

Come Follow Me Insights 25 D&C Sec. 64 - 66

I'm Taylor, and I'm Tyler. This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today, Doctrine and Covenants sections 64 through 66.

So, as we begin this particular section 64, keep in mind that fairly recently Joseph Smith and that whole group of missionaries has returned to Kirtland from Missouri, and there seems to be a lot weighing on Joseph's mind. We don't have a lot of historical context for 64 for what was going on and why it was given; it's almost as if Joseph was having a little moment of perhaps feeling a little bit overwhelmed or a little bit frustrated with the way things have turned out and that they're not flowing a little more smoothly, and so you pick up this section with this perspective of has there ever been a time in your life where you've looked around at all of the things that you're working on and all the things that you're doing in life and have you ever felt discouraged because it seems like nothing is going extremely well, nothing is just flowing well, it feels like you're doing a whole bunch of things part way but nothing is getting really well done? Perhaps that might be some of this human discouragement that is going on with some of these early Church leaders feeling like, ah, what do we do? How do we – how do we get things going more smoothly because there's – there are a lot of problems in Kirtland and in Missouri at this time.

So look at verse 1: "Behold, thus saith the Lord your God unto you, O ye elders of my church, hearken ye and hear, and receive my will concerning you." I love this concept that when you've got a million things to be concerned about or to be working on, it's nice when you can go to the Lord and get the short list from him of that which he wants you to focus on, that which needs your attention right here, right now, rather than being overwhelmed with the enormity of all the different responsibilities that maybe are weighing down on you or making you feel guilty because you're not doing them perfectly.

Look at verse 2: "For verily I say unto you, I will that ye should overcome the world; wherefore I will have compassion upon you." I love this idea of God saying, don't have your focus be on that which is earthly or worldly, that which is drawing your attention here. I'm going to have compassion on you. I'm going to give you an opportunity to move forward and help you organize things.

Look at verse 3: "There are those among you who have sinned; but verily I say, for this once, for mine own glory, and for the salvation of souls, I have forgiven you your sins." Notice the source of forgiveness. It comes from God. "I have forgiven you your sins", okay (Doctrine and Covenants 64:3)? "I will be merciful unto you, for I have given unto you the kingdom" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:4). Now that theme is going to come up again when we get to section 65, so hold that thought. You could circle the word "the kingdom". I have given unto you this kingdom of God is now on the earth. It's been given.

Verse 5: "And the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom shall not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., through the means I have appointed, while he liveth, inasmuch as he obeyeth mine

ordinances." There are people in Kirtland, right here in early September of 1831, who are very, very frustrated with Joseph; they're calling him a fallen prophet, they're saying he's taking too much power to himself. Ezra Booth is probably leading that charge at this particular juncture, but you'll notice that the Lord makes it very clear that it's him who gave those keys to Joseph, and as long as Joseph obeyeth his ordinances, God is going to keep those keys with Joseph. God called him, and if he's going to be released, it's going to be God that releases him, not a public opinion vote, not a in-our-world-today, not a social media campaign that's going to say, yeah, we think we're smarter now than the prophet, so to speak. It doesn't work that way in the history of time nor in modern times.

And God is pleased with his servant Joseph. What's interesting, there are times even here God says, Joseph, you said, and we often – the problem is, some people thought, well, if Joseph Smith made a mistake, that must mean he's a fallen prophet, and therefore he's got to be removed, and God's, like, hey, I understand that I gave a fallen human keys of responsibility and guess what? I expect that there will be times when things get messed, and that's what the whole plan of salvation is about is forgiveness.

Again, for some context, listen to the people who are causing problems in the Church with the apostasy. Norman Brown leaves the Church after his horse had died on the way down to Missouri, to Zion and back. He's, like, I'm just done. My horse is gone, I'm just done with the kingdom of God. Joseph Wakefield, he leaves the Church after he sees Joseph Smith playing with some kids, and his feeling is like a man of God, a prophet of God who - that's just not prophetic activity.

I tell you what, seeing Joseph come down from upstairs doing revelatory work and then come down and romp around the play – or the front room with the children causes him to say he can't be a prophet, and for me, that would just touch my heart. Because what would Jesus probably would say? “Suffer the little children to come unto me” (Mark 10:14).

You know that we got Simonds Ryder some sections ago, he leaves the Church because his name gets misspelled. In fact, as I was making notes today, I misspelled his name and I forgot there's a “d” right there. Ezra Booth again is one of the most vociferous and vocal opponents, and then when you have all the – well all of the problems that have happened at the Morley farm where they're trying to live the communal order and also with Lemman Copley who had reneged on his willingness to offer his farm for people to live together. There's just a lot going on and here we are, we're less than a year and a half into the Church and there's just all this contention and misunderstanding, and I love what God is doing here. He's saying, hey, look. I'm in charge. I understand that my children will sometimes make mistakes. Sometimes we'll see that they'll trespass against one another, and this never, ever goes away. It's always, always available. We sometimes think it isn't and we turn our back and act like, uh, it can't be forgiven because we have failed to turn to the source of forgiveness. So this is actually one of my favorite sections. I probably say that about a lot of the Doctrine and Covenants the way the scriptures are, is so incessant, that it is insistent that we can be forgiven and that we should forgive one another.

Isn't it interesting as you go through that list, Taylor, to consider – consider our own lives today as we – as we live in the 21st century, how often do you sometimes pay too much attention to these negative, horizontal voices that tell you, you messed up, you're not good enough, you'll never be good enough, or the adversary's voice in our mind that discourages us and makes us feel like I'll never – I'll never measure up, I'll never be good enough. I don't know that just because Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet or because we have modern prophets in our current day, I don't know that they get a free pass on – on having to figure out how to overcome and filter out those negative voices that come to them either from the horizontal sources or from the devil, but isn't it amazing that we have this source that we can look to, to say, you know I'm not perfect. You know my limitations when you called me to this, and I just want to do thy work; I want to build up thy kingdom, but no, I'm not perfect. Help me to know what to do in order to – to not be this pessimist and focus on all these really negative things, but acknowledge the fact that we're not perfect but move forward anyway. That's a struggle for everybody.

And pointing out again the humanness of Joseph Smith, we do not have a doctrine of prophetic infallibility in the Church, meaning, we do not have a doctrine where we believe that our prophets are perfect, and yet too many of us think they are perfect, and so when we see them possibly making a mistake or actually just being human, or perhaps our fellow saints, we're, like, wait a second, if that saint, if that prophet made a mistake, the Church must not be true. I remember as a missionary out teaching and struggling with this issue where an investigator said, I really cannot listen to your message anymore because I know some of the members and here's some things I saw them do that were wrong.

That argument, I find it so ironic, the example I think we used before in here is, Taylor, would you ever go into a second-grade classroom while they're working on their math worksheets and walk up and down the rows and look at these math worksheets for these second graders and notice all the mistakes they're making and then walk out of the room and report to me, Tyler, math is bad. Math is evil. Math is broken. And I'd say, what are you talking about? And you'd say, let me show you all the mistakes that were made in there that I witnessed. I saw it. They were terrible. Brothers and sisters, math isn't broken because second graders have a hard time applying mathematical principles perfectly with every single problem they run into.

The gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ, they're not broken or they're not bad because members of the Church aren't perfect at applying those principles that are taught, that are given in every situation and in every problem we're working on at any given time, regardless of our calling. The person who bases their testimony on the truthfulness of the gospel based on how much they agree with their bishop or their stake president or their Relief Society president or their ministering sister or all the way up the line to the prophet himself, brothers and sisters, I don't think the scriptures tell us to have faith in people; they tell us to have faith in God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. That's the list, and then from there they give us the kingdom and now we have to wrestle with mortal imperfection and fallibility and not base our testimony on – on how well

somebody does according to our – “to the dictates of our conscience” in – in governing the affairs of the kingdom (Articles of Faith 1:11).

Yeah, I just love this principle because there's usually messiness in life. We all – we bump into each other and there's friction, and yet actually, part of the plan so that we can learn and grow, and this makes it possible that everything that happens here that's less than ideal can actually all be overcome. I love the invitation that's so persistent here, God saying, I will forgive and I invite all of you to forgive. It's just such a beautiful message.

So let's carry it through. Look at verse 6: "There are those who have sought occasion against him without cause." So God's making this very clear. There are sometimes people who have tried to slander Joseph Smith and drag him down without cause. This is happening in 1831. Well, guess what? It's also happening in the 21st century where people are slandering him and seeking occasion against Joseph and against other Church leaders without cause. It's a – it's an amazing thing when I hear people say certain things about Joseph in a slanderous way, when I feel so spiritually immature in comparison to Joseph that I could never, ever point a finger of accusation at him without first taking a serious look in the mirror at which point there's no – I don't want to start slandering people in the historical past when they're not here to defend themselves, when they're not here to give me context, when I've got a limited view of what they said and did and I'm judging them or condemning them based on that view.

And adding to that also, they've grown and developed and sure, maybe they made a mistake, but for us to hold them hostage to that past mistake. It's like we were sent down here to learn in part from our mistakes, and if we're not allowing people to move on from their mistakes, we're actually denying the Atonement of Jesus Christ and denying the power of God, and I don't want to. The word adversary, actually the word Satan, means to be an adversary; that's what the Hebrew word means. I don't want to be a Satan, an adversary who stands in the way of peoples' progress by saying you made that mistake and you're forever bound to it. Now as a human, I sometimes do that, and so I have fallen victim to this where I am sometimes on the outside pointing at people, and I find myself deeply appreciative when I've become aware of my own failings of how I'm bothering other people that God can forgive me and I can get forgiveness from some other people and I should forgive myself.

Good. Now look at verse 7: "Nevertheless, he has sinned; but verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness, who have not sinned unto death." So he gives this very clear statement that this is what he does. He forgives sins. There are many people who feel like repentance is this – this deep, heavy, sorrowful, painful thing. When you read the scriptures, you get the sense from a heavenly perspective that this is one of the greatest attributes of God, is his mercy and his willingness and ability to be able to forgive us and let the past die, so to speak. Let it fade into the past and let us move forward and grow, as Taylor was talking about, this idea of learning from those mistakes and moving on and not being held hostage to that past experience.

Look at verse 8. He gives you a little insight into those original twelve apostles back in the New Testament. "My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:8). You'll remember that one occasion where Peter comes in and says Lord, how oft do I have to forgive my brother, 'til seven times?' And the Lord looked at him and said, no, Peter, you need to forgive your brother "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

Which, by the way, seven is perfection and ten is like completion, and it's like it's a perfection of perfection, a perfection of completion, so he's basically saying thoroughly and totally – some of us like to multiply, like, oh, I can do the math, and I grab my calculator, okay, 490 times. Yeah, whatever that number is, and, like, I'm going to do two parts, okay that person's got to 489, 490, I'm done. And actually, it's not about the number, it's about the fullness and the totality of forgiveness as God does for us.

Love it! Now the famous verse 9. This verse is astounding in its – its potential to change our life: "Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:9). Let's pause there for a minute. Let's make something – a couple of things very clear here. Jesus didn't say, you have to forgive right here, right now everybody. He didn't put a time stamp on this. He gave a commandment that we ought to forgive one another of any trespass, but the implication here is that for some of you, that means you've been hurt very deeply, and it's okay if you work with the Lord through the process of time, through a forgiveness process, where your heart can change, and for some of you, it will happen in an instant. For some of you it will take a day. Some of you will take a week. Some of you might take a year or ten. The point is, you're working towards this goal. What is the goal? Brothers and sisters, the end goal isn't forgiveness, the end goal is to become more like Christ, more like God, who is a very forgiving and merciful being, especially when you don't deserve it.

That's the whole point of that parable that Jesus is going to tell to Peter right after he asked that question, the parable of the ten thousand talents which, by the way, this won't get you into heaven, but the word "ten thousand" in the Greek is "myrias" which the King James translators put into the English ten thousand. The reality is, is the way Jesus told the parable was this man owed a myriad of talents, which to the Greek perspective is the biggest number you can imagine. Well, I guess in 1611 when they were translating the Bible, ten thousand was the biggest number they could imagine because that's what they keep putting in for every time "myrias" appears in the Greek text. His point being, brothers and sisters, the debt that we have incurred from God is equivalent to a myrias, a myriad – a myriad of talents which is incalculably huge, this debt, and God is willing to forgive us all that debt.

And now he's saying, you need to forgive your brother of that hundred pence debt that he has incurred from you lest you hold the greater sin. Stop and think about that for a minute. A greater sin. How could it be a greater sin if I say, no, I'm not going to forgive you? What you did to me

was too bad, because now I'm not just denying a forgiveness or a letting go of some past mistake. What I'm actually doing is I'm denying God's mercy and power and goodness, not just in that person's life but in my life.

Stop and think about it, brothers and sisters, when you – when you are carrying offense deep in your soul or in your heart, how is that hurting the person who offended you? It's not. It's hurting me. If Taylor does something to me and I hold onto it in an angry, unforgiving way, it's causing – it becomes a canker or a cancer, if you will, in my soul, not in his. The minute I can drop that burden at the feet of the Savior and say I don't want to carry this anymore, then he gets to own it.

Look what he says, verse 10: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive [most people]." Right? Oh, wait. I think I read that wrong. "...it is required to forgive all men" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:10). That's a hundred percent. Brothers and sisters, the greater sin would be me saying, no, your badness is bigger than Christ's goodness. Your offense, your sin is stronger than Christ's infinite atonement. That's what I'm saying, in essence, when I refuse to forgive.

Now, I have to be really careful and sensitive here because there – there have been terrible abuses and terrible sins committed against many of you who might be watching this, and it hurts; it's painful. That's the point is to allow Jesus's infinite Atonement to start that healing process with you who have been on the receiving end of those sins and that have been hurt by them. You need the infinite Atonement and the mercy and the merits and the grace of the Redeemer just as much as anybody who has sinned needs the merits and the mercy and the grace and that purifying, cleansing power of his Atonement. You need that comforting and that reassuring love to take the place of that angry and bitter feeling that has settled into your soul.

Let's talk about this a bit further because all of us have been hurt in our lives. The first principle I'd like to talk about, actually, it's not really a principle, you may have heard this phrase in your life, forgive and forget. This actually is not a scriptural or doctrinal phrase. Now I'm not suggesting that we don't forget what's happened, but I am suggesting that if you have been hurt by somebody or something, it may be difficult to forget in moments of you not trying, those painful memories might return, and we don't need to burden ourselves to believe that we are bad if these thoughts and the reminder of pain comes back in our lives. I mean, our bodies are designed to remember pain because it keeps us safe from experiencing those things again.

So if you feel burdened by this idea, I encourage you to think about what God has suggested and what God teaches, that his love is sufficient for all and at any moment where you are remembering pain, you can reach out to God, and again, this is not a doctrinal principle, this is not in scriptures.

Let me actually add to this that forgiveness is an act of faith. Let me say that again. Forgiveness is an act of faith. Isn't that interesting? When I verbalize and say act of faith, you may not know whether I'm saying active faith or act of faith. And it turns out forgiveness is both. Every time you have an opportunity to forgive somebody, it is an act of faith, and in some cases the pain and hurt

that you've experienced is so deep and so painful that we have to have many moments of acts of faith which become active, that every time we act on faith to forgive somebody, we're doing an act of faith.

Another principle here: In the gospel there are two key principles. There is repentance, and as we've mentioned, forgiveness. Repentance allows you to heal from things that you've done wrong, hurts that you've caused yourself or possibly to others. Repentance allows you to access the Atonement of Jesus Christ for pain that you have caused. Forgiveness allows you to access the Atonement of Jesus Christ for pain other people have caused you. Isn't that beautiful? So pain happens. Sometimes we pass out pain to others, and sometimes we receive pain. Repentance allows us to access the Atonement of God so that we can overcome the pain we have caused others. Forgiveness allows us to overcome the pain others have caused us, and we receive that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

So as we think about this power of forgiveness, we can think about its connection to repentance. Then finally I want to just talk about these two other words that we have seen in these passages. Actually let's talk again about forgiveness. Forgiveness literally means to completely give away. What pain are you willing to give away? Bad memories, hurt, anger, frustration, bad thoughts? God also completely gives away everything bad that we've done when he forgives us.

Then finally let's talk about this word "trespass". So, this verse here that talks about how we should be forgiving the trespasses of others, the word trespass literally means to step over a border, and sometimes we inadvertently step over boundaries or borders when we didn't know that there was a boundary or border there, and it may offend somebody, it may hurt somebody, even if it was unintentional, and sometimes people do that to us. We have personal borders we've set up in our lives and we don't always advertise them to everybody, and if somebody crosses over one of our boundaries or borders, we might feel offended or hurt or bothered, and this is our opportunity to try to be more like God by forgiving people. Sometimes, though, we do trespass, we go over boundaries or borders intentionally and we may intentionally hurt people, and we intentionally do things that actually cause them pain and trauma, and people sometimes do that to us. It is a natural consequence of living in this fallen world so that we can actually learn to how to be more like God. It gives us the opportunity to thoroughly give away the anger, the hurt, the frustration, the pain.

So as you think about these verses, you might consider, are there trespasses that I've committed against others where I need to seek forgiveness, or have people trespassed against me unwittingly or wittingly and I need to actively work to let go of that, and every time that pain is reminded of – every time I'm reminded of that pain, do I need to work to let go of that and turn it over to God and to let him heal the pain that's happened?

So to summarize, forgiveness is one of those means that God has given us to not just connect more completely with heaven, but to actually change and to become more like that God who gave us life and the Savior who is nurturing our new life, our new birth and is so willing to forgive us, and I want to be more like him. Consequently, next time somebody offends you, look at that as an

opportunity or perhaps an invitation, to now practice, act in faith, this active faith to become more like Jesus.

And, by the way, a quick, clarifying note. This is - any discussion we have on the principle of forgiveness is not a – an invitation for you to set yourself up for failure or to encourage or allow any kind of abuse or horrible situations to continue because you somehow think that that's now a Christlike way to live, is to just let people do whatever they want, to hurt you or others around you. That is not the case. So again, the command is to forgive. The command is not to facilitate hurt or abuse, so that's to be applied in your own individual situations that you may find yourself. And I would also say before we move on, isn't it ironic that for most of us – I guess I should just speak for me instead of including you in this as well – the hardest person on the planet to apply this principal to happens to be that person staring at you in the mirror, and I think the same rule applies in this commandment of forgiveness to the person in the mirror as it does to everybody around you, that we've got to be willing – it's an act of faith to look in the mirror and say, you knew better, but you did it anyway, but I'll forgive you, which then allows the Lord to forgive us if we – if we forsake and we move forward and we keep striving, we keep trying to become more like him. It's very powerful.

Let's jump over to a new concept. Verse 23: "Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man...". You'll notice how God uses the word today in the Doctrine and Covenants. Here is where he gives you the definition. "Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man..." (Doctrine and Covenants 64:23). He's saying, it's always going to be called today until you get the Second Coming. So that's why section 64 is going to tell you that the Second Coming is tomorrow, because until that happens, it's today.

Brothers and sisters, in looking at – in looking at time as it unfolds, you have the past, you have the present, and you have the future. I love the fact that in the gospel of Jesus Christ we're invited to look to the past, learn from the past, prepare for the future, but act in the present. Live, act in faith, make your decisions, become who you need to become today, because that's the present, that's the gift. I like in English how you're living in the present because today is a gift. It's the musical, "The Music Man," that President Thomas S. Monson quoted in General Conference years ago, where the main character in that musical said something along the lines of, when you stack up enough tomorrows and you focus so much on tomorrow, then the day will come that you will look back and realize you have a whole bunch of empty yesterdays, because you're overlooking what you can do right here, right now, because you're just living for all of these dreams and hopes and aspirations for the future, rather than looking around what you have today.

So in that context, look at verse 23: "Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming." I love this. We often refer to this verse right here, 23, as the fire insurance policy that the Lord gives us, that at his Second Coming those who are burned will be those who haven't tithed. Now some of you would wonder, why would God attach tithing to

that particular promise? It's also important to note here that in section 64's historical context and setting, they weren't living the same law of tithing as we are today where you pay one tenth of your increase. That law isn't going to come until a few years later. Right now this tithing law would be focused on consecration, but they're calling it tithing.

If you look in the book of Malachi which is the very, very last book of the Christian Old Testament, if you look at chapter 3, that's this chapter where he talks about tithing, will a man rob God? - that famous passage, you'll notice that the verse right before the famous tithing verses come, 8, 9 and 10, the verse right before, Malachi 3 verse 7 – look at this: "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, wherein shall we return?" And then he talks about tithing. Are you noticing that God is inviting his people? I will be your God, you will be my people. But people, you live in a world that really, really values money and what money can do for you and what money does to you, and if you're not careful, money will become your God in one way or another, and I want to be your God, so return to me. How do you return to me? In the payment of tithing. That's interesting. And if you pay your tithing, you sacrifice this, in the day of my coming you won't be burned. Well, why won't you be burned? Because the world hasn't become your God; you're not worshipping the idols of the world, God is your God, and one of the ways that he helps us establish that, not just in our mind and in our heart but in our whole life, our whole approach, is in us being willing to sacrifice a little teeny portion of our income to him to say, I love thee more than I love this money.

Now look down at verse 24: "For after today cometh the burning – this is speaking after the manner of the Lord – for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon." Hmm, do you think there might be some implications to people in Kirtland in 1831 who have said, no, actually, I'm not going to consecrate what I promised to consecrate – my property; I love my property and my house and my money more than I love this commitment that I've made to God, and they've reneged on that covenantal promise that they've made, and he says, verse 25: "Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today." You'll sacrifice, you'll work while it is today. Look around you. There are lots of things you can do today.

Now, shift clear down to verse 33: "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:34). Brothers and sisters, whether it's forgiveness, whether it's tithing, whether it's being anxiously engaged in doing the best you can and striving to keep the covenants that you have made and keep the commandments of God, these are all invitations for us to become more fully consecrated to God, to become more like Jesus himself, who was the ultimate example of what it means to be consecrated to God the Father in his life.

Let me just share one little mission story with you to teach this principle. Elder Bauer and I who were serving in Toledo, Paraná, down in Brazil, a southern state down in Brazil, let me tell you about João and his family that lived in that ward in Toledo. They lived in a fairly modest house. Most – most people in North America would not have appreciated living in this kind of a house. He had many children - four or five children – and they weren't exactly rich. And João had a brother who wasn't a member of the Church and he invited Elder Bauer and me over to his house to teach this brother of his. They both worked at the same place, they worked for the city there in their water treatment plant, I believe. We arrived to teach that discussion, and his brother wasn't there, and João told us that things weren't going well at work, that he and his brother both had been hired fairly recently and things were going poorly and he was likely to be – he thought he was going to get laid off, as well as his brother, and he said his brother had gotten called in last minute to go to work and so he wasn't able to come to this missionary lesson.

So Elder Bauer and I shared a brief scriptural message with the family because that's what Presidente Oliveira had asked us to do with every visit, and we said a prayer and got up to leave, and I don't remember what thought we shared; I don't remember much, but as we got up to leave, João nodded to his wife who went into the kitchen and came back with a grocery sack and he handed it to us. I opened up the grocery sack and inside are two freshly baked loaves of bread. They smelled so good. And then I looked at the children. Here's his wife holding a little baby and she had two little children hugging her – either side of her legs and they were looking at this bag of bread, and then I looked closely at them and I realized something. João is a very large man, very, very large, very strong. And I looked at his children and I realized they looked skinny. They looked hungry, and they were looking very hungrily at this bag, and my heart broke in that moment.

Here was this family who was worried about his job, worrying about providing for the needs of his family and they're now giving two loaves of bread to the missionaries who just the day before I think was P-day and we'd gone shopping and had plenty of food. I didn't want to be rude, but I said to João, oh, thank you so much for this offering, and Elder Bauer and I tried to give the bread back, but João shook his head. And then I started to pray: Heavenly Father, please help João to understand, and I had a flash of brilliance. I said, I got it. Why don't we all sit down together and cut this bread up and eat it all together? I thought that was a great idea. João didn't think that was a great idea. He stepped forward, and here we are with this bag outstretched, and he put his hands over mine. Did I mention that he's a really large man? And he said, Elder Griffin, please take the bread. And I'm sitting here praying, help him to understand, help him to understand. And then he said something I'll never forget. He said, my family needs the blessings of the Lord now more than we've ever needed them before. Will you please take the bread? And then all of a sudden, my prayer got answered, in my own head. I understood. And in that moment I said, we would be honored to take this bread on one condition, that you'll let us offer one more prayer for your family, at which point we knelt down and poured out our heart to heaven in behalf of this – this incredibly faithful and good family who was acting in faith.

Later that evening when we were at home in our apartment, we were settling things down and I needed a little snack so I went and I got one of those loaves of bread out and I cut off a couple of pieces and I put some butter and jam on it and I took a bite and I paused and I said, wow! This bread tastes really good. I've eaten a lot of bread in my life, but that particular bread on that particular day tasted especially good. And then young Elder Griffin realized something. Of course it tastes good, because that bread had a secret ingredient. It was infused with faith of this - this incredible couple who had – who are so willing to give and to sacrifice for the Lord, and there's something miraculous that happens when human beings in a fallen world are able to do what it says in verse 34: "Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind;". When we're – verse 33: "...not weary in well-doing," we "...[lay] the foundation of a great work. And out of small things..." even two loaves of freshly made bread, "...proceedeth that which is great."

Brothers and sisters, whatever situation you are in, you look around and figure out how could you more fully apply this principle of be not weary in well-doing, because that's what Jesus did his entire life in perfect proportions. How can we now do these small and simple things that are infused with our actions of faith that will cause great things to be brought to pass? I love that perspective.

Now jump down to 41: "For, behold, I say unto you that Zion shall flourish, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon her." Lest we get caught up in the negative or pessimistic ideas and opinions that maybe swirl around the world we live in, the promise is sure: Zion will flourish. Verse 42: "And she shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto her out of every nation under heaven. And the day shall come..." (Doctrine and Covenants 64:42-43). Notice these aren't perhaps this might happen – there's a good chance that this is going to occur, no, he said it shall, it shall, it will happen, "...when the nations of the earth shall tremble because of her, and shall fear because of her terrible ones. The Lord hath spoken it. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 64:43). We don't need to guess or wonder who's going to win in the ultimate battle between heaven and the forces of the devil and the forces of darkness. We already know what's going to happen.

Now shift down to section 65. Section 65 is given at a time when Joseph is still working his way through the translation process of the Bible. According to Steven Harper he's somewhere near the end of Matthew or the beginning part of Mark, the Gospel of Mark, it's interesting because in this section we're calling back to Matthew chapter 6, the Lord's Prayer, which is this beautiful pattern that Jesus has given us for how to address God the Father, and Joseph actually considers or designates this revelation as a prayer, section 65, and so it's going to have these lofty gratitude and petition kinds of elements to it.

Look at verse 1: "Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one sent down from on high, who is mighty and powerful, whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth, yea, whose voice is unto men – Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Brothers and sisters, this entire section, six verses, is going to take you on a biblical journey. It's a tour through multiple passages throughout the entire Bible, so the tour, so to speak, begins in Isaiah chapter 40, which is a highly significant chapter because Isaiah 40 is the transition chapter between those first 39 chapters where God is

talking about the punishment and the negative consequences that come from breaking his covenant with him, and then 40 through 66 is the section of hope where God is coming back and reestablishing the covenant with people who previously had broken it. Section 40 begins that let me forgive you, let me work with you even though you don't deserve it. That's one of the beautiful attributes of God's goodness, is his ability to grant this kind of goodness, especially when we don't fully deserve it. Look at section – or Isaiah chapter 40 verse 1. Look at the very first phrase: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God" (Isaiah 40:1). Did you see the covenant? Ye are my people; I'm your God, and a God will comfort his people, and that's what he starts with. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:2). It's time to now be clean and to move forward. "The voice of him," verse 3, now this is your tie to section 65, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." That whole notion is going to then get repeated in Matthew chapter 3 with John the Baptist. That's – that's what he's doing, he's preparing the way of the Lord, crying repentance telling the people to make his paths straight for his coming. That's all tied in here in verse 1.

Now look at verse 2: "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth." Now we're going to the prophecy in Daniel chapter 2 verse 44 and 45, this stone cut out of the mountain without hands rolling forth.

Look at verse 3: "Yea, a voice crying – Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom." Now we're into some of the allusions and the allegories in Matthew 25 and other examples of where the bride is – the bridegroom is coming and we're the bride and we've got to be prepared for that Second Coming. "Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people. Call upon the Lord..." (Doctrine and Covenants 65:4-5). You'll notice he's continually inviting us to turn to him, not to turn to others for our guidance and our direction. "Call upon [him], that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven..." (Doctrine and Covenants 65:5). Did you notice the preposition there? The Son of Man shall come down in heaven, not come down from heaven. He'll come down in heaven as if he's bringing a portion of heaven with him when he comes. Look at the distinction, "...clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth" (Doctrine and Covenants 65:5). We talked last time about the kingdom of God in heaven, the kingdom of God on earth, and he's trying to make this really, really difficult planet on which we live – he's trying to turn it into an outpost of heaven.

Verse 6: "Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come." That's what we do with all these efforts we've been talking about so far, is creating an environment where the kingdom of heaven can return to the earth for that second coming.

Now listen to this prayer here at the end: "...that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 65:6). Giving that connection back to the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, that he begins, "...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done..." (Matthew 6:9-10). That's what Jesus taught us in our prayers that we should be asking God for, and that's what our prophets and apostles and the leaders of our Church today are asking us to do is to prepare the world for the coming of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven to join the kingdom of God on the earth which is the bride, the Church.

Now we shift over to section 66. Historically, William E. McLellin has an amazing story to tell. He's a very recent convert. He lost his wife and his infant child fairly recently, felt lost, and he heard some preaching about the Book of Mormon and David Whitmer's testimony really got his attention, and Hyrum Smith ends up baptizing William McLellin, and then they make the journey up to Kirtland. He met Joseph like 4 – 3 or 4 days before this revelation is given. Brand new convert, new in town, and he's just excited to go; he's ready to go in the gospel. And before coming to Joseph he records in his journal that he had petitioned God for five specific questions that he had that he wanted answered, but he didn't tell Joseph what those were, and then he comes to Joseph and he says, what do I need to do? Others have come to you for revelations, I want a revelation. What do I need to do?

Now he never divulged what those five questions were, but what he does tell us later on in life is that every one of those five questions were specifically answered in this revelation, and it left this indelible impression on William E. McLellin's soul, even to the point where – keep in mind, William McLellin is going to leave the Church. He's going to become kind of a bitter enemy of the Church during one phase in particular there in Missouri – but he never goes back on what happened here, and he says, there's no way Joseph came up with this on his own. Joseph was a prophet. So his reasons for leaving the Church are different, but he never goes back on what happened here.

A couple of scholars, Jan Shippo and Jack Welch, have carefully reviewed the records of William McLellin and also section 66, and they propose what might be likely the five questions that William had, and here they are. So how does this Church that's just been organized fit into the purposes of God in the world and how does it relate to other religions, and here is what the answer is in verse 2: "Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fullness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might have life and be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in the days of old." Another question – number – 2nd question: what is my spiritual standing? Let's look at verse 3 for an answer: "Verily I say unto you, my servant William, that you are clean, but not all; repent, therefore, of those things which are not pleasing in my sight, saith the Lord, for the Lord will show them unto you."

Every week the sacrament is a renewal of the baptismal covenant. You are clean and maybe God's saying but not all, right? You're going to leave here next week and you're probably going to make mistakes, but guess what? I the Lord have power to heal you. Come back to the sacrificial table of sacrament and declare your sins, declare your loyalty to me, and I'll forgive you.

Isn't it beautiful, that the not all clause gets defined how? Look at the second half of verse 3: "...repent, therefore, of those things which are not pleasing in my sight, saith the Lord, for the Lord will show them unto you." We don't look to the world to figure out what I need to work on next. He says, I'll show them to you. I'll show you the areas where you're not clean yet, and I'm going to give them to you in bite-size chunks. You can do this. The covenant path is – is doable, because he's going to give you the next step. That's it; he's not going to give you the next hundred miles. He'll give you the next step, and I will show them unto you. I just – I love verse 3.

These are great verses. Question 3, what is my role in the Church? So William has left behind his former life, he used to be a school teacher, he's now left where he – he's now left where he had been, he's moved to Kirtland, what's his next step? Verses 5 through 8 help to answer that: "Behold, verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city, yea, in those regions round about where it has not been proclaimed" (Doctrine and Covenants 66:5).

Question 4. William McLellin has personally seen the healing power of God through the power of the priesthood. He saw that – he saw that from Hyrum Smith, and so he wonders, will I be able to have that power? Verse 9: "Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. Return not till I, the Lord, shall send you. Be patient in affliction. Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

And then the last question, how can I escape the temptations of adultery and other sins that have burdened me? And it seems that verses 9, 10, and 12 seem to answer this. Let's take a look at verse 10: "Seek not to be cumbered." Right? Seek to avoid temptation. "Forsake all unrighteousness. Commit not adultery – a temptation with which thou has been troubled" (Doctrine and Covenants 66:10). Down to verse 12: "Continue in these things even unto the end, and you shall have a crown of eternal life at the right hand of my Father who is full of grace and truth." And the section concludes with: "Verily, thus saith the Lord your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 66:13).

Now personal revelation to us today is unlikely to get canonized in scripture for eons of time that other people can read, but I love that God took the time to answer the very specific questions of a seeking saint, and the same is true today. Wherever you're at, you have questions, you can talk to God, and he can reveal to you through the Holy Spirit or through other means what those answers are, and he will declare to you as he did to William, thus saith the Lord your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. He can give you the truth.

So to conclude today, our invitation to all of us is to be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. “And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). Sometimes it's easy to get overwhelmed with the enormity of the tasks that lie around us and in front of us, but I love the fact that he says, don't be weary and don't be overwhelmed, just do those small and simple things, infuse those offerings that you make with faith, and out of those - those small efforts that we make today, today – this is the day we have to work, today -- then great things will be brought to pass.

Brothers and sisters, to finish, I love the words of that beautiful Primary song, “I'm trying to be like Jesus in all that I do and say.”¹ May the Lord bless all of us. Try a little harder to be a little more like Jesus today. And we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹ Perry, Janice Kapp. “I'm Trying to Be like Jesus.” *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, 1980, www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/childrens-songbook/im-trying-to-be-like-jesus?lang=eng

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