

CHAPTER 41

3 Nephi 12–14

Introduction

In His mortal ministry Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount to encourage His disciples to strive toward perfection with full purpose of heart. Following His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Book of Mormon people in the Western Hemisphere and again delivered this sermon.

The gospel standards contained in this sermon have been reaffirmed in our time through modern revelation. President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency observed: “The Savior’s transcendent message in the Sermon on the Mount is of burning-bush importance to all of us: ‘But seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness’ [Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; see also Matthew 6:33]. This message needs to penetrate into our hearts and souls. As we accept this message, we are taking our personal stand in this life” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 68; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 67).

Through your study of these sacred principles in the Book of Mormon, you will gain insights that will help you stay faithful and remain on the road to perfection.

Commentary

3 Nephi 12–14. A Blueprint for Our Lives

- The Sermon on the Mount as contained in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon is the Lord’s blueprint for perfection. Of this sermon, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) said: “Christ came not only into the world to make an atonement for the sins of mankind but to set an example before the world of the standard of perfection of God’s law and of obedience to the Father. In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, or what might be said to be ‘an autobiography, every syllable of which he had written down in deeds,’ and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives” (*Decisions for Successful Living* [1973], 55–56).

3 Nephi 12:1–2. Give Heed to the Apostles

- The Savior began His sermon to the Nephites by calling attention to the importance of following the

twelve Nephite disciples, whom He had called and given power and authority. Modern revelation has also emphasized the safety and blessings that come by following the Lord’s chosen servants (see D&C 1:38[📖]; 21:6). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why it is of critical importance for us to follow the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles today:



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“The apostolic and prophetic foundation of the Church was to bless in all times, but *especially* in times of adversity or danger, times when we might feel like children, confused or disoriented, perhaps a little fearful, times in which the devious hand of men or the maliciousness of the devil would attempt to unsettle or mislead. Against such times as come in our modern day, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are commissioned by God and sustained by you as prophets, seers, and revelators. . . .

“. . . Such a foundation in Christ was and is always to be a protection. . . . In such days as we are now in—and will more or less always be in—the storms of life ‘shall have no power over you . . .’ [Helaman 5:12]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 7).

3 NEPHI 12:1–2

Compare these verses with Matthew 5:1–2. What does the Book of Mormon account add?

3 Nephi 12:3. “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit Who Come unto Me”

• President Harold B. Lee defined what it means to be poor in spirit:

“The Master said, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matthew 5:3.) The poor in spirit, of course, means those who are spiritually needy, who feel so impoverished spiritually that they reach out with great yearning for help. . . .

“Every one of us, if we would reach perfection, must one time ask ourselves this question, ‘What lack I yet?’ if we would commence our climb upward on the highway to perfection” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 210).

• The phrase “who come unto me” (3 Nephi 12:3) is not found in the New Testament version of the Sermon on the Mount, but it clarifies the Savior’s teaching. It is blessed to be poor in spirit *if* we come unto Christ. The Savior described in 3 Nephi 12:2 how we begin to come unto Him. The statement “who come unto me” can in principle also be applied to other Beatitudes. In order to be comforted (v. 4), inherit the earth (v. 5), be filled with the Holy Ghost (v. 6), obtain mercy (v. 7), or see God (v. 8), we must come unto Christ.

As the Savior led into His sermon about coming unto Him, He mentioned baptism 19 times between 3 Nephi 11:21 and 12:2. To completely “come unto Christ” includes accepting the ordinances of salvation.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described additional ways we can come unto Christ: “Come unto Christ through proclaiming the gospel, perfecting our lives, and redeeming our dead. As we come unto Christ, we bless our own lives, those of our families, and our Father in Heaven’s children, both living and dead” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 98; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 85).

3 Nephi 12:3–12. The Beatitudes

• The Savior’s sermon begins with declarations referred to as the Beatitudes. These start with a series of statements that declare “blessed are . . .” (see 3 Nephi 12:1–11). *Beatitude* means “‘to be fortunate,’ ‘to be happy,’ or ‘to be blessed’” (Matthew 5:3a). Webster’s dictionary defines the word as “a state of utmost bliss” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.

[2004], 107). Such words describe the results when Saints apply the teachings of this sermon.

The LDS Bible Dictionary explains that the Beatitudes “describe certain elements that go to form the refined and spiritual character, and all of which will be present whenever that character exists in its perfection. Rather than being isolated statements, the Beatitudes are interrelated and progressive in their arrangement” (“Beatitudes,” 620). The Guide to the Scriptures adds, “The Beatitudes are arranged in such a way that each statement builds upon the one that precedes it” (“Beatitudes”).



President Harold B. Lee taught that the Beatitudes embody the “constitution for a perfect life”: “Four of them have to do with our individual selves,” and four “have to do with man’s social relations with others” (*Decisions for Successful Living* [1973], 57, 60). The following chart illustrates that relationship:

| With Self | With Others |
|--|---|
| Blessed are the poor in spirit. | Blessed are the meek. |
| Blessed are all they that mourn. | Blessed are the merciful. |
| Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness. | Blessed are all the peacemakers. |
| Blessed are all the pure in heart. | Blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake. |

3 Nephi 12:4. “Blessed Are All They That Mourn”

• Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy explained how the Beatitudes could be seen as progressive in nature: “The Beatitudes may be viewed as a recipe for righteousness with incremental steps, beginning with ‘the poor in spirit who come unto [Christ]’ (3 Nephi

12:3). The next step in the celestial direction is to *mourn*, especially for our sins, for ‘godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation’ (2 Corinthians 7:10)” (*Your Agency, Handle with Care* [1996], 8).

3 Nephi 12:5. “Blessed Are the Meek”

- President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), explained that meekness is not weakness:

“If the Lord was meek and lowly and humble, then to become humble one must do what he did in boldly denouncing evil, bravely advancing righteous works, courageously meeting every problem, becoming the master of himself and the situations about him and being near oblivious to personal credit.

“Humility is not pretentious, presumptuous, nor proud. It is not weak, vacillating, nor servile. . . .

“*Humble* and *meek* properly suggest virtues, not weaknesses. They suggest a consistent mildness of temper and an absence of wrath and passion. . . . It is not servile submissiveness. It is not cowed nor frightened. . . .

“How does one get humble? To me, one must constantly be reminded of his dependence. On whom dependent? On the Lord. How remind one’s self? By real, constant, worshipful, grateful prayer” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 232–33).

3 Nephi 12:6. “Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness”

- While serving in the general Relief Society presidency, Sister Sheri L. Dew explained the connection between *desire* (hungering and thirsting) and *action*, or the ability to work to achieve the desired results: “Our ability to hear spiritually is linked to our willingness to work at it. President Hinckley has often said that the only way he knows to get anything done is to get on his knees and plead for help and then get on his feet and go to work. That combination of faith and hard work is the consummate curriculum for learning the language of the Spirit. The Savior taught, ‘Blessed are all they who do *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost’ (3 Ne. 12:6; emphasis added). Hungering and

thirsting translate to sheer spiritual labor. Worshiping in the temple, repenting to become increasingly pure, forgiving and seeking forgiveness, and earnest fasting and prayer all increase our receptivity to the Spirit. Spiritual work *works* and is the key to learning to hear the voice of the Lord” (“We Are Not Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 96).

3 Nephi 12:8. “Pure in Heart”

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to be pure in heart:

“To be without guile is to be pure in heart, an essential virtue of those who would be counted among true followers of Christ. . . .

“If we are without guile, we are honest, true, and righteous. These are all attributes of Deity and are required of the Saints. Those who are honest are fair and truthful in their speech, straightforward in their dealings, free of deceit, and above stealing, misrepresentation, or any other fraudulent action. Honesty is of God; dishonesty of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning. Righteousness means living a life that is in harmony with the laws, principles, and ordinances of the gospel” (*Finding Peace in Our Lives* [1995], 181–82).

3 Nephi 12:9. Peacemakers

- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified of the ultimate source for becoming a peacemaker: “Coming unto Jesus Christ as the ‘Prince of Peace’ [Isaiah 9:6] is the pathway to peace on earth and goodwill among men [see Luke 2:14]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 39).

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described how to become a peacemaker: “Peacemakers: In the full sense, only those who believe and spread the fulness of the gospel are peacemakers within the perfect meaning of this Beatitude. The gospel is the message of peace to all mankind. Children of God: Those who have been adopted into the family of God as a result of their devotion to the truth. By such a course they become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 8:14–18;

Gal. 3:26–29; 4:1–7.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1971–73], 1:216).

3 Nephi 12:13. “Salt of the Earth”

- The Book of Mormon account indicates that “to be the salt of the earth” is a goal members of the Church should strive for (3 Nephi 12:13). In the Mosaic sacrificial ritual, salt was a reminder that we should remember and preserve our covenants with God (see Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5). In a similar sense, Saints should help restore and preserve the covenants in these latter days. Doctrine and Covenants 101:39–40 indicates what one must do to be accounted as “the salt of the earth.”

To be considered “the salt of the earth” carries an important meaning. While serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, Elder Carlos E. Asay (1926–99) explained to priesthood holders:

“When men are called into mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men;

“*They are called to be the savor of men*’ (D&C 101:39–40; italics added).

“The word *savor* (*s-a-v-o-r*) denotes taste, pleasing flavor, interesting quality, and high repute. . . .

“A world-renowned chemist told me that salt will not lose its savor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination. Similarly, priesthood power does not dissipate with age; it, too, is lost through mixture and contamination. . . .

“Flavor and quality flee a man when he contaminates his mind with unclean thoughts, desecrates his mouth by speaking less than the truth, and misapplies his strength in performing evil acts. . . .

“I would offer these simple guidelines, especially to the young men, as the means to preserve one’s savor: If it is not *clean*, do not think it; if it is not *true*, do not speak it; if it is not *good*, do not do it (see Marcus Aurelius, ‘The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius,’ in *The Harvard Classics*, Charles W. Eliot, ed., New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909, p. 211)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1980, 60–61; or *Ensign*, May 1980, 42–43).

3 Nephi 12:14–16. “Let Your Light So Shine”

- Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles referred to personal experience in emphasizing the importance of being a light for others:



“Growing up on Long Island, in New York, I understood how vital light was to those traveling in the darkness on the open sea. How dangerous is a

fallen lighthouse! How devastating is a lighthouse whose light has failed!

“We who have the gift of the Holy Ghost must be true to its promptings so we can be a light to others.

“‘Let your light so shine before men,’ said the Lord, ‘that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven’ [Matthew 5:15–16].

“We never know who may be depending on us. And, as the Savior said, we ‘know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them’ [3 Nephi 18:32]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 82; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 71).

3 Nephi 12:17–20, 46–47. The Law of Moses Was Fulfilled by Jesus Christ

- By the time of the Savior’s mortal ministry, the law of Moses had been at the foundation of Israelite religious and social life for over a thousand years. The Nephites possessed written records of the law on the brass plates, and Nephite prophets taught and observed the law. When the Savior visited the Nephites, He taught them that the law had been completely fulfilled in Him. However, they were not to think of the law of Moses as “destroyed” or having “passed away” (3 Nephi 12:17–18). How is it that the Savior “fulfilled” but did not “destroy” the law of Moses? The law of Moses included both *moral* and *ritual* aspects.

The *moral* aspects included such commandments as “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Jesus Christ taught the Nephites that not only were they to avoid murder and adultery, but also anger and lust—conditions of the heart that lead to

murder and adultery (see 3 Nephi 12:21–30). Thus the gospel of Jesus Christ fulfilled the law in the sense that it expanded the moral aspects of the law of Moses by being a higher law; it included the moral imperatives of the law of Moses and placed them in the context of broader gospel principles that require a change of heart.

The *ritual* aspects of the law of Moses included commandments about animal sacrifice and burnt offerings—what Abinadi called “performances” and “ordinances” (Mosiah 13:30). The Nephite prophets understood that these parts of the law of Moses were meant to help people look forward to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 25:24; Jacob 4:5; Mosiah 16:14–15). Therefore, when the Savior’s mortal mission was completed, these forward-looking ordinances could no longer look ahead to a future event—the event had happened, and the ordinances were fulfilled in the sense that it concluded. Thus the Savior taught the Nephites that animal sacrifices and burnt offerings were to be “done away,” and that His followers were to offer instead the “sacrifice” of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:19–20). In place of ordinances that looked forward to the Atonement, the Savior instituted the sacrament, an ordinance of remembrance, to look back to the Savior’s atoning sacrifice (see 3 Nephi 18:1–11).

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated: “Jesus came to restore that gospel fulness which men had enjoyed before the day of Moses, before the time of the lesser order. Obviously he did not come to destroy what he himself had revealed to Moses anymore than a college professor destroys arithmetic by revealing the principles of integral calculus to his students. Jesus came to build on the foundation Moses laid. By restoring the fulness of the gospel he fulfilled the need for adherence to the terms and conditions of the preparatory gospel. No one any longer needed to walk by the light of the moon, for the sun had risen in all its splendor” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:219–20; see also Stephen E. Robinson, “The Law after Christ,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1983, 68–73).

3 Nephi 12:19. “A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit”

- Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified of the value of having a broken heart and a contrite spirit: “I witness that ‘redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; . . . unto all those who have *a broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered’ [2 Nephi 2:6–7; italics added]. This absolute requisite of ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit’ prescribes the need to be submissive, compliant, humble (that is, teachable), and willingly obedient” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 77; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 53).

3 Nephi 12:22. “Whosoever Is Angry with His Brother”

- The New Testament account of the Savior’s teachings is, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22). The Savior’s teachings on this subject in the Book of Mormon are the same except that the phrase “without a cause” is deleted. This indicates that it is best to avoid anger altogether. It should be noted that the earliest known manuscript for Matthew 5:22 does not contain the phrase “without a cause” (see Daniel K. Judd and Allen W. Stoddard, “Adding and Taking Away ‘Without a Cause’ in Matthew 5:22,” in *How the New Testament Came to Be*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd Jr. [Sidney B. Sperry symposium, 2006], 161).

3 Nephi 12:27–29. Avoid Lust

- Elder Richard G. Scott contrasted both the results and motivation for love versus those of lust: “Love, as defined by the Lord, elevates, protects, respects, and enriches another. It motivates one to make sacrifices for another. Satan promotes counterfeit love, which is lust. It is driven by a hunger to appease personal appetite. One who practices this deception cares little for the pain and destruction caused another. While often camouflaged by flattering words, its motivation is self-gratification” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 43–44; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 35).

3 Nephi 12:30. “Take Up Your Cross”

• Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the phrase “take up your cross”:

“The *daily* taking up of the cross means *daily* denying ourselves the appetites of the flesh.

“By emulating the Master, who endured temptations but ‘gave no heed unto them,’ we, too, can live in a world filled with temptations ‘such as [are] common to man’ (1 Corinthians 10:13). Of course Jesus noticed the tremendous temptations that came to Him, but He did not process and reprocess them. Instead, He rejected them promptly. If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us! Turning these unwanted lodgers away at the doorstep of the mind is one way of giving ‘no heed.’ Besides, these would-be lodgers are actually barbarians who, if admitted, can be evicted only with great trauma” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 88; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 71).

3 Nephi 12:31–32. “Whoso Shall Marry Her Who Is Divorced Committeth Adultery”

• Elder Bruce R. McConkie described who the Savior here was speaking to and how it applies to us today:

“This strict law governing divorce was not given to the Pharisees, nor to the world in general, but to the disciples only, ‘in the house,’ at a later time as Mark explains. Further, Jesus expressly limited its application. All men could not live such a high standard; it applied only to those ‘to whom it is given.’

“... It may have been in force at various times and among various people, but the Church is not bound by it today. At this time divorces are permitted in the Church for a number of reasons other than sex immorality, and divorced persons are permitted to marry again and enjoy all of the blessings of the gospel” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:548–49).

• It would appear that one of the purposes of the Savior’s words was not to condemn those who marry divorced people, but to teach the people not to turn to divorce as the solution to all the minor irritations that come up in marriage. In speaking about divorce, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) has taught:

“Of course, all in marriage is not bliss. Years ago I clipped these words from a column written by Jenkins Lloyd Jones:

“There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and ravishing wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear the divorce courts are jammed. . . .

“‘Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed’ (‘Big Rock Candy Mountains,’ *Deseret News*, 12 June 1973, p. A4). . . .

“. . . Among the greatest of tragedies, and I think the most common, is divorce. It has become as a great scourge. The most recent issue of the *World Almanac* says that in the United States during the twelve months ending with March 1990, an estimated 2,423,000 couples married. During this same period, an estimated 1,177,000 couples divorced. (See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1991* [New York: World Almanac, 1990], p. 834.)

“This means that in the United States almost one divorce occurred for every two marriages. . . .

“Selfishness so often is the basis of . . . problems. . . .

“Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking! . . .

“. . . The remedy for most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his



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shoulders and meet his obligations. It is found in the Golden Rule. . . .

“There must be a willingness to overlook small faults, to forgive, and then to forget.

“There must be a holding of one’s tongue. Temper is a vicious and corrosive thing that destroys affection and casts out love.

“There must be self-discipline that constrains against abuse. . . .

“There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 94–98; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 72–74).

3 Nephi 12:48. “I Would That Ye Should Be Perfect”

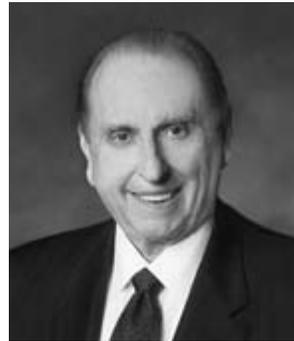
- It is not possible to be perfect in this life. However, President James E. Faust explained that we must seek for perfection now so as to be able to attain it in the next life: “Perfection is an eternal goal. While we cannot be perfect in mortality, striving for it is a commandment which ultimately, through the Atonement, we can keep” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 22; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 19).

- President Spencer W. Kimball also explained the need to strive for perfection: “‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ (Matthew 5:48.) Now, that is an attainable goal. We will not be exalted, we shall not reach our destination, unless we are perfect, and now is the best time in the world to start toward perfection. I have little patience with persons who say, ‘Oh, nobody is perfect,’ the implication being; ‘so why try?’ Of course no one is wholly perfect, but we find some who are a long way up the ladder” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 165).

3 Nephi 13:1–8, 16–18. Do Not Your Righteous Acts Openly

- These verses in 3 Nephi teach about avoiding the giving of money to the poor openly or praying and fasting openly to be seen of others. The Lord

encourages us to practice righteousness in private. President Thomas S. Monson explained the value of anonymous service:



“I approached the reception desk of a large hospital to learn the room number of a patient I had come to visit. This hospital, like almost every other in the land, was undergoing a massive expansion. Behind the desk where the receptionist sat was a

magnificent plaque which bore an inscription of thanks to donors who had made possible the expansion. The name of each donor who had contributed \$100,000 appeared in a flowing script, etched on an individual brass placard suspended from the main plaque by a glittering chain.

“The names of the benefactors were well known. Captains of commerce, giants of industry, professors of learning—all were there. I felt gratitude for their charitable benevolence. Then my eyes rested on a brass placard which was different—it contained no name. One word, and one word only, was inscribed: ‘Anonymous.’ I smiled and wondered who the unnamed contributor could have been. Surely he or she experienced a quiet joy unknown to any other. . . .

“A year ago last winter [1981], a modern jetliner faltered after takeoff and plunged into the icy Potomac River. Acts of bravery and feats of heroism were in evidence that day, the most dramatic of which was one witnessed by the pilot of a rescue helicopter. The rescue rope was lowered to a struggling survivor. Rather than grasping the lifeline to safety, the man tied the line to another, who was then lifted to safety. The rope was lowered again, and yet another was saved. Five were rescued from the icy waters. Among them was not found the anonymous hero. Unknown by name, ‘he left the vivid air signed with his honor’ (Stephen Spender, ‘I think continually of those—’ in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers], p. 291.) . . .

“May this truth [service] guide our lives. May we look upward as we press forward in the service of our God and our fellowmen. And may we incline an ear toward Galilee, that we might hear perhaps an echo of the Savior’s teachings: ‘Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them’ (Matthew 6:1). ‘Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth’ (Matthew 6:3). And of our good deeds: ‘See thou tell no man’ (Matthew 8:4). Our hearts will then be lighter, our lives brighter, and our souls richer.

“Loving service anonymously given may be unknown to man—but the gift and the giver are known to God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 73–74, 76; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 55–57).

3 Nephi 13:7. “Use Not Vain Repetitions”

- *Vain* means “empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance” (*Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828* [1967]). Our prayers are vain when we offer them out of habit, with little thought or feeling.

“The prophet Mormon warned that if anyone ‘shall pray and not with real intent of heart . . . it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such’ (Moroni 7:9). To make your prayers meaningful, you must pray with sincerity and ‘with all the energy of heart’ (Moroni 7:48). . . . Give serious thought to your attitude and to the words you use” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 119).

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin cautioned regarding repetition in prayer: “Our prayers become hollow when we say similar words in similar ways over and over so often that the words become more of a recitation than a communication. This is what the Savior described as ‘vain repetitions’ (see Matt. 6:7)” (“Improving Our Prayers,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 24; see also Alma 34:27–28).

3 NEPHI 13:9–13

What principles for effective prayer does the Savior teach in these verses?

3 Nephi 13:9–13. The Lord’s Prayer

- We can use the principles in the Lord’s Prayer as a model for our service in the kingdom. President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught:

“The prayer begins with reverence for our Heavenly Father. Then the Lord speaks of the kingdom and its coming. The servant with a testimony that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ feels joy in its progress and a desire to give his or her all to build it up.



“The Savior Himself exemplified the standard set by these next words of the prayer: ‘Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth’ (Luke 11:2). That was His prayer in the extremity of offering the Atonement for all

mankind and all the world (see Matthew 26:42). The faithful servant prays that even the apparently smallest task will be done as God would have it done. It makes all the difference to work and to pray for His success more than for our own.

“Then the Savior set for us this standard of personal purity: ‘And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil’ (Luke 11:4). The strengthening we are to give those we watch over comes from the Savior. We and they must forgive to be forgiven by Him (see Matthew 6:14). We and they can hope to remain clean only with His protection and with the change in our hearts that His Atonement makes possible. We need that change to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“You may have confidence in the Lord’s service. The Savior will help you do what He has called you to do, be it for a time as a worker in the Church or forever as a parent. You may pray for help enough to do the work and know that it will come” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 83; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 67–68).

3 Nephi 13:19–24. “Lay Not Up for Yourselves Treasures on Earth”

- President Ezra Taft Benson referred to the temporary nature of earthly treasures:

“Our affections are often too highly placed upon the paltry perishable objects. Material treasures of earth are merely to provide us, as it were, room and board while we are here at school. It is for us to place gold, silver, houses, stocks, lands, cattle, and other earthly possessions in their proper place.

“Yes, this is but a place of temporary duration. We are here to learn the first lesson toward exaltation—obedience to the Lord’s gospel plan” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, 17; or *Ensign*, June 1971, 33).

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave insight regarding the treasures we may lay up for ourselves: “The Savior taught that we should not lay up treasures on earth but should lay up treasures in heaven (see Matthew 6:19–21). In light of the ultimate purpose of the great plan of happiness, I believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).

3 Nephi 13:34. “No Thought for the Morrow”

- The Book of Mormon clarifies the meaning of Matthew 6:25–32 by indicating that Jesus was speaking to the twelve Nephite disciples for this portion of the sermon (see 3 Nephi 13:25–34). After Jesus delivered this charge to them, he then turned and began to speak to the multitude again (see 3 Nephi 14:1). It is helpful to note that Jesus repeatedly turned back and forth between these two audiences throughout His sermon.

3 Nephi 14:1–2. Judging

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks clarified the meaning of verses 1–2 in 3 Nephi 14 by explaining the difference between righteous and unrighteous judgments. Then he outlined those righteous principles:

“I have been puzzled that some scriptures command us not to judge and others instruct us that we should judge and even tell us how to do it. But as I have studied these passages I have become convinced that these seemingly contradictory directions are

consistent when we view them with the perspective of eternity. The key is to understand that there are two kinds of judging: final judgments, which we are forbidden to make, and intermediate judgments, which we are directed to make, but upon righteous principles. . . .

“*First*, a righteous judgment must, by definition, be intermediate. . . .

“*Second*, a righteous judgment will be guided by the Spirit of the Lord, not by anger, revenge, jealousy, or self-interest. . . .

“*Third*, to be righteous, an intermediate judgment must be within our stewardship. . . .

“*Fourth*, we should, if possible, refrain from judging until we have adequate knowledge of the facts” (“‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 7, 9–10).

3 Nephi 14:7–8. Asking through Prayer

- President James E. Faust bore testimony of the gift and privilege we each have of access to our Heavenly Father through prayer: “Access to our Creator through our Savior is surely one of the great privileges and blessings of our lives. . . . No earthly authority can separate us from direct access to our Creator. There can never be a mechanical or electronic failure when we pray. There is no limit on the number of times or how long we can pray each day. There is no quota of how many needs we wish to pray for in each prayer. We do not need to go through secretaries or make an appointment to reach the throne of grace. He is reachable at any time and any place” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 67; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 59).

3 Nephi 14:12. The Golden Rule

- Elder Russell M. Nelson quoted the Golden Rule and gave these comments:

“[Jesus] taught the Golden Rule, saying, ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them’ [Matthew 7:12]. This principle is found in nearly every major religion. Others such as Confucius and Aristotle have also taught it. After all, the gospel did not begin with the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem. It is everlasting. It was proclaimed in the beginning to Adam and Eve. Portions of the gospel

have been preserved in many cultures. Even heathen mythologies have been enriched by fragments of truth from earlier dispensations.

“Wherever it is found and however it is expressed, the Golden Rule encompasses the moral code of the kingdom of God. It forbids interference by one with the rights of another. It is equally binding upon nations, associations, and individuals. With compassion and forbearance, it replaces the retaliatory reactions of ‘an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’ [Matthew 5:38]. If we were to stay on that old and unproductive path, we would be but blind and toothless” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 41–42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 39).

3 NEPHI 14:15–20

What does the symbolism in these verses teach us about those who claim to be prophets?

3 Nephi 14:15. “Beware of False Prophets”

- Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned against those who teach or publish false doctrine: “Let us beware of false prophets and false teachers, both men and women, who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church

and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God’s true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce. . . . They ‘set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion’ (2 Nephi 26:29)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 78; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63).

Points to Ponder

- What difference does it make to do a good deed willingly versus doing the same deed reluctantly?
- Analyze your motives to determine whether or not you are seeking “first the kingdom of God” (3 Nephi 13:33).

Suggested Assignments

- Paraphrase as many of the Beatitudes as you can remember. Then check 3 Nephi 12:3–12 to see how you did.
- What do you need to do to more fully deny yourself of unrighteous thoughts and desires? Write out a plan on how to accomplish it.