

“Settle This in Your Hearts”

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This is an appropriate moment to thank Elder Hanks for his influence on my life in so many moments over so many years.

Eighteen years ago from this same pulpit, I pled with those who stood indecisively on the “porch” of the Church to come fully inside. (See *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, pp. 12–13.) Today my plea is to those members already inside but whose discipleship is casual, individuals whom we love, whose gifts and talents are much needed in building the kingdom!

Any call for greater consecration is, of course, really a call to all of us. But these remarks are not primarily for those who are steadily striving and who genuinely seek to keep God’s commandments and yet sometimes fall short. (See [D&C 46:9](#).) Nor is this primarily for those few in deliberate noncompliance, including some who cast off on intellectual and behavioral bungee cords in search of new sensations, only to be jerked about by the old heresies and the old sins. Instead, these comments are for the essentially “honorable” members who are skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than “anxiously engaged.” ([D&C 76:75](#); [D&C 58:27](#).) Though nominal in their participation, their reservations and hesitations inevitably show through. They may even pass through our holy temples, but, alas, they do not let the holy temples pass through them.

Such members accept callings but not all of the accompanying responsibilities; hence, their Church chores must often be done by those already “anxiously engaged.” Some regard themselves as merely “resting” in between Church callings. But we are never in between as to this soaring call from Jesus: “What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” ([3 Ne. 27:27](#); see [Matt. 5:48](#); [3 Ne. 12:48](#).) It is never safe to rest regarding that calling! In fact, being “valiant” in one’s testimony of Jesus includes striving to become more like Him in mind, heart, and attributes. ([D&C 76:79](#).) Becoming this manner of men and women is the ultimate expression of orthodoxy!

All are free to choose, of course, and we would not have it otherwise. Unfortunately, however, when some choose slackness, they are choosing not only for themselves, but for the next generation and the next. Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children! Earlier generations in a family may have reflected dedication, while some in the current generation evidence equivocation. Sadly, in the next, some may choose dissension as erosion takes its toll.

While casual members are not unrighteous, they often avoid appearing to be too righteous by seeming less committed than they really are—an ironic form of hypocrisy.

Some of these otherwise honorable members mistakenly regard the Church as an institution, but not as a kingdom. They know the doctrines of the kingdom, but more as a matter of recitation than of real comprehension.

Casual members are usually very busy with the cares and the things of the world—much as honorable Amulek once was. Called many times, he would not hear. He really knew concerning the truths of the gospel, but Amulek would not acknowledge that he knew. ([Alma 10:4-6.](#))

One common characteristic of the honorable but slack is their disdain for the seemingly unexciting duties of discipleship, such as daily prayer, regular reading of the scriptures, attendance at sacrament meeting, paying a full tithe, and participating in the holy temples. Such disdain is especially dangerous in today's world of raging relativism and of belching sensualism, a world in which, if many utter the name of Deity at all, it is only as verbal punctuation or as an expression of exclamation, not adoration!

In contrast, those sincerely striving for greater consecration neither cast off their commitments nor the holy garment. They avoid obscenity, keep the law of chastity, pay their tithes, and love and serve their spouses and children. As good neighbors, they “bear one another’s burdens,” “mourn with those that mourn,” “comfort those ... in need of comfort,” and valiantly “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.” ([Mosiah 18:8-9.](#))

When the determination is first made to begin to be more spiritually settled, there is an initial vulnerability: it is hard to break with the past. But once we begin, we see how friends who would hold us back spiritually are not true friends at all. Any chiding from them reflects either resentment or unconscious worry that somehow they are being deserted. In any attempt to explain to them, our tongue is able to speak only “the smallest part.” ([Alma 26:16.](#)) We continue to care for them, but we care for our duty to God more. Brigham Young counseled candidly: “Some do not understand duties which do not coincide with their natural feelings and affections. ... There are duties which are above affection.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 7:65.)

Likewise it is only fair to warn that any determination to seek greater consecration will soon expose what we yet lack, a painful but necessary thing. Remember the rich, righteous young man who was told by Jesus, “One thing thou lackest”? ([Mark 10:21.](#)) Ananias and Sapphira, otherwise good members of the Church, “kept back” a portion instead of consecrating their all. ([Acts 5:1-11.](#)) Some would never *sell* Jesus for thirty pieces, but they would not *give* Him their all either!

Unfortunately, we tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. But there are so many ways of keeping back part. One might be giving of money and time and yet hold back a significant portion of himself. One might share talents publicly yet privately retain a particular pride. One might hold back from kneeling before God's throne and yet bow to a particular gallery of peers. One might accept a Church calling but have his heart more set on maintaining a certain role in the world.

Still others find it easier to bend their knees than their minds. Exciting exploration is preferred to plodding implementation; speculation seems more fun than consecration, and so is trying to soften the hard doctrines instead of submitting to them. Worse still, by not obeying, these few

members lack real knowing. (See [John 7:17](#).) Lacking real knowing, they cannot defend their faith and may become critics instead of defenders!

A few of the latter end up in the self-reinforcing and self-congratulating Hyde Park corner of the Church, which they provincially mistake for the whole of the Church, as if London's real Hyde Park corner were Parliament, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace, and all of England combined!

Only greater consecration will cure ambivalence and casualness in any of us! As already noted, the tutoring challenges arising from increased consecration may be severe but reflect the divine mercy necessary to induce further consecration. (See [Hel. 12:3](#).) If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. Deprivation may prepare us for further consecration, though we shudder at the thought. If we are too easily contented, God may administer a dose of divine discontent. His long-suffering thus becomes very necessary to maximize our agency and development. But He is not an indulgent Father.

We "cannot bear all things now," but the Lord "will lead [us] along," as we "give place" in our thoughts and schedules and "give away" our sins, which are the only ways we can begin to make room to receive all that God can give us. ([D&C 78:18](#); [D&C 50:4](#); [Alma 32:27, 28](#); [Alma 22:18](#).) Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus!

Consecration is the only surrender which is also a victory. It brings release from the raucous, overpopulated cell block of selfishness and emancipation from the dark prison of pride. Yet instead of striving for greater consecration, it is so easy to go on performing casually in halfhearted compliance as if hoping to "ride to paradise on a golf cart." (Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979, p. 125.)

But is being consecrated and "swallowed up" a threat to our individuality? (See [Mosiah 15:7](#).) No! Heavenly Father is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new and the real self. It is not a question of losing our identity but of finding our true identity!

When, at last, we are truly pointed homeward, then the world's pointing fingers of scorn can better be endured. As we come to know to Whom we belong, the other forms of belonging cease to mean very much. Likewise, as Jesus begins to have a real place in our lives, we are much less concerned with losing our places in the world. When our minds really catch hold of the significance of Jesus' atonement, the world's hold on us loosens. (See [Alma 36:18](#).)

Increased consecration is not so much a demand for more hours of Church work as it is for more awareness of Whose work this really is! For now, consecration may not require giving up worldly possessions so much as being less possessed by them.

Only when things begin to come into focus "with an eye single" do we see "things as they really are"! ([Jacob 4:13](#).) What a view awaits! Only to the degree that we respond to life's temptations as Jesus did, who "gave no heed unto them," will we be "free"—free at last! ([D&C 20:22](#); [John 8:32](#).)

True orthodoxy thus brings safety and felicity! It is not only correctness but happiness. Strange, isn't it, even the very word *orthodoxy* has fallen into disfavor with some? As society gets more and more flaky, a few rush forward to warn shrilly against orthodoxy!

Remember how, with Pharaoh's angry army in hot pursuit, ancient Israel aligned themselves with the Lord's instructions? [Moses](#) stretched forth his hand and the Red Sea parted. With towering walls of water on each side, Israel walked through the narrow passage obediently, and no doubt quickly! There were no warnings about conforming on that day!

There are passages ahead which will require similar obedience, as prophets lead the "men [and women] of Christ" in a straight and narrow course.

Becoming more like Jesus in thought and behavior is not grinding and repressing, but emancipating and discovering! Unorthodoxy in behavior and intellect is just the opposite. A little [pornography](#) may lead not only to child and spouse abuse, but it slowly sucks out the marrow of self-esteem. A little tendency to gossip can lead not only to bearing serious false witness, but more often to malicious whispers which, unfortunately, "memory will warehouse as a shout." (C. S. Lewis, *The Quotable Lewis*, ed. Owen Barfield and Jerry Root, Wheaton, Ill.: Tindale Publications, 1989, p. 425.) A little criticism of the Brethren, which seems harmless enough, may not only damage other members but can even lead to one's setting himself up as a substitute "light unto the world." ([2 Ne. 26:29](#).) Yes, happily, some such prodigals do come back, but they usually walk alone, unaccompanied by those they once led astray!

Jesus counseled His disciples, "Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you." (JST, Luke 14:28.) Getting thus settled precedes consecration. The Prophet [Joseph Smith](#) said gospel knowledge "does away with darkness, suspense, and doubt" and how "there is no pain so awful as that of suspense." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 288.) Being settled keeps us from responding to every little ripple of dissent as if it were a tidal wave. We are to be disciples, not oscillators, like a "reed shaken with the wind." ([Matt. 11:7](#).) More members need the immense relief and peace which can come from being "settled" without which those individuals will be like "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." ([Isa. 57:20](#).)

There is another special reason to become settled: we will live in a time in which "all things shall be in commotion." ([D&C 88:91](#); [D&C 45:26](#).) The uncertainties, upheavals, and topsy-turviness of today's world will be such that those who vacillate and equivocate will be tossed about by severe turbulence.

Finally, if we shrink from deeper consecration, then we are not worthy of Him who, for our sake, refused to "shrink" in the midst of His deepening agony during the Atonement! ([D&C 19:18](#).) Instead, Jesus pressed forward, giving His all and completing His marvelous "preparations unto the children of men." ([D&C 19:19](#).)

Consider, what if Jesus' Mortal Messiahship had consisted only of remarkable sermons? Or was further enhanced with healings and other miracles—but without Gethsemane's and Calvary's awful but consecrated hours of the Atonement? How then would we regard Jesus' ministry? Where would mankind be?

Brothers and sisters, whatever we embrace instead of Jesus and His work will keep us from qualifying to enter His kingdom and therefore from being embraced by Him. (See [Morm. 6:17](#).) May we get settled and prepare now for that marvelous moment then, I pray in the name of [Jesus Christ](#), amen!