

## **My Testimony: I Replaced Criticism with Prayer**

In the devotions from last year on the action page for January 2015 it said, "This Month I Plan to stop being critical of others. I will **pray** for them instead of criticize them. I will look for the good in my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ."

I testify to you that the action of praying for people who I might otherwise criticize works!

Last fall (2015) I noticed Satan would tempt me to have critical thoughts of my brothers and sisters in the faith and a general disgruntled feeling about the congregation and the church as a whole. In December (2015) I decided to follow the Patriarch's advice and **pray** for people instead of judging them.

**Pray** in all kinds of situations. It really works!

1) Love and concern quickly replaced my judgmental thoughts, and I began to **pray** for my brothers and sisters in ways I would not have thought to do before,

2) Satan's temptations to cause me trouble in my relationships with others stopped when loving **prayers** were faithfully offered for God's people and for His purposes--to build up Zion. To God be all praise, honor and Glory!

**1 Nephi 1:65-66** *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save He shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which He commandeth them.*

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our daily lives--for the cause of Zion!

by Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## **Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth**



**God is Calling Us to Come Up Higher!**

### **Preparation Guide for January Women's Devotionals:**

This was the challenge placed before us in 2015. Have we grown spiritually this past year as individuals and as a congregation? May we review this Challenge anew and commit to help lay the foundation of Zion in 2016--let us be ready for His return!

**Zion is beginning when we love God and we love each other.**

Let us be loving, kind, tenderhearted, forgiving, and not judging one another. Let us look for the beautiful and the true instead of looking for faults in each other.

**Love is a true catalyst, it changes everything it touches.** If we work on keeping the two great commandments as found in **Matthew 22:34-39**, we would soon see great changes for good taking place.

**Fourth thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church: "Do I make righteous judgments?"**

**Action = "Cease to be critical of others. Instead, pray for those that seem to make poor decisions."**

**Read Romans 12:5-10**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>January</u>
	Let us start our New Year with a “Spiritual Resolution” to Prepare, to Change, to Grow Spiritually!		Read Hymn #180: “Admonition”		Read Hymn #63: “Let Us Pray for One Another”		<u>D&amp;C 85:38a-c</u> Jesus instructs us in the ways of living, and above all things how to love and pray until He comes to receive us unto Himself.
	1. Keep commandments. 2. Study God’s revelations.		“Love ye me and love all people; love as I have loved you. This your calling, this My purpose; thus be My disciples true. Then in this exalted station, your companion I will be. Every promise of My Scriptures will be verified in thee.”		“It is waning on t’ward midnight; soon we’ll hear the watchman say, ‘See the Son of God is coming; go and meet Him on the way!’ That our lamps may then be burning, bright enough to guide our way, and that we may share His glory, for each other let us pray.”		<u>Moroni 7:53</u> Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which He hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of His Son Jesus Christ.
	<u>2 Peter 3:1-3</u> The second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments.		“Get ye up then to your mountain, Zion of the closing day! For the glory of My coming, waits to break upon your way! Forth from hence your testimony, shall to trembling nations go; and the world confess that with you God has residence below.”		<u>D&amp;C 65:1d</u> Pray unto the Lord; call upon His holy name; make known His wonderful works among the people, call upon the Lord, that His Kingdom may go forth upon the earth.		The Lord would have us to be kind and tenderhearted to each other and not gossiping or saying hurtful things about each other. Let us speak words that will edify all those around us.
	Revelations (prophecy) are being fulfilled in our day and age right before our eyes!				Excerpts from a message given through Elder Rob Bird at the CMRB Reunion at Odessa Hills in 2013: “... Don’t ever underestimate the value of the <u>gift of My Holy Spirit</u> , or the <u>power of a fervent prayer</u> , or fail to <u>treasure up and feast upon the promises found in My Word</u> , or the strength found in <u>obedience to my two greatest commandments</u> .”		<u>Ephesians 4:29-32</u> Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.
	<u>F. Henry Edwards, in his commentary of the Doctrine &amp; Covenants, lists reasons for revelation/prophecy:</u>				Pray and be prepared for the coming of the Lord!		Spend much time in study of the scriptures!
	1. increase understanding 2. correct errors 3. instruct wisdom-seekers 4. stimulate repentance 5. humble and strengthen 6. power to translate Book of Mormon 7. authorize and inspire the foundation/development of the church 8. bless/give knowledge				<u>Also read Matthew 22:34-39</u>		
	Also read D&C 1:5-8		Spiritual Condition matters!				Let us love one another in word and deed!
			<u>Also read Hebrews 6:1</u>				<u>Also read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13</u>

## **May We Ever Strive to Become “The Bride of Christ”**

In the devotions from last year on the action page for February 2015 it said, “This Month I plan to look at my heart and to remove from it any sin I find there. I will also ask God to reveal to me the hidden sin in my heart that I may not even be aware of. I will come down into the depths of humility and repent. I will seek to purify/sanctify my heart through study, fasting and prayer. I will make a conscious effort to put on the whole armor of God. I will do all I can to become a Bride of Christ who has no guile or deception within my heart.”

### **“Without guile” means to be the same inside and out!**

1) The more we surrender our will and put our trust in God, the more we will become filled with strength, faith and light. **Repentance is essential to cleanse and receive new birth.**

2) The more we surrender, the more we become aware of our weakness and that we cannot possibly do this on our own. **Jesus provided the atonement that allows us a new life--at one with Him.**

Elder Howard Parker said in a sermon: “All unused time will flow to our weakness and our actions follow our heart.” **Man is in a fallen state and we battle this carnal, sensual, and devilish nature for pure hearts, for pure minds and to submit our will into the hands of our Creator.**

**Obadiah 1:3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.**

**James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.**

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.orgb.org](http://www.orgb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our daily lives--for the cause of Zion!

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women’s Leader, 2010-2016

## **Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth**



### **Preparation Guide for February Women’s Devotionals:**

Continuing in our preparation to establish the cause of Zion, consider the great **Battle for our Heart.**

The root word “heart” means “the center of anything.” What have you given your heart to?

It seems like this would be an easy choice--seeking Zion in our hearts--but we are blind many times to our own sins!

Do we appear to be something we’re not, hiding behind a façade for others to see? If we want a pure heart, “without guile,” we must be mighty in prayer and fasting, repenting often, letting God’s word dwell in us, forgiving others. No more facades!

**Fifth thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church: “Am I without guile?”**

**Action = “Let your every action and word reflect the truth of who and Whose we are, with no deception whatsoever.”**

**Read Alma 3:27-29, 50-53**

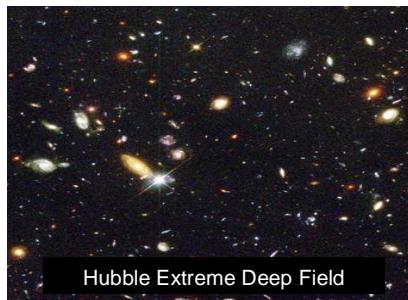
<u>Week #1</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>February</u>
Put on the full armor of God and battle areas of darkness in your life by cleaving to the Light of Christ!		Read Hymn #358:  “ <u>Give Me Thy Heart</u> says the Father above, no gift so precious to Him as our love...”		Read Hymn #358:  “ <u>Give Me Thy Heart</u> says the Spirit divine, All that thou hast to My keeping resign; Grace more abounding is Mine to impart, Make full surrender, and give Me thy heart.”		Read Hymn #358:  “ <u>Give Me Thy Heart</u> says the Savior of men, Calling in mercy again and again. Turn now from sin, and from evil depart...”	
<u>Ephesians 6:10-18</u> Finally...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.... Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.		<u>Psalm 115:9-11</u> O Israel, trust thou in the Lord; He is thy help and thy shield. ... <u>Ye that fear the Lord</u> , trust in the Lord; He is your help and your shield.		<u>D&amp;C 24:1b</u> ...if thou art faithful and walk in the paths of virtue ... I will preserve thy life, and thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion.		<u>Proverbs 16:6-7</u> By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.	
1. Choose Godliness. 2. Establish cause of Zion.		<u>Guard your heart from quile</u> by submitting your will to God's will and trusting in Him -- even in times of affliction and sorrow.		<u>Keep your heart fixed on the Lord</u> by using tools to keep your heart pure and true.		<u>In a sermon, Elder Howard Parker shared four key steps in repenting:</u>	
<u>1 Timothy 6:12</u> Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...		A friend wrote this: “Praise God today for all your trials. ... It is through trial, testing, and emptying out yourself to God that every new revelation of Christ is given or born inside of you. ... If you remove yourself from that trial you are taking yourself out of the hands of God. Empty yourself and submit to His will.”		1. Purposeful prayer and fasting. 2. Feasting upon the Word of God daily. (renews mind, gives wisdom and counsel, convicts, and fills with the Holy Spirit) 3. Humility (meekness and lowly condition allows God's Spirit to fill us, use us and mold us) 4. Service (doers of the Word serve the Lord by serving others)		1. Godly sorrow 2. <u>Corinthians 7:9</u> Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. 3. Cease to do evil (true repentance means to turn around and walk in a new direction that is opposite to our sin) 4. Learn to do well <u>Isaiah 1:17</u> Learn to do well.	
In order to have a pure heart, <u>without quile</u> , sometimes we must taste the bitter that we might know to prize the good. The <u>gift of agency</u> allows us to choose Godliness in the daily battle for our hearts, our mind and our will!		We are in a battle for our heart.		God is CALLING. He is PREPARING a place for us. Let <u>us</u> also be PREPARING for Him!		Let us accept God's forgiveness and in turn extend our forgiveness to others.	
We have been placed here, in this time, to establish the “cause of Zion” which is righteousness.		Let us acknowledge the sovereignty of God and submit our will to His.				Restore right relationships!	
What have you given your heart to?		Trust in God!				Fight the good fight! Keep a pure heart -- free from quile!	
Lift up the standard of Christ's Light in your life!		<u>Also read Mosiah 1:119-120</u>		<u>Also read Enos 1:46</u>		<u>Also read 1 John 2:9-11</u>	
<u>Also read D&amp;C 85:3a-b</u>							

**Psalms 8:1-4 O Lord...how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!  
Who has set Thy Glory above the heavens...when I consider Thy  
Heavens, the Work of Thy Fingers, the moon and the stars, which  
Thou hast ordained...what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?**

How can we stay humble? Contemplate the Majesty and Glory of God!  
Consider the Heavens and declare--there is no end to His Work!

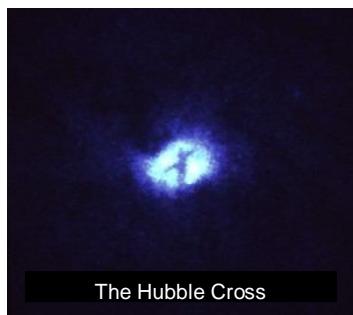
Recent images from the Hubble telescope into an area in the solar system that mankind considered empty, thinking they might have reached an end, discovered otherwise. After eleven days of the Hubble absorbing light, they found galaxy upon galaxy! (Each light pictured below is a galaxy.)

We are a blessed generation to have such proofs of God's creative power. Oh, how humble we should be!



Hubble Extreme Deep Field

The Spiral Galaxy



The Hubble Cross

They have discovered the "whirlpool" galaxy. In its center they found a beautiful testimony of our God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

**The Hubble Cross: It is as if God has placed His "Maker's Stamp" upon the universe.**

Humility is the right understanding of who we are before God. We are truly humbled as we consider the Glory, Majesty and all-encompassing Power of God and ALL of His Creation. In all this Majesty He created each one of us--His children--and He loves each one of us so much that He came and died for us; then He rose again that we, too, will have life everlasting. There is no greater love than this! Let us come before Him always in humility and praise!

*May you each be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from 2015 ([www.orgb.org](http://www.orgb.org) Resource Page). Let us put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!*

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Jesus Christ Set the Example for Us

#### Preparation Guide for March Women's Devotionals:

We must become humble and repentant, for we are all sinners--every one. Do not listen to the great lie that Satan often whispers in a Christian's ears: "You should be proud of yourself, you're really 'pretty good folks' unlike the other sinners in the world!" **Humility and repentance are vital to our spiritual well-being**, as outlined in the "core" --important ingredient-- in each one of these Scriptures:

**3 Nephi 5:49-50 Steps to Salvation**

**D&C 11:4-5 Involved in Kingdom-building**

**Alma 10:6-7 Dwell in God's Kingdom and Enter into His rest**

**D&C 28:1-2 Great promises to those who humble themselves**

**Sixth thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** "Am I willing to truly enter into the depths of humility?"

Action = "Begin to keep a diary, by writing down the blessings we have received and how God's hand has always been in our lives. Thank God every day for the manner in which He has blessed us. Share these testimonies with others."

**Read D&C 5:5b**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>March</u>
We desire in our hearts to be humble. Lord, help us to do this with eagerness and with no degree of hesitation.		Words to a classic hymn:		Read Hymn #101 (Tan):		Read Hymn #84 (Tan):	
<b><u>Alma 16:151</u></b> ...if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon My words, and exercise a particle of faith, <b><u>Yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you,</u></b> Even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of My words.		<b><u>Just A Closer Walk With Thee.</u></b> I am weak, but Thou art strong; Jesus, keep me from all wrong; I'll be satisfied as long as I walk--let me walk close to Thee."		<b><u>Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,</u></b> look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."		All to Jesus I surrender; All to Him I freely give; I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live. All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow... I surrender all, I surrender all, All to Thee, my blessed Savior, <b><u>I surrender all.</u></b> "	
By immersing "self" in His Word, we grow! <b>Humility IS:</b> Wisdom, joy, righteousness, lowly in heart, broken heart and contrite spirit, meek, submitting our will to God's will, thankful for blessings, repentant, prayerful, fasting, lifting our voices in praises!		Recognizing in our lives what <b>humility IS NOT</b> can lead us to repentance, humbling ourselves, and receiving the Lord's help in removing these obstacles:		<b>Jesus Christ is our EXAMPLE.</b> He is meek and lowly, submitted fully to the Father, suffered for joy set before Him, joy when He comes for His church, learn by things suffered, obedient, no reputation, a servant.		<b><u>Hebrews 12:2</u></b> For the joy that was set before Him [HE] endured the cross, despising the same....	
<b><u>Helaman 2:31</u></b> Nevertheless, they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, ...purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, ...which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.		<b><u>Mosiah 1:118</u></b> danger to soul <b><u>Alma 3:50</u></b> unprepared <b><u>Alma 4:3-4</u></b> names blotted out <b><u>Mormon 2:54</u></b> divine justice <b><u>2 Nephi 8:25</u></b> not forgiven <b><u>Other attributes</u></b> stubborn, puffed-up, do not visit the sick nor impart substance, stony heart, perish		<b><u>2 Nephi 13:6; Hebrews 12:2</u></b> He humbleth Himself before the Father. <b><u>2 Nephi 13:9; Ether 5:40</u></b> If we are His, we must be like Him. <b><u>Matthew 16:25-26; Mark 8:36, Luke 9:23</u></b> Take up your cross (spiritual) and deny self.		What is my <b>RESPONSE?</b> Will I surrender <u>all</u> to Him? Acknowledge His blessings; salvation/transformation; He makes weak things strong; humbled by Word of God.	
Let us rejoice in God's many blessings and ask Him to reveal to us specific ways to humble ourselves!		Let us begin to identify all areas in our lives lacking humility, even in our afflictions and weaknesses.		Read Hymn #32 (Blue): <b>Come learn of the meek and lowly</b> , come sit at the Master's feet; No place in the world so holy, no place in the world so sweet. His lessons are plain and simple, a balm to the wounded breast; He maketh our burdens lighter, and giveth His children rest."		No doubts; no wavering; breath of life--blessed in spite of ourselves!	
<b><u>Also read Alma 16:136</u></b>		Expect great joy when we embark on this transforming journey of humility--yielding our hearts to God!		<b>Rejoice!</b> He will appear and we <u>can</u> be like Him!		Righteous judgment; submissive to all things inflicted; bear burdens with much patience; learn humility through suffering.	
		<b><u>Also read Alma 16:127</u></b>		<b><u>Also read Philippians 2:7-10</u></b>		He will lift us up! Praise and worship Him! Trust Him through our sincere fasting and prayers.	
						Again, count it all joy!	
						<b><u>Also read James 1:2</u></b>	

## BECAUSE HE LIVES...

**...I will give my heart willingly to Him!** The Lord calls us to be “of a willing heart.” In any day and age, it takes a person with a willing heart to commit to the work of the Lord. He gave His all for us. Let us also be willing to give our all to Him--in whatever way we can--to assist in building up the cause of Zion!

**Exodus 35:4-30** *And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord...And every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded.*

**...I will be wise-hearted in service to Him!** The Lord is eagerly awaiting our response to His instructions. He waits for us to be willing to work, to be willing to sacrifice. He is waiting for an outpouring of service from those whose hearts stir them to action!

**Exodus 35:25-26** *And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun...And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun....*

**...I will pour my “self” out -- and I will sacrifice for Him!**  
If we move forward in obedience to Him, with willing and wise hearts, and give our whole souls to Him in sacrifice, He will bless us. He promises to strengthen us, assist us, and uphold us!

**Read Exodus 36:3-7 ...the people bring much more than enough...**

What if, in our day, the cry went out, “Oh stop, we have enough; enough Sunday School teachers, we have enough youth leaders, we have enough people to mow the church yard and clean the church, we have enough workers, we have more than enough money for everything we need!” Would that not be a wonder to behold?

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.orgb.org](http://www.orgb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

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## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



**Take My Life and Let it Be...**

### **Preparation Guide for April Women’s Devotionals:**

This month I will pray that the Lord will open my eyes and lead me into fuller service for Him. I will pray for a willing heart and the courage to move out in faith. I will seek to respond to opportunities for service to my God and my King. I will go where He leads me even if it is beyond my comfort zone into new uncharted territory. I will attempt to be like the women in Exodus who were willing-hearted and wise-hearted. I will give willing service with Joy and Excitement!

**Romans 12:1-2** *I beseech you therefore...by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.*

**Seventh thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** “Am I willing to give my whole soul unto Christ?”

Action = “Commit everything that you have and everything you are to the work of the kingdom.”

**Read D&C 64:7a**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>April</u>
Consider two interpretations of waiting upon the Lord: 1. be still 2. do His bidding		Read Hymn #323:  <b>"Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee."</b>		Read Hymn #323:  <b>"Take my heart, my mind, my will, Let them be thy servants still."</b>		Read Hymn #323:  <b>"Take my silver and my gold; Naught of thine would I withhold...Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee."</b>	
<b>Psalm 59:9</b> Because of His strength will I <u>wait upon</u> thee; for God is my defense.		<b>Romans 12:1-2</b> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.		<b>Matthew 6:11</b> Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.		<b>Genesis 4:6</b> And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days...Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said...I know not, save the Lord commanded me.	
<b>Isaiah 40:31</b> But they that <u>wait upon</u> the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.		<b>What is reasonable service?</b> Convenient, only on Sunday, when I'm in the mood? No!		Catherine Thomas has a pro-life exhibit that she takes to different events and rallies. She can always tell just by talking to someone if they think "it would be a good idea" or if they are someone who is "going to make it happen." The ones that make it happen always are ready to assist and do whatever it takes.		Saints at Kirtland sacrificed to build the temple. Women cut their hair to put in the plaster and broke their china to make the plaster sparkle.	
Remember the sermon at OGRB by Kreg Levengood? Example: Tomato plants in a greenhouse have fans on them to keep them moving--otherwise when they grow they will not have enough strength to hold the fruit!		<b>What is a living sacrifice?</b> My time, my money when it is convenient for me? No!  Rather, let our response to Him always be, Yes!		<b>When WE pray,</b> "Thy kingdom come, Thy Will be done," do we pray like it is a good idea or like someone who is going to make it happen?		Parley Pratt and other missionaries walked from St. Louis to Independence during a winter they called "the winter of the deep snow." They sacrificed much and survived on frozen bread and pork.	
Compare that example to our work for the Lord: How can we ever build the Kingdom if we don't know how to work? It stands to reason that if we don't work now, but think we will work at a later time when Zion comes, we won't be strong enough to bear the fruit.		Recognize that <u>God created each one of us with a purpose</u> . Be willing every day to be stretched and used wherever, whenever and however needed, even in uncharted territory, in response to His call.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will we assist and spring to action?</li> <li>• Will we sacrifice and give up our sins?</li> <li>• Will we give our time, our talents, and our tithes?</li> </ul>		Perhaps we wouldn't mind giving up our hair or our china today; and perhaps we would even endure a long trek in the cold on a limited diet.	
Get moving. Do something for the Lord! He will strengthen you for the task when you ask Him to use your efforts for His work!		<b>Stand ready to sacrifice everything daily and present yourself to God in prayer--unselfishly--ready for any new opportunity He brings to follow Him and serve Him!</b>		<b>Do you think the Kingdom is a good idea?</b> Take the next step: Ask God, "What do I need to do to make the Kingdom happen?"		But, what if you were asked to give up your smart phone, fast food, or leisurely screen time?	
<b>Also read D&amp;C 58:6c-f</b>		<b>Also read 3 Nephi 5:87</b>		<b>Also read John 12:26</b>		<b>Do we love the gospel enough to sacrifice and be willing to give our all for the Kingdom?</b>	
						<b>Also read Lectures on Faith 6:7a-d</b>	

Today, as we partake of the bread and the wine, remember that we have made a covenant with God in the waters of baptism. Prayers over the bread and wine remind us monthly of this covenant and that we are always to remember Jesus and keep His commandments.

**D&C 17:22d** O God, the Eternal Father, we ask Thee in the Name of Thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this BREAD to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the Body of Thy Son, and always remember Him and keep His commandments which He has given them, that they may always have His Spirit to be with them. Amen.

**D&C 17:23b** O God, the Eternal Father, we ask Thee in the Name of Thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this WINE to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the Blood of Thy Son which was shed for them, that they may witness unto Thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember Him, that they may have His Spirit to be with them. Amen.

My 93-year-old father was failing both in mind and body in his last few months of life at The Groves. Hal and I would take my mother there on Sunday afternoons to attend the Restoration service with him. One Communion Sunday we were a little late and the staff did not have Daddy ready--it was quite a hassle. We arrived at the service late and Hal and I ended up sitting behind my parents. As I sat and watched my father being served communion, I thought, "Is this really worth it, does Daddy even understand what he is doing--taking Communion?"

Later, arriving back at our home, Hal told me of an interesting experience he had during the service. He, like me, was watching my father take Communion, and just like me wondered if the hassle was worth it, and if Daddy even understood what he was doing. The Spirit swept over him and God spoke to his mind, "Many of My people when they take Holy Communion give no thought to their covenant or to the meaning of my Holy Communion and when they partake in this manner it is nothing but bread and wine, but when they consider their covenant with me and repent and remember Me then it is Holy Communion. Today Kenneth has taken Holy Communion and it will be his last on the earth." My father passed away later that month.

#### **Read Psalm 111:4-9 ...He will ever be mindful of His covenant...**

I have shared this because I believe that if we would truly partake of Holy Communion, repenting, remembering our Savior and then go forth to do all He has commanded us, Zion would soon come upon the earth. What will we do with the remainder of our days?

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

## **Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth**



#### **Preparation Guide for May Women's Devotionals:**

**God made a wonderful covenant with those who keep His commandments and covenants:**

**D&C 34:6a** Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound, and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble, and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish; and Israel shall be saved in mine own due time.

As we watch events play out on the world stage, do we long for Zion to spring forth and become a reality--not just something we talk about? Zion is for us and the world!

Will you accept the challenge of D&C 34 and make a new (or renewed) commitment today to enter into your covenant with the Lord? Begin by remembering your baptism and set goals for the week, month and year--develop a personal written "life plan." Continue to keep track of your progress!

**Eighth thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** "Am I willing to enter into a covenant with my Lord to serve Him all the remainder of my days?"

Action = "Prepare a written plan of the manner in which you will live your life from this day forward. Include statements about the temporal, physical and spiritual aspects of how your life will be lived. Sign this covenant and read it at least once per week."

**Read Psalm 15:1-5**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>May</u>
What did “living in covenant” mean to the Hebrews?		Why should I want to live in covenant?		How to “enter into covenant.” What do I promise to do?		The covenant-living challenge!	
Foundational reason was NOT selfishness or neediness, but rather a mutual love initiated by the party in authority.		<b>Alma 17:3</b> ...whosoever shall put their trust in God, shall be supported in their trials, and in their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day.		<b>D&amp;C 16:4e</b> Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness; and as many as repent, and are <u>baptized in My name</u> , which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.		1. Write out things you do or have done that help you keep your covenant.	
It meant sacrifice (difficult to fulfill), surety (great assurance because they knew the other party would fulfill their pledge no matter the cost).		Many of the promises found in the scriptures focus on those who have entered into a covenant with God. When we truly love Him, we desire to live with Him and keep His commandments, because He first loved us.		Repentance and baptism go hand in hand in <u>beginning a covenant</u> , but let us not forget that “coming unto Christ” and repenting is also a <u>continual process</u> . In fact it may be the most important part of fulfilling our covenant promise daily.		<b>D&amp;C 6:14c</b> But if they reject not My Words, which shall be established by the <u>testimony</u> which shall be given blessed are they; and then shall ye have joy in the fruit of your labors.	
Several steps included:		<b>Mosiah 1:58</b> He doth require that ye should do as He hath commanded you, for which if ye do, He doth immediately bless you....		I promise to keep all the commandments, such as:		<b>Colossians 3:16</b> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exchange of names, weapons, and garments</li> <li>• sacrificing a lamb and sharing a meal</li> </ul>		When we choose to begin living in covenant with God <b>NOW</b> , He promises many specific blessings, for our life here on Earth.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• love God and love others (foremost!)</li> <li>• pray, fast, study the Word of God</li> <li>• steward of time, talents, resources</li> <li>• forgive others and serve others</li> </ul>		2. Write out the areas in which you feel your covenant needs strength, i.e. your weaknesses. Now, claim the following promise:	
<b>1 Samuel 18:3</b> Then Jonathan and David made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul.		<b>Mosiah 1:88-91</b> ...I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold they are <u>blessed in all things</u> , both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end, they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of <u>never ending happiness</u> . O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it.		Trust that letting Him be in control (1) releases and frees us from daily stress, (2) honors Him. Pride and trust cannot co-exist in us. Do not murmur, but rather speak in praise and in confidence of the Lord.		<b>Ether 5:28</b> I give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before Me; for if they humble themselves before Me, and have faith in Me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.	
Christ fulfilled every detail of the ancient blood covenant and became our representative with the Father. He is the reason we will be blessed when keeping our covenant with God.		We may also look forward to the <b>FUTURE</b> blessings of eternal life. Oh, the joy of living in the presence of our Savior and His love forever!		When forgiveness seems like a difficult task, remember it is a mental choice, not a feeling.		3. Remember God knows best and His commands bring joy, not burden.	
<b>1 John 4:9-10</b> In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.				Many times we are required to make the mental choice to forgive even when we do not FEEL like forgiving. God knows this and when we try, the Lord softens hearts one to another!		<b>1 John 5:3</b> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.	
Realizing and appreciating the spirit of the covenant and sensing God’s great love for us is ultimately what should bring us to our knees in humility, with a desire to live the covenant life with Him!				<b>Also read D&amp;C 6:4b</b>		4. Share your list with an accountability partner on a regular basis.	
<b>Also read John 3:16</b>		<b>Also read D&amp;C 76</b>				<b>Also read Poem by Bill J. Dollins at <a href="http://www.orgb.org">www.orgb.org</a> Resource Page</b>	
						<b>May Women’s Devotionals (Wk 2)</b>	

## We Need Zion Now

God is calling us to come up to a higher level, to "Keep His Commandments" and to "Build Up His Kingdom."

He promises that if we sanctify ourselves He will empower us.



**D&C 140:5c** The work of preparation and the perfection of My Saints go forward slowly, and Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of My people justifies.

**D&C 102:2c** And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I cannot receive her unto Myself.

**D&C 56:4c** Behold, thus saith the Lord unto My people, You have many things to do, and to repent of; for, behold, your sins have come up unto Me, and are not pardoned, because you seek to counsel in your own ways. And your hearts are not satisfied. And ye obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.

Heed the warnings -- hurry and obey!  
It is not too late if we will begin today!

**Romans 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; who love not the truth, but remain in unrighteousness.

Do we love God? If so, we will embrace the truth, by going forth and keeping all of His Commandments!

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Preparation Guide for June Women's Devotionals:

Do I want Zion? When will I recognize that if I desire to build up the cause of Zion that "keeping the commandments" is the key and it is time to do this -- even past time!

**Alma 16:57-58** And now it came to pass that Alma said unto him, Behold, I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart; yea, that ye will still resist the Spirit of the Truth, that thy soul may be destroyed.

Let me no longer be in rebellion of God and His Truth -- when I refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit and do not keep the commandments I am refusing to obey God. If I have a hard heart and resist, my very soul can be destroyed.

**D&C 6:3-4** Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep My commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion....

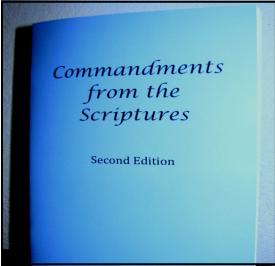
The Holy Spirit of Truth must become a part of my daily life so I will be led into the right pathway -- open my blind eyes, unfog my cloudy mind, soften my heart -- so I may desire to keep all the commandments of God. Once the desire is created in me, He promises to assist me in being obedient to Him!

In the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church this guidance is given to those who seek to be a part of Zion:

1. We are required to keep all the commandments.
2. We are required to embrace the truth.

Action = "Seek to keep all the commandments of God and embrace the truth, knowing this is impossible of and by myself. Pray often. Ask God to assist by the power of His Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Truth."

[Read D&C 10 and 11](#)

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>June</u>
We say we love Christ. Do we?		Read Hymn #180		Read Hymn #371		Consider blessings received when keeping commandments and consequences if not kept.	
<b>1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments....</b>		"Love ye Me and love all people; love as I have loved you. This your calling; this My purpose; thus be My disciples true."		"Trust and Obey"		<b>D&amp;C 81:3b and Alma 17:47-48</b> I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.	
		<b>Deuteronomy 11:13-32</b> Hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to LOVE the Lord your God, and to SERVE Him with all your heart and with all your soul....		Since the creation of mankind, God has given guidance and commandments. <u>See Genesis 2:19-22</u>		<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>	
In the introduction to the booklet on the commandments, Gwendoline Sorensen wrote, " <u>Christ said</u> , 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'" (John 14:15)		The celestial law of Zion is the law of love. Jesus said all the law and the prophets hang on two commandments: <b>love God and love your neighbor</b> .		Adam and Eve suffered for not keeping the specific commandment God gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden. We know what happened:		<b>Isaiah 48:18</b>	
<b>John 15:10 If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.</b>		LOVE GOD with all your heart, might, mind and strength:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eve was beguiled by Satan</li> <li>Eve ate the forbidden fruit</li> <li>Eve persuaded Adam to eat also</li> </ul>		<b>D&amp;C 24:4b and 100:2c</b>	
Love of God, therefore, is our motivation for keeping the commandments. Surely we all wish to abide in Christ's love.				Because of disobedience, they were expelled from the garden and had to endure sorrow and hard work to make a living.		<b>D&amp;C 92:3a</b> Verily I say unto you... if you keep not My commandments the love of the Father shall not continue with you; therefore you shall walk in darkness.	
Without God's help, keeping the commandments is an overwhelmingly difficult task; in fact, it is impossible! But with God all things are possible. <u>Read Philippians 4:13</u>				<u>See Genesis 4:5-6</u>		<b>BLESSINGS</b>	
More than 100 verses in the Scriptures talk about keeping the commandments. Seek them out and study them each day.		LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR as Christ loved us. Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:		God gave a new commandment to Adam and Eve: worship God and make an offering to the Lord. This time Adam was obedient. An angel appeared and asked him why he was offering sacrifices to the Lord. Adam replied: "I know not, save the Lord commanded me." Adam had learned to have trust and to be obedient.		<b>Luke 21:36</b>	
<u>Also read Moroni 7:53</u>				Realizing God gives commandments <i>for our good</i> , we know that by keeping them we will be blessed. Of greater importance, though, <i>we keep the commandments because we love the Lord!</i>		<b>Deuteronomy 5:29, 15:4-5</b>	
						<b>D&amp;C 5:6d-e, 6:1c, 12:3b, 90:1a</b>	
						<b>1 Nephi 5:59, 7:69</b>	
						<b>Mosiah 1:88-91</b>	
						<b>Revelation 2:26</b>	
						<b>Genesis 9:21</b> When men should keep all My commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto Myself.	
						Arthur Oakman: "... love Him with all your heart, mind, might, and strength ... love your fellow men ... the essence of the kingdom of God."	
						What greater blessing can we have than God's abiding love, which allows us in turn to love our neighbor as God loves us, and thereby to keep His commandments? That is Zion!	
						<u>Also read Deuteronomy 11:13-2</u>	
		<u>Also read D&amp;C 17:4a-b</u>					
		<u>Also 1 John 4:21</u>					

## WE MUST KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS !

**Psalm 5:3** My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.



Elder Eric Odida of Kenya preached at Waldo during the summer series in 2015. Like our July Devotionals, he preached on the very subjects of Looking Upwards and Being of One Heart and One Mind! We were amazed!! When God wants to send forth a concept He sends it forth in many different ways.

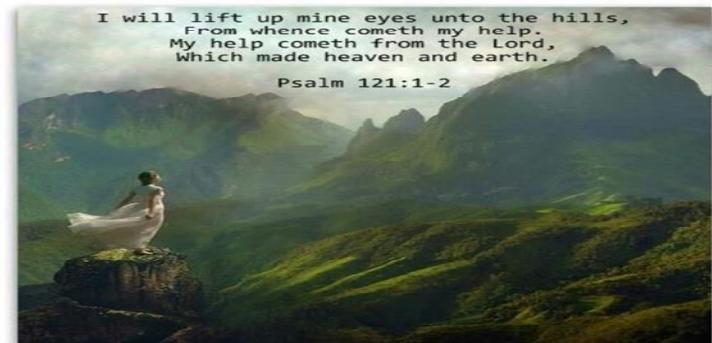
Eric quoted this Scripture from Luke 21:24-27: "...And then His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, tell us concerning Thy coming? And He answered them, and said, in the generation in which the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, like the sea and the waves roaring. The earth also shall be troubled, and the waters of the great deep; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.

If we are going to fulfill our role individually and as a people, to build Zion, we must begin to look upward and grow spiritually. We must become of one heart and one mind with Him and thus with each other. We must move quickly and do those things our patriarchs and most importantly our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ has asked us to do. May we set our eyes upon Jesus and follow Him.

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Preparation Guide for July Women's Devotionals:

High Priest Leonard Smith of OGRB gave this council by the power of the Spirit in 1994: "I would challenge you to look to the future and approach the challenge and perplexities that are about. From here we look to our Jesus for the light and truth. Pressing times are upon you My People; put your hands in My Hands and let Me lead you into new frontiers of discipleship and worship."

Elder Rob Bird of Lexington gave an inspired message at our CMRB reunion in 2013: "Practice My Kingdom in your homes each day until each home will be a beacon of light in your neighborhood. Exercise the celestial principles and laws in your branches so My Spirit will be poured out in greater power than you have witnessed or imagined...Don't ever underestimate the value of the gift of the Holy Spirit, or the power of a fervent prayer, or fail to treasure up and feast upon the promises found in My Word, or the strength found in obedience of My two great commandments."

In the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church these challenges are given to those who seek to be a part of Zion:

3. We are required to look upward.
4. We are required to be of one heart and one mind.

Action = "Keep my eyes on Jesus through spiritual disciplines of prayer, Scripture study, fasting and consecration of my time and talents to God. Do this daily and not give up. A daily habit and lifestyle. Not overcome by problems and trials of life because I will keep my eyes on Jesus. No contentions between me and brothers/sisters in the faith. Pray for God's help in these matters. Pray for charity in my heart at all times. Ask God to help me obey and follow the first and great commandment...I will look up!"

Matthew 22:35-39

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>July</u>
Read Hymn #101 (Tan Hymnal)		The Everlasting Covenant		"One Heart and One Mind"		"One Heart and One Mind"	
<u>"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,</u> Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace."		<u>Genesis 9:21-23</u> And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all My commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the City of Enoch which I have caught up unto Myself. And this is Mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall <u>embrace the truth, and look upward</u> , then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is Mine everlast- ing covenant, which I made.		Let us respond to God with great happiness, joy and unity!		Contentions are a huge roadblock to becoming of one heart and one mind. May we even contend for the faith without descending into disagreement with anger.	
<u>2 Corinthians 3:16</u> Nevertheless, when their heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.				<u>Examples of Unity</u>		<u>D&amp;C 136:3b</u> Contentions, bickerings, and strife are unseemly, hinder the work of the church, and should not find place among the Saints.	
<u>Psalm 40:12-13, 16-17</u> For innumer- able evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me....Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; let such as love Thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me; Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.		<u>Remember</u> faith, hope, charity qualifies us for the work. But we also need much more! We need virtue, knowledge, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, humility and diligence. Yes, diligence in keeping all the commandments and keeping our eyes on God and our hearts set on building up the cause of His Kingdom!		<u>Acts 2:41-47</u> (After the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples shortly after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.) Then they that gladly received His word were baptized .... And all that believed were together, and had <u>all things common ... with gladness and singleness of heart</u> , praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily ....		<u>It is hard, or even impossible,</u> to have contentions when our hearts are full of the love of God--when we are keeping the first great commandment to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and we are keeping the second great commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.	
Keep my hold firm on the Rod of Iron. Keep my feet on the straight and narrow path. Keep my eyes focused on the beautiful and white fruit tree.		We know that if we will keep the Vision of God's Kingdom (Zion) before us, everything else will fall into place!		<u>Characteristics of Unity</u>		<u>Ezekiel 11:19-20</u> And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; That they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.	
<u>1 Nephi 2:65-69</u> ... And it came to pass that they did come forth and commence in the path which led to the tree....		<u>Also read D&amp;C 45:12d-14</u>		• Just dealings		<u>As we move toward becoming</u> one with Christ and the Father, we will begin to have more and more of the nature of God within us. We will become love, even as God is love.	
Focus on Christ. Memorize His Word through Scriptures and Hymns. Write down blessings and testimonies for recall.		<u>Also read D&amp;C 34:6a</u>		• All things common		What am I willing to do to have more of Christ and less of me?	
<u>Also read Psalm 5:3</u>		<u>Also read Matthew 6:38</u>		• No contentions/disputations, no rich/poor, no bond/free			
				• Miracles in name of Jesus		<u>Also read Mosiah 9:39-41 (Covenant)</u>	
				• Industrious rebuilders		<u>Also read Moroni 7:50-53 (Charity)</u>	
				• Commandment keepers			
				• Continual fasting, prayer, meeting together often to pray and hear the Word of the Lord			
				• No divisions			
				• All one--the children of Christ			
				Contention will cease when the love of God dwells in the hearts of the people!			

## A RIGHTEOUS PRAYER FOR ZION !

### Hymns of the Restoration #84:

"We'll go forward unto Zion, We will pledge our lives to Thee;  
May Thy gentle Spirit's whisper lead Thy saints to victory."

Psalms 15:1-5 Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill of Zion? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord; sweareth not falsely to hurt any man, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Let us not be selfish, but let us overcome our sins--those things that separate us from God and His righteousness. He will give us the power to overcome, since it is not by our own strength that we can repent. His love conquers all!

Genesis 7:23 And the Lord called His people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them.

Zion will be built by those who have learned to dwell in righteousness before it physically comes.

Moroni 7:52 Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them.

Is it possible to love God and not others?

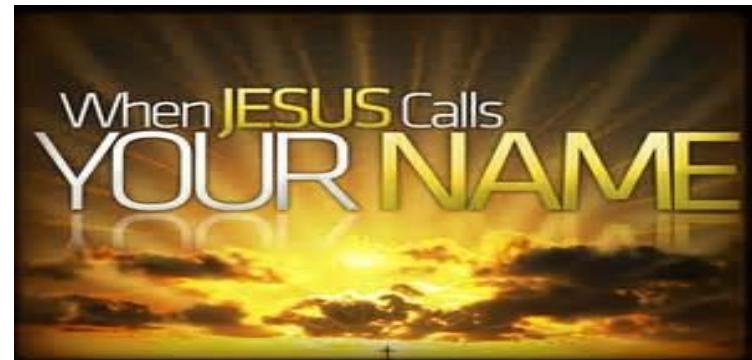
I John 4:20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also.

Picture someone in your mind that you avoid or just don't want to be around. Perhaps this person irritates you with their words or actions. The amount of love you feel for that person is how much you love God. Let's consciously choose to do what is right[eous]!

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.orgb.org](http://www.orgb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Preparation Guide for August Women's Devotionals:

2 Nephi 14:12 But behold I say unto you, that ye must pray always, and not faint: that ye must not perform anything unto the Lord, save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that He will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

Are all of my decisions--my daily choices--pleasing to God and in accordance with His commandments?

- I will respond to God's guidance/direction, choosing loving righteousness, as I actively succor those who stand in need.
- I will pray daily that He will open my eyes to those around me.
- I will seek ways to share my wealth--my blessings both temporal and spiritual-- with others. For all I have is really not mine anyway--it all belongs to God!

In all areas of my life, I will attempt to be righteous that I might be prepared to meet my God face-to-face.

1 Nephi 7:62 For he (Satan) hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth.

In the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church these challenges are given to those who seek to be a part of Zion:

5. We are required to seek out and dwell in righteousness.
6. We are required to impart of our substance.

Action = "We are required to seek out and dwell in righteousness; and thereby we are compelled to impart of our substance to those that stand in need."

Genesis 7:23-24

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>August</u>
Read Hymn #377 (Blue Hymnal)  "Give of your best to the Master; Naught else is worthy His love."		"Charity is the pure love of Christ."  <u>Mosiah 2:30-31</u> Perhaps thou shalt say, The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance, that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just. But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done, he perisheth for ever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.		"What if I can't?"  It is not only monetary riches that God has commanded that we impart to our brothers and sisters. We are not exempt if we do not own riches.		And the survey says:  Am I lazy? YES Do I lack self-discipline? YES Am I selfish? VERY	
<u>Mosiah 2:43</u> I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.				<u>Mosiah 9:60-64</u> And again, Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; if he have more abundantly, he should impart more abundantly; and he that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. And thus they should impart of their substance, of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul. And this he said unto them, having been commanded of God; And they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another, both temporally and spiritually, according to their needs and their wants.		<u>D&amp;C 102:2b</u> ...but, behold they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh Saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom...	
Don't be afraid to ask someone if you can provide for them.  The instruction in D&C 85:38a is that we should LEARN to do this. God desires to teach by His Spirit and His Word. Ask Him where to find those in need and trust that He will point them out, if we truly seek.		Get rid of judgmental thoughts!  Everyone is different. Let God decide who is deserving of our help--rather, His substance--for it is not our substance nor is it our decision, when we are His.		<u>Stewardship over gifts &amp; talents:</u> <u>using them for His glory!</u> <u>We can do many things to be helpful to others:</u>		Imparting of our substance is characteristic of saints and required by the Celestial Law.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share items in storage that are no longer needed.</li> <li>Give foods we love; and, provide good nutrition.</li> <li>Spend less money on frivolous things; instead, consider more how to focus on God and acting in ways that will fulfill His promises.</li> </ul> <p>Putting God's desires first is a self-discipline of our money, our time, and our effort.</p> <p><u>Also read Luke 3:15-16</u> <u>Also read D&amp;C 85:38a</u></p>		Pray for the sick. Visit them. Minister to their needs.  God has told us to pray that He will supply us with the LOVE needed to do His will.  Allow Him to flood your heart with that love that only flows from His heart. This is His desire for us!		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pray, console, cry with, listen</li> <li>Clean, organize</li> <li>Mow, garden, repair</li> <li>Feed, visit, read to</li> <li>Write letter, call, make a gift</li> <li>Laundry, dishes</li> <li>Massage, care for the sick</li> </ul>		<p>We need to be obedient!</p> <p>The highest goal in our life is to walk with Jesus Christ in His wonderful Kingdom.</p> <p>There is no greater joy!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why then are we slothful and disobedient?</li> <li>Why do we procrastinate?</li> </ul> <p>If we want so much to be selected as God's jewels--let us now be inspired.</p> <p>Let us pray for one another and continue to strive together for the Kingdom of God--ZION!</p> <p><u>Also read Luke 12:50-52</u> <u>Also read Moroni 7:52-53</u></p>	

## C o m e   U n t o   J e s u s

### Is our "response" pleasing to the Lord?

We were told, through our Brother, Elder Don Cutshall, in August, 2015, that the **devotionals** written and put together by several dozen of our women in the Oak Grove Restoration Branch that year, were "pleasing to the Lord."

As you know, the **devotionals** were developed around the "Spiritual Preparation of the Body of Christ" pamphlet prepared by our Patriarchs in 2004. We did this because of Elder Ed Story's message in June 2014 calling our branch to obey and be cleansed; becoming transformed and made new creatures worthy of His Invitation. Have we forgotten this?

Additionally, these "**Stepping Stones**" have been prepared each month in this past year to highlight those **devotionals** and keep them before us and to assist us in our daily spiritual growth.

We must grow! We cannot stand still. There is no such thing as standing still in spiritual matters. If we stand still we will slowly decline.

**D&C 32:3e ...wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom; for, behold, verily, verily I say unto you, that I come quickly; even so. Amen**



### WATCH and BE READY

Beginning next month, there will be a new type of bulletin insert -- a resource -- to assist us in growing even closer to God! We must, "Trim Our Lamps and Be Ready for the Bridegroom."

We hope you will actually be inspired to **re-read the full devotionals** from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our lives--for the cause of Zion!

Questions: Contact Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Preparation Guide for September Women's Devotionals:

**Revelation 22:14-17** Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.... I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Why not make this personal to you by truly accepting the most important invitation: Come unto Jesus!

- Obey His commandments and be repentant.
- Have a contrite heart and seek Jesus through daily prayer and study.
- Make this invitation a priority in life.
- Follow His example and carry His image in your countenance and in your actions.

Have you accepted His invitation to Come?

Remember, His invitation to Come may be the most important one to receive, the most important one to ever accept, and the most important invitation you will ever offer to others!

In the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church these challenges are given to those who seek to be a part of Zion:

7. We are required to come unto Jesus.

Action = "Come unto Jesus."

**Revelation 22:16-17**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>September</u>
What is our response when our Lord calls us to come to Him?		COME UNTO ME By William Baxter		Listen to His Words. What is important to Him? What does He want us to hear?		Are we like others who have chosen to <i>Come unto Jesus</i> ?	
<b>Moroni 10:29-30</b> Yea, <u>come unto Christ</u> , and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, <u>then is His grace sufficient for you</u> , that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ; ... <u>then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God</u> , through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.		"Come unto me," the Saviour cries, All ye by sin oppressed; Confess My name before the world, And I will give you rest.		<b>Mark 1:12-13</b> Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God; and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.		Read/share the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, found in the New Testament of the Holy Scriptures. All ages!	
His grace, while extended freely, does exact a response from us:		Assume My mild and easy yoke, And by obedience prove, Your heart's devotion to My cause, Your gratitude and love.		<b>John 4</b> ...Whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.		<b>Consider the stories of praise:</b> The shepherds with haste at the birth of Christ; aged Simon and Anna waiting at the temple to hold Jesus in their arms; wise men following the star and thereby being rewarded with finding Jesus and worshiping, praising God and sharing their joy with others!	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come repenting of sins (do not be rebellious).</li> <li>• Come with a broken heart and a contrite spirit (like a little child).</li> <li>• Come with humility before Christ and others (reconcile in all ways possible).</li> <li>• Come and do His will (willing to sell all we have for His sake, His work, and for His people).</li> </ul> <p>If we come unto Him under His conditions we will see His face!</p> <p><u>Also read 1 John 1:8-9</u>  <u>Also read Matthew 5:5</u>  <u>Also read 3 Nephi 5:71-72</u></p>		In meekness strive to do My will, All other teachers flee, Lay every earthly trust aside, And learn alone from Me.  The stores of wisdom all are Mine, And to each trustful heart, Treasures of knowledge, deep and pure, I gladly will impart.  I am of meek and lowly heart, And those who follow Me, Must cast all lofty pride away, And learn humility.  Through life, then, humbly follow on; In death, lean on My breast; Fear not the dark and gloomy grave, Beyond it lies your rest.  [The Millennial Harbinger (October 1851): 600.]		<b>Matthew 6:38</b> Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.		<b>Consider the stories of healing:</b> Cast unclean spirits out [and healed] a man at Capernaum and also at the house of Simon and Andrew; healed lepers; healed the paralyzed man lowered through the roof.	
				<b>Mark 8:43</b> He that layeth down his life for My sake and the gospel's, shall come with Him, and shall be clothed with His glory in the cloud on the right hand of the Son of Man.		<b>Consider the stories of forgiveness and teaching:</b> the Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, woman washed His feet with her tears; sinners full of gratitude to Jesus for chance to reverse sinful ways.	
				<b>Luke 17</b> The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you.		Jesus wants us to <i>come to Him</i> . Like those who came before, will we also <i>come unto Him</i> by believing, repenting, listening, learning, and proclaiming what He has done?	
				Certainly, if we <i>Come to Jesus</i> , we will see that being students of His words will bring us closer to Him.			
				<b>Also read Matthew 5 and 13</b>			
		<b>Also read 3 Nephi 4</b>				<b>Also read Matt., Mark, Luke, John</b>	
		<b>Also read D&amp;C 85:18b</b>					

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth

Ladies (and members and friends of the Church of Jesus Christ -- Oak Grove Restoration Branch), as you may know, the majority of our women's devotionals for last year were based on the 2004 pamphlet published by the Fellowship of Restoration Patriarchs entitled, "Spiritual Preparation of the Body of Christ."

This project was initiated due to the inspired message presented to Oak Grove, as received through Elder Ed Story in June, 2014, regarding the recommendations of the Patriarchs.

During the past year, as I read our monthly devotionals, I began to sense that the guidelines and counsel presented in the pamphlet were truly "Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth."

This coming year, on each Communion Sunday, you will see one of these "Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth" in your bulletin.

We would not want to leave behind the 2004 Patriarchs' pamphlet, Ed Story's inspired message, or the devotionals and preparations created by the Women's Department in 2014-2015.

The monthly "Devotionals and Consideration" and "Preparation Guide for Devotionals" were far too extensive to absorb in one sitting, so we will pull some of the highlights from each one to share with you afresh--that we may follow the stepping stones and continue to grow spiritually.

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page.

May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our daily lives--for the cause of Zion!

by Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016



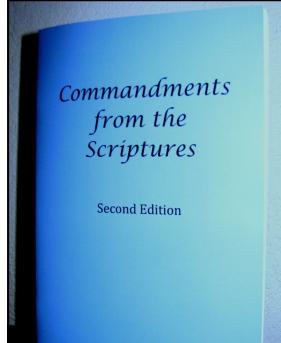
### Preparation Guide for October Women's Devotionals:

**Remember = A List, A Plan and A Goal** are all three **Keystones for change**. If you do something for 21 days it becomes a habit. Let us continue to grow change and become transformed. The goal is set before us to Build Up the Cause of Zion.

**D&C 94:5f** Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her, but if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.

**First thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** "Am I willing to deny myself now, the things of this world that cannot be taken into Thy kingdom?"

**Action = "Make a written list of the activities in which you currently participate that cannot be taken into the Kingdom, and work diligently to eliminate them from your life."**

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>October</u>
Make yourself ready, for the Bridegroom is at the door. Zion calls to us. World conditions are worsening. We must quickly build up God's Kingdom in this place.		Read Hymn #180: "Admonition"		Read Hymn #63: "Let us pray for one another, for the day is fading fast."		In D&C 85:36-37 God calls us "His Friends" and tells us to assemble together. He challenges us to study His words and learn of Him through Faith and Study.	
<b>D&amp;C 140:5c</b> The work of preparation and the perfection of My Saints go forward slowly, and Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of My people justifies;		Let us examine ourselves and consider if we are slothful in keeping God's commandments.		Do you look around you and see night growing stronger in recent events in the world?		Consider what God is asking you to do in this scripture.	
<b>D&amp;C 140:5d</b> but My word shall not fail, neither will My promises, for the foundation of the Lord standeth sure.		Over and over again we have been told to keep His Commandments.		Are you developing good prayer habits?		Could you come to church more often?	
<b>Romans 12:2-3</b> And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.		<b>D&amp;C 6:3a</b> Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep My commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.		Ask yourself how you can improve your prayer life and set a goal.		Are you daily reading and studying His words?	
Pray; ask God to open your mind to that which you need to change in your life to prepare yourself for Zion and Christ's return. We need to become transformed. Start this very week with at least one change.		 A small booklet titled "Commandments from the Scriptures" Second Edition, published by the Oak Grove Women's Department in 1983. The cover is blue with white text.		Make a commitment to come to prayer meeting on Wednesday nights and join with the body of Christ as we pray for one another.		Consider what you need to do to improve in this area.	
		Note: Sherrie Smith recently revised and expanded the above booklet, which was first published by the Oak Grove Women's Department in 1983. It is an excellent guide for studying commandments found throughout the Holy Scriptures (Inspired Version), the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.		<b>Alma 16:219</b> Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto Him; cry unto Him when ye are in your fields; yea, over all your flocks; cry unto Him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening.		Make a list and a plan, then move out in faith to accomplish these things--that your faith might grow stronger.	
						<b>D&amp;C 85:36a</b> Therefore, verily I say unto you, My friends, Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you; and as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning even by study, and also by faith.	

Last year, in our Women's November devotional, we recommended that each woman choose a "Spiritual Growth Sister." Did YOU do that? It always helps us to have someone to assist us and help us stay accountable when we seek to change habits in our lives.

I have to confess, I chose a Spiritual Growth Sister, but then did not stay in close contact with her as I should have. I plan to renew that relationship, if she will agree to do that, and stay in contact at least through emails--once a week this time.

In thinking about this I also feel impressed to say we can also use our Close Proximity Fellowship Groups as "Spiritual Growth Women's Groups," to help us stay accountable. Invite the women from your Close Proximity Fellowship Group into your home for a time of sharing and prayer. Share one with another the things you desire to change in your lives and then pray for one another. Meet often to encourage and help one another.

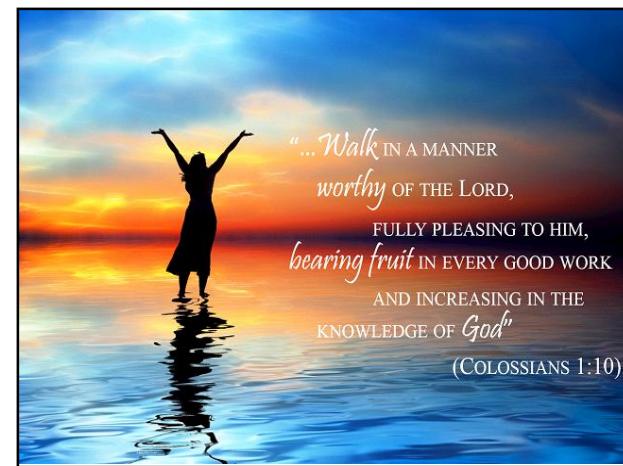


I know I will do better in the changes I desire to make in my life with the help of a friend or even a group of friends to help keep me accountable. I hope all of you will seek to make a new effort to find that "Spiritual Growth Sister or Group" to assist each other in staying accountable. If we work together we can help one another and grow together!

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.ogrb.org](http://www.ogrb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our daily lives--for the cause of Zion!

by Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth



### Preparation Guide for November Women's Devotionals:

**Remember =** If we want to become transformed into a Bride worthy of Christ when He returns, we must become arrayed in fine linen clean and white; we must become righteous. We need a plan to assist us in that transformation!

Remember, in recent studies they found people who made a list, along with a plan to follow, and set a goal, were much more likely to succeed in changing and developing new habits. God certainly knows what it takes for us to change; and I believe that is why the Patriarchs included, "A Plan of Action," for us to follow.

My sisters in the faith, with God's help and by helping each other, we can become adorned in robes of righteousness, prepared for Christ's return. God is calling us in many different ways to grow spiritually and come up higher.

**Second thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** "Do I have ought against any person?"

**Action =** **Make a written list of those persons that you have ought against or that you know have ought against you. Go to them and make things right by forgiving them and/or seeking their forgiveness."** [Read D&C 64:2d-2e](#)

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>November</u>
When Christ returns will we be caught unprepared, as His Bride, wearing a torn and stained wedding dress?		Read Hymn #180: “Admonition”		Read Hymn #63: “Let Us Pray for One Another.”		In D&C 85:36b we are called to organize ourselves, to prepare every needful thing and to establish a house of prayer, fasting, faith, learning, glory, order, and to be of God-organized so as to be ready for service.	
Think how diligently a bride prepares for her wedding--wearing the perfect dress and looking absolutely her best from head to toe.		Do our deeds and the way we live our lives show forth the plan and purpose of God? Are we involved in service to God? In the scriptures we are reminded that love is action. If we love God our actions will show it!		We live in a day when Satan has much power and strength.		Are you ready for service? Are you ready to serve God? Are you ready to give Him your best?	
How will we look when Christ returns? Will Christ be able to rejoice that we have made ourselves ready for His return? Will we be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white?		<b><u>1 John 3:18-19</u></b> My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue only; but in deed and in truth... hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.		<b><u>D&amp;C 3:1e</u></b> But be diligent unto the end; pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan, that do uphold his work.		<b><u>Proverbs 3:9-10</u></b> Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.	
<b><u>Isaiah 62:5</u></b> For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy God marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.		<b><u>Also read Matthew 24:49-53</u></b>		Prayer is powerful and if we will be faithful in praying for one another, we can through prayer, see our loved ones and ourselves delivered.		So let us give to God our first fruits:	
<b><u>Also read Alma 3:39-44</u></b>		The spoken word and ministry that has been given to our branch is calling us to prepare, to change, and be more committed to God's cause. When Christ returns will the actions and deeds in our daily lives reflect our love and service for Him?		<b><u>II Nephi 11:83</u></b> And the prayers of the faithful...		1. Fruit of daily prayer 2. Fruit of fasting often 3. Fruit of growing faith 4. Fruit of daily study and learning about Him 5. Fruit of living a life where our activities glorify Him 6. Fruit of a life sacrificed and lived out for God	
This very day, ask God to help you see the dirty spots/sins in your life. Ask Him to help you repent and change those things that are displeasing to Him. Become transformed into His image, and put on that wedding dress of righteousness.		What changes do YOU need to make in YOUR daily life so that the deeds in your life will magnify God and testify of your love for Him?		When we seek God in prayer He sends His Spirit to be with us.		Ask yourself how your daily activities are organized. Are they centered in Christ and His cause? Does God have priority in your life?	
				Let us become mighty in prayer. Let us stand in the gap for each other.		<b><u>Also read Alma 11:167-170</u></b> Note great power of prayer!	
						<b><u>Also read Matthew 6:31-37</u></b>	

## MY CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR ... JESUS

Last year, Ed's message came with a warning: **We must be transformed!** God told us, "I will not love the sin that takes up residence within you. Only when you truly repent in humility before Me will I be able to claim you as My own. You must be made anew, transformed, cleansed, before I allow you to be worthy of My celestial chambers to meet Me your God and [be] My Bride at the marriage supper, My celestial and holy table."

My sisters, here it is now a year later. Ask yourself, have I repented and made the changes Christ is calling me to make? Have I grown closer to the Lord in deed and purpose? Am I ready right now to go into the marriage supper of the Lamb, if the call went forth today? All of these questions are certainly something we should be considering. Hopefully, these questions will cause us to rethink some of our actions and commitments.

Here at this Holy Christmas season, what better gift can we offer to the Christ Child than a truly broken, repentant heart, a contrite spirit and a new commitment to obey all His Commandments in the coming year? Is not the offering of a repentant, humble and pure heart, dedicated to His Work the best gift of all to give to the Christ? What gift will you offer the Christ this Christmas?

**D&C 59:2a, e-f** Wherefore I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve Him. Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness; even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon My holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto thee to rest from thy labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High.

We hope you will actually be inspired to re-read the full devotionals from last year. See [www.orgb.org](http://www.orgb.org) Resource Page. May we continue to put the actions the Patriarchs recommended into our daily lives--for the cause of Zion!

by Pat Chadwick, Women's Leader, 2010-2016

## Stepping Stones for Spiritual Growth

### The Invitation



**Preparation Guide for December Women's Devotionals:** Last year, in September 2014, Elder Ed Story brought an inspired message to the Church of Jesus Christ--Oak Grove Restoration Branch. (If you don't have a copy, you can find it on the back of the 2015 women's calendar.)

The message brought by Ed started with this: "My children, who are willing to serve Me, listen to My word. I am offering you another invitation to come unto My fold for the last time, in these the last days and age to do My will." The Lord also told us, "You must obey, and be cleansed, and made new creatures before I allow you to be worthy of My invitation."

Are we worthy of the invitation? Can we really say we are on our way to becoming "new creatures"? If not, why not? Ladies, let's step out in faith and truly obey all God's commandments and see what happens. We can start by changing little things in our lives and setting our homes in order. Ask God to assist you in this very thing. By the very power of His Holy Spirit, He can and will assist us. We, of ourselves, are unable to overcome the sins in our lives and become transformed, but with God's help we can do it!

**Third thing listed in the guide prepared by the Patriarchs of the church:** "Is my house in order?"

Action = "Sit down as a family and discuss the needs of the family. Pray earnestly together for each other, having family prayer each day."

[Read D&C 90:6f](#)

<u>Week #1</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>Week #2</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>Week #3</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>Week #4</u>	<u>December</u>
When you read the story of Christ's birth, do you ever wonder why the wise men were the only ones searching for Him? Why were there not more people actively watching for Him? Do you think those same possible reasons apply today as we watch and prepare for His Second Coming?		Read Hymn #180: "Admonition"		Read Hymn #63: "Let Us Pray for One Another."		<u>D&amp;C 85:36b</u> says that our incomings, our outgoings, and all of our salutations shall be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High.	
1. Will WE forget or misunderstand the latter day prophecies, due to our own lack of study? 2. Will WE give up hope or decide WE don't care? 3. Do WE think it won't happen in OUR day? 4. Are WE too busy to actively seek Him?		"Time is ripe, My work must hasten! Who so will, may bide the hour. Naught can harm who God protecteth, elements confess His power. Up ye, then, to the high places I have bid you occupy! Peril waits upon the heedless, Grace upon the souls who try."		"Pray in faith and pray unceasing, to the God we love and trust. For our prayers are much availing, if we walk upright and just. Be not weary of exhorting, heed the lessons of each day; and that we may be unwavering, for each other let us pray."		1. What if during this Christmas season everything we did would be done in the name of the Lord? 2. What if we carried that on into the coming year? 3. What if every day we arose with the intent to let all our actions that day glorify God?	
<u>Ether 5:41</u> And now I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be, and abide in you forever. Amen.		<u>D&amp;C 135:2b</u> The hastening time is here and greater unity than ever before is necessary if the forces of opposition are to be met.	We are called to wait for Him and never give up; endure to the end and never waver.	<u>Psalms 40:1</u> I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.	Death could not hold Him. He dwells in heaven and hears our prayers!	Yes, surely, these actions will transform our lives! What a gift we will give to the Christ -- even that of a transformed life for Him!	<u>D&amp;C 77:2a</u> And now, verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient that all things be done unto My glory.
The Wise Men had to actively accept the invitation to go find the Christ child. Let us begin our journey and step out in faith to prepare ourselves for the Coming of our King!		God promises to one day wipe all tears from our eyes and to fill our hearts with peace and eternal joy.  Hold firm to His promises, dear sisters! He is coming!  Let us rejoice in the Christmas season, looking forward with joy and hope to that which is yet to come, even the return of our Lord and Savior as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.		Consider the direct line to heaven that is ours--it is never busy! Yes, we have access to instant messaging (think a prayer) and texting (write down a prayer). He always answers our prayers. We all love those "yes" answers, but sometimes He will say "no" or "wait" and then our faith is tested.	Prayers are powerful and God says they come up before Him as a sweet incense.	Again, as surely as we move forward to offer ourselves to Him, through spiritual improvements and renewed commitments, He blesses.	<u>Mosiah 1:56-57</u> And He never doth vary from that which He hath said; therefore, if ye do keep His commandments, He doth bless you, and prosper you.
		<u>Also read D&amp;C 108:10d</u>		<u>Also read Revelation 8:3-4</u>			