

FAITH THAT TAKES UP THE CROSS DAILY

Comparing the word of God to a seed, as Alma does, underscores the need for us to give regular place in our lives for planting that precious seed. We do this by regularly providing both the desire and the time to search and ponder by connecting the word (the doctrines of the kingdom) to daily life. Doing so enlarges one's soul, enlightens one's understanding, and increases one's faith. (See Alma 32:28–29.)

Desire, or even a particle of faith, can be enough initially to cause us to thus “give place” for planting gospel doctrines—“the word”—in our lives and nurturing the doctrines thereafter. The failure to do these simple basic things—planting and nurturing—underlies the subsequent failures of faith, whether in the failure to pay tithing, to pray, to understand personal trials, or to build a better marriage, and so forth.

The members' faith in the Brethren as living Apostles and prophets not only provides the needed direction but also clearly sustains those leaders in their arduous chores. There is more to it than this, however. Sustaining them also means that we realize those select men are conscious of their own imperfections; each is even grateful that the other Brethren have strengths and talents he may not have. The gratitude of the Brethren for being so sustained thus includes appreciation for members' willingness to overlook the imperfections of the overseers. The faithful realize the Apostles are working out their salvation, too, including the further development of the Christlike virtues. Serious discipleship requires us all to be “on the way to perfection” rather than thinking we are already in the arrival lounge.

Lorenzo Snow said of the Prophet Joseph Smith's minor imperfections that he marveled how the Lord could use him, anyway, even with those imperfections. This gave Lorenzo Snow hope that the Lord might be able to use him, too, even with his imperfections.

However, even with the awareness of the imperfections in each other, we should not let our own weaknesses go unchallenged or unremoved, even though we need time and

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long-suffering in which to eliminate these weaknesses or to make them into strengths.

Since faith is markedly increased by "the word," it is vital to use every opportunity to hear or read "the word" regularly, even daily, if possible. Brigham Young hungered for the word in his early discipleship. While he was not easily impressed by anyone, his regard for Joseph was deep, and it never left him. Of this prophet-pupil relationship, Brigham, now himself the prophet, said: "An angel never watched [Joseph] closer than I did, and that is what has given me the knowledge I have today. I treasure it up, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus, to help my memory when information is wanted."⁴

How blessed we in succeeding generations have been that Brigham listened so carefully to Joseph! Brigham's harvest became our harvest. Someday perhaps we shall learn, too, how the Prophet gained reciprocally from his faithful friend and pupil, Brigham.

Our desires matter greatly. The linkage between our desires and our deeds is so clear. "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9).

If our desires are strong and righteous, they can move us to the needed daily actions (see Alma 32). Abraham is a classic case. He genuinely desired greater happiness. He thus desired to have the priesthood blessings his fathers had once had, even though his home environment apparently was bad. Abraham let those desires work in him until the day came when faith moved him away to start a different life. He certainly "gave place" by giving up his status quo in order to establish the better life he desired in "another place of residence." (See Abraham 1:1-2.) His sights were really set on the City of God, for he desired a heavenly country (see Hebrews 11:10, 16).

Abraham didn't start off fully developed, however. He was required to go through various and trying developmental experiences. Abraham finally acquired full spiritual submissive-