways that you live your life, and I believe that the one leads into the other. We all come into the church and we perform the outward acts of obedience such as, the law of chastity, the law of tithing, the Word of Wisdom, all of the questions on the temple recommend interview. But now he takes us into something deeper, something that is inward, not outward, and he calls it "the individual private and personally revealed commandments that result from continual and faithful obedience." (Now listen to the last sentence; think of act or be acted upon), "Such instruction, the individual private and personally revealed typically are proactive and anticipatory in nature."

I looked up in the Bible dictionary the definition of "proactive" and here's what it says: creating, controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened.

Do you see the tie-in?

I want to tell you a little story of something that's happened in the last month. Margie is going to participate and share this, because it's her experience. I'll just start out by saying that for some reason she developed some pain in her neck and in the base of her skull. She'll describe that and then I'll tell you what we did and then she'll pick it up from there. Margie: Well, I had spent three weeks, going on the fourth week with this intense pain in my neck. I couldn't turn my head left or right more than an inch without just excruciating pain. So, I finally went to the doctor. The doctor didn't

have much to say, gave me some muscle relaxers, and that didn't work. I went back and said, "this is not working." I went to the emergency room one night with our daughter who works there and they gave me some steroid shots in the base of my skull and said "that will take care of it".

Well, it didn't do anything, so finally, in the meantime, I had had a blessing from Mike. Then on a Sunday, Mike went to his High Priest Quorum and he... I'll let him tell you that part.

Mike: Well, I had the impression that I should get two of the brethren from the High Priest Quorum to join me, and we're all fasting on that Fast Sunday, and we're going to give Margie a blessing. I believe in the power of quorums, and the smallest High Priest quorum is three members. You can't have a priesthood quorum unless you have at least three members. So, I set in that High Priest group and I looked around the room and tried to have the spirit direct me on which brethren I could ask to come out after church to give this blessing. I picked two men, when up to them after church and said, would you come over to the house at 5 o'clock today? I gave them a little short introduction as to what was going on, an explanation, and they said "sure". So, at 5 o'clock we came together and one of them anointed Margie with oil, and then the three of us, as a priesthood quorum, stood around, laid our hands upon her head, and gave her a blessing, and rebuked this sickness, this pain which she was describing as out of 10 being the maximum, she was up into the 12 range. I could see that she was wearing down after three weeks and I was really quite concerned. The doctors had not been able to do anything, so I said we will rely on the Priesthood. So we gave her that blessing, and the Spirit of the Lord was there, and we felt good about it, and the men left. At that point, we didn't notice anything had happened. Go ahead Margie:

Margie: Well, the intensity level of the pain dropped probably to an 8 or 9, but I was still very uncomfortable. I went back to the doctor and asked for stronger pain medicine. I never take anything for headaches but I was to the point where I just couldn't handle the pain anymore. So, they gave me some medicine to take the edge off, and the pain level dropped down to maybe 5 or 6. When I take this medicine I have to take food, so I took that for three or four days, and we're coming up on Sunday. It was Saturday night and I was thinking: okay tomorrow is fast Sunday. I want to fast but I can't fast because I have to take food with the medicine. So I thought, well I'll just eat a little tiny bit, just enough to get by so I don't get an upset stomach. So I woke up next morning, the pain was there. Okay, I thought, what do I do, do go to church in pain and not take this medicine, and just go fasting or just go ahead and take the medicine and eat? Immediately the words came to my mind, "Claim the Blessing". I was having this thought process as I was laying in bed before getting up because I didn't want to get up and face even more pain with movement. So, as I set there and pondered that, I felt this overwhelming feeling of strength. I thought, you know what? I'm going to claim the blessing, the Priesthood blessing that I was given the week prior. And I thought, all I had done was allow him to give me the blessing, and I set back, and nothing happened. I was a little bit frustrated wondering why didn't the Lord heal me? And with these words "claim the blessing:", I just thought, by golly, I'm not going to take the medicine, I'm not going to eat, I'm going to get well. So I went to church, and the pain was just almost more than I could handle. In fact, after Sacrament Meeting I was tempted to leave, and I thought no, I'm going to stay. I'm going to claim this blessing. As the three hour block was over and we went home and I noticed that the pain was lessening and lessening. Over a period of the next 2 or 3 days, the pain continued to drop. As my excitement continued to rise and as I kept hearing over and over in my mind, "claim the blessing".

Mike: Until eventually the pain has gone completely away and it's just a miraculous thing. So, after one month in just terrible pain, no sleep, you could just see it in her eyes and her countenance, she would tell me, I'm just so tired, I'm being worn out. I was very concerned because we didn't have any idea what was going on. She had had an MRI and had gone to all kinds of places.

This concept of the Spirit whispering to her, "claim the blessing", was something we hadn't considered before. It's very much in line with acting or being acted upon. When we receive a blessing from the Lord we expect that when we have exercised the faith to have someone lay their hands upon our head, and a blessing is pronounced, that is all we should have to do is sit back at that point and wait for the desired results. But this revelation has taught us both that, after you have exercised the faith, and received the blessing, you need to now go out and show the Lord through your actions that you have a right to "claim the blessing," **blessings that are promised** in that administration, like the Holy Ghost did. It's like when confirming a member of the Church to receive the Holy Ghost, and they lay their hands upon your head, and say "receive the Holy Ghost". What most people think, at that point, is that the Holy Ghost is now obligated because of that ordinance to now come in and become a companion, when in reality, a key has been turned and a door opened, with that confirmation ordinance for you to now go out and "claim the companionship of the Holy Ghost" that's promised to you, by exercising your agency. There's that whole principle of agency that ties in with Lehi and everything that we're talking about here tonight.

I'd like to tie another scripture in with that. If you go over to Ether 12.

Student: Let me ask you, was claiming the blessing by Margie by going to church no matter how difficult it was?

Margie: Part of it was just my attitude. I started to add my faith to it. Since I had the blessing, I just expected it like a

magic wand to wave over me and I was going to be well. Well, I had even forgotten about the blessing until that morning when the thought came to me "claim the blessing". I'm thinking, what blessing? And then I remembered I had had this Priesthood blessing and nothing had happened, and I thought, well, I haven't done anything. I hadn't exercised my faith, and I hadn't said, hey, I have a right to have this blessing. I had not claimed it. It had just been pronounced but I had not done anything in order to have it become active in my life for me.

Mike: I want you to notice the words she said. "I have a right to that blessing." She exercises faith to ask for the administration in the first place. Asking in faith is a form of sacrifice, and the faith and sacrifice required for that blessing to be pronounced: you have a right now. If you come up through faith and you've sacrificed in order to claim that blessing, in order to receive the blessing, you have a right to claim it. Let me see if I can give you another scripture that seems to fit in with this principle.

Mike: This is been a very powerful principle. One of the things she did to receive that blessing was to forego taking any more of the medicine that Sunday morning, in spite of the fact that her pain is up to 8,9,10+. She still went to church.

Let's go to Ether 12:17-19. "And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the promise until after their faith. And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God. And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad."

How easy would it have been to stay in bed? Moving less. Just getting up, the pain accelerates with the extra movement. But now going to church and making a conscious decision, think about that to not take those medicines. So that morning when she went to church she didn't take any of those. We have some high-powered narcotics here, to cut major pain and she decided just not to take any of it, so she was acting upon the revelation given to her to claim the blessing.

Margie: That was what I felt impressed to do. That's not to say everybody go out and ditch your medicine. That was just my own personal revelation for this particular circumstance in my life, because there is a place for medicine.

Mike: Absolutely. So, in any situation where we want to exercise this right to claim the blessing, you'll be guided by the spirit to know what you need to do on your part to act, and not simply sit back be acted upon. So, revelation plays a part in this action.

Let's look at Ether 12:17: "And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the promise until after their faith."

See, faith is an action principal brothers and sisters. Faith can be divided into two groups: One is an action principle of faith, and the other one is a power principle. The action principle of faith precedes the power principle. Most of what we talk about in the church is the action side of faith. The action side of faith is that every action is done, every decision that you make, every action is a part of faith in some desired result. If you didn't have in your mind some end result of this action, there would be no need for you to act at all, so, faith is an acting principal and it moves from the action principle of faith into power. It's the same as being ordained to the priesthood and having power in the priesthood. Those are two different concepts. Just like faith- the action principle, is completely different than faith as a power principle. The one precedes the other.

Now lets look at Ether 12:18: "And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God."

This next part right here: (Think about this experience that Margie had, and then think about verse 19): 19 And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things (right here) which they had beheld with the eye of faith, and were glad."

Now people who physically see miracles happen in their lives, are more likely to physically see those miracles actually take place in the Telestial world, behind the veil, if they first visualize those results in their mind. Or, in other words, see with the eye of faith. So, seeing something happen with the eye faith precedes the actual physical fulfillment of that. That fits in again with: what are we doing when we are expecting blessings and miracles in our life? Are we actually going the extra mile and seeing the desired results of those miracles in our mind? The Book of Mormon seems to teach that until you can see it in your mind, you're never going to see it physically. Until you can conceive of that in your mind then you're never going to actually have the physical occurrence. I'd like Margie to tell you another story. It's just a marvelous story. She's told his story on three continents, on our missions, and it's blessed the lives of many, especially, of young women. It has to do with an experience she had and I'd like to turn the time over to her for a few minutes and tell you a little bit about about the background she comes from, and what led up to this wonderful experience. Now think about what we have talked about tonight: "claiming the blessing" and acting instead of being acted upon.

Margie: Prior to meeting Mike, we've been married 13 years now, I was living in Snowflake, AZ teaching school. I was single and I had several people that were concerned that I was getting to be an older in age and not having been married.

At first it was no big deal as I was younger but then as I got older, it was harder and harder to attend church, because it's a family oriented church. I sat there on the bench and looked around and watched as everybody had their families and I just sat there all alone. I would often throw little pity party for myself, because I didn't have any companionship at home, no family around or anything. I remember several times, lots of ups and downs, I was at this point 46 years old, still not married. It almost became an embarrassment, like what's wrong with you, and I started thinking what's wrong with me that I'm not married? Surely, I think I'm a nice person, and Satan has nice way of twisting everything that's true, and making it into our own self-destructive action. Well, I remember June when I was 46 years old I remember it was a fast Sunday and it was the evening, and I had had lots of dates. Everyone in Snowflake liked to set me up with blind dates, with this that and the other person. I went on lots of double dates, in fact I could probably qualify for the Guinness Book of World Records for blind dates. Anyway, I was 46 years old and feeling kind of down that evening, kneeling beside my bed, pouring my heart out to the Lord, and I finally was just so tired I said, "you know I've been praying all my life that I would be married and for the first time in my life I decided, you know what, I'll tell you what, I have a **right** to be married. I'm doing everything you told me to do. I go to church. I serve, I do all the things I should. I knelt there at the side of my bed reasoning with the Lord, with tears streaming down my face. I can still see the picture and remember the feelings that I had. But for the first time, and I've often had that prayer, but my prayer had been 'help me get married, help me get married, help me to get married'. This time I reasoned with the Lord. I told him why I wanted to be married. I told him why I felt like I had merited the right to be married and have an eternal companion. But then at the end I said this, "you know, however, if I can be a better influence for people as a single person, I'm going to be the best dang single person you've ever met, and I will never, ever again bring up the subject of being married. I will just do whatever you want me to do." That was a Sunday night in June. Two or three weeks later I was supposed to be the guest speaker at a regional singles conference and I thought, 'okay'. I started telling my friends, I think I want to be married by the end of this year. They're all looking at me like, 'yeah right'. I said, "I'm going to the singles conference so I'm going to see all these single people. So in my mind, I had it all set up that when I went to the singles conference, I'm going to be up talking in front of everybody, and I'm going to have an opportunity for all these guys to look at me and say wow, cool lady here, and let's go ask her out on a date. I get up there and I give my talk, and it was great, it was fine and dandy, and then the conference got over and I hadn't meet one guy, really. In the meantime, prior to that, I told all my friends, I'm getting married, and I'm going to find my guy, at the singles conference. In the couple of weeks prior to that conference a friend said, "I can make your wedding cake", and someone else said "oh, my husband is a professional photographer, he'll take your pictures". And another person said "I'll plan your wedding and I'll do your reception". Everybody had everything worked out and planned and they said, "all right"! And when the singles conference came and went, I remember when a particular friend said, "are you disappointed you didn't find your guy? I said nope, I told the Lord that if I didn't get married by the end of this year, and it's only August now, look I've got everything planned: I got the cake, I've got the wedding and reception all planned. I even knew what I was going to serve at the reception. They said, "don't you think you need to find a guy first?" And I said no, we've got it all planned, we're all organized, it'll happen if it's supposed to, if not, I'm not going to worry about it. I'm just going to go out and live my life.

Well, three weeks later I met Mike. Long story short, within two months we were married. We did get married before the end of that year, on December 13, at 3:33, cuz three is my favorite number! The Lord provided what I had wanted all along. But, I had just asked all my life, "I want to be married, I want to be married, I want to be married". The time was right. I think it was through personal revelation that I felt like I had qualified. One other thing. As I was praying that night, I thought, if I'm to be married, I want options, I want choices. Everybody in the world gets choices. I'm at a point in my life that when I have a date I go out once and decide if he's a dim bulb or if he's marrying potential. And all I was finding was packages of dim bulbs! I had quite a collection of them! Well, I decided that I had a right to have choices. Sure enough, as soon as I met Mike I had some other guys come into play. So, I now found myself juggling these guys and talking to these guys. I remember, Mike wasn't too happy about that. I told him one weekend that I was leaving for the weekend to go meet this guy in Mesa to see if he was marrying potential. Anyway, long story short, we got married and it was definitely the right thing. It was directed. The whole perspective and my whole life changed when I changed my attitude. Number one, I tried to claim the blessing that I thought was rightfully mine, because my patriarchal blessing said that I would be married in the temple in the own due time of the Lord. I just kept thinking, when is it going to be time? So I knew that I was going to get married, it was just that I wasn't expecting it to be that long. I wasn't expecting to be that advanced in age prior to that. When I reasoned with the Lord, which we see in the scriptures--The Book of Mormon--all the time, I explained my situation, I explained my solutions, I explained why I need it, and then, "claim the blessing". I had done everything but "reason" and "claim the blessing". When I finally did that, then things fell into place, and here we are living happily ever after!

Mike: Amen to that! She's the best thing that ever happen to me.

Let me just share with you another little thought, thanks Margie, I never tire of hearing that story.

We are a generation now as members of the Church that must be doing something different than we've done before. We can't continue to do the same things that we've done up to this point. Satan's chain has been lengthened in the wisdom of the Lord. Satan has been given a longer chain and a broader base from which to operate among the children of men. With that, we now need to do things much more different than we've ever done before. It's not going to be enough to do what we've done in the past in order to meet the challenges that are here now. I believe that when we talk about a marvelous work and wonder, we always, in my life, attribute the marvelous work and a wonder, which is Isaiah 29, to the restoration of the Church. And, certainly, the Church restoration and everything that goes along with it is a marvelous work and a wonder. I believe that the ultimate marvelous work and a wonder has not happened yet. That is, from out of the society of The Latter Day Saints there will be a small group of people who will hear the call and answer the call to become a Zion people, a society prepared to meet The king of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. That society doesn't become a society all at once. It starts by one man and one woman, here and there, hearing the voice of the Spirit call them to step up now, to awake and arise, and be and do something different than they've been doing up to this point. In order to claim blessings that are reserved for the Latter-day Saints in the days that are here, that is to establish a Zion society that will endure from this point forth through the Second Coming and during the millennium, and fill the whole earth. That has never been done. It's our privilege and blessing and responsibility to do that. Priesthood brethren, we need to do more now, than we've done, way beyond now. Just being ordained to the Priesthood is not enough. We now need to move up. The only place we hear this statement is in the temple. At the most sacred place in the temple, you'll hear the words "Power in the Priesthood". Not, "power of the Priesthood", but "Power in the Priesthood". Ordination comes first and must precede "power in the priesthood". And now with "power in the Priesthood" in the Telestial world we can do things and become persons that we otherwise could not become.

Can I share with you just a personal experience about how I feel that I've done this in one way? I say this just to share with you as an example. I've lived in Eager now for almost 25 years. When I first came here I planted fruit trees. We put them in here and I now have 42 mature trees that are anywhere between 15 and 25 years of age. Some were already on the property that are much older than that. They might be 40 to 50 years old. They're all mature and they're all producing trees. The problem with Eager is, in the spring we have terrific winds that come in anywhere from 50 to 70 miles-per-hour, and we have late frosts. We have an early spring and the trees warm up. They come out beautiful with blossoms and everything. Then these winds and this frost come along and just destroys everything. So, out of that 25 years that I've been here, we've only seen fruit on our trees produce maybe only 5 or 6 times in this season. All the other times they were wiped out. Up to this time I've said, "it doesn't matter. When the time comes that we need this fruit to live off of, in a day of devastation and the days of challenge, geopolitical and worldwide turmoil that the scriptures seem to indicate are coming, that if I've had the faith to plant the trees, then, at the time we need them, God will provide, and we will have a harvest. That's been my prayer. The missing part is, what am I doing to help that process, besides just planting the trees? I thought that just planting the trees was enough. What more can I do now to act, rather than simply ask for a blessing and ask God to do it all, and come August, September, October, go out and pick the fruit and bottle it and have a great harvest laid up in store in the season thereof?

I been thinking differently for the last 2 years about these things. So this year, for the first time in seven years, I really pruned back our trees. I took them all back a good third, and maybe a little bit more. I've got two great big brush piles out in front of the house that will take two truck loads to haul them off or make a really big bonfire. The thought came to me that these trees are living entities. I thought about the temple where the Lord creates all the vegetation on the earth, the grasses, shrubs, trees, every herb and tree bearing seed in itself after its own kind to bring forth fruit in the season thereof, to fulfill the measure of their creation, and have joy therein. And I thought the measure of the creation of all of these fruit trees is to give me fruit. If the fruit tree that I've planted doesn't give me fruit, it's not for filling the major of its creation. It's whole purpose is to provide fruit for me. My job is to take good care of those trees and do all that I can to ensure that they fulfill the measure of their creation and joy therein. So, my thinking now is going beyond what I have in the past (just pray for the Lord to protect them and wait for the fruit to come on). I'm thinking now, what more can I do. How can I act in this area to help bring to pass the purpose of the Lord in the creation of fruit trees and to gladden the heart and please the eye of Mike and Margie Stroud. These trees are living souls. All the vegetation kingdom are living souls. They are intelligent spirits accompanied by physical bodies. That, by definition in section 88, is a living soul. In the temple ceremony it tells me they have joy in the fulfillment of their creation. So, what I did this year was, as I thought about it and pondered on it, after we pruned these trees out, one day, one afternoon, when it was quiet and no one was looking I went out and placed my hands upon these trees, and by the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood I gave each one of these trees a Priesthood blessing. I blessed them that if they had been wounded in the pruning process that they would heal quickly. I blessed them they would be healthy and strong in that they would have power to withstand the elements so that they might bring forth fruit in the season thereof, fulfill the measure of their creation. I closed those blessings In the name of Jesus Christ, and I blessed each one of our fruit trees. As the frost season has come in, and we now know that in the last two or three days, that the temperatures up here in Eager at 7000 feet have gotten

down into low 20s. We've walked out and we've seen, and so each night when the frost comes then I walk out privately and I stand in the orchard, and I petition the Lord, and ask for his blessings upon these fruit trees. Here's something else I've learned, brothers and sisters. If you want specific blessings, you cannot ask for vague promises. So when giving my blessing I named, please bless the peach trees, the apple trees, the cherry trees, the plum trees, the apricot trees and the pear trees. I have faith that we will have a bounteous harvest this year as a result of the power of the Priesthood and exercising that in behalf of all living things. It's not just human. Let me read a scripture to you from Alma 34 that got me thinking about this.

Starting in verse 17: "Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon His holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

18 Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.

19 Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him. 20 Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks. (Do you see that?) 21 Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening."

President Benson said, We need to associate ourselves With men like Daniel who prayed three times a day to God.

22 Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. 23 Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. 24 Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. 25 Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. 26 But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

27 Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.

In summary, it's time for us, brothers and sisters, for us to do something different than we've been doing up to this point. It's time for us to awake and arise. It's time for us to claim the blessings that are ours by foreordination, to be here at this time, and in this place, and under these circumstances. There is no chance in all of this. It's an exact plan foreordained for you. It's time for us now to have revealed to us, by the Holy Spirit, what our foreordained purpose is and to rise up and to claim those blessings. I testify to you of these things and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, The holy Messiah, amen.