

Qualities To Emulate In Our Everyday Lives

First Invitation from Our Savior

- 3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- 5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- 7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- 9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- 10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

(Matthew 5:3-12)

Application Exercise

The teachings in the Beatitudes show the character traits of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Remember, spiritual growth is a gradual process grounded in the way of life we choose to live, and no one is perfect.

Read each item below carefully. Choose the most appropriate response from the response key relative to how true that statement is about you. Your goal is to be honest with yourself and accept that you will rate yourself better on some items than on others.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

- ___ I am teachable, not conceited or boastful (poor in spirit).
- ___ I seek the comfort of the Lord through prayer in times of mourning and sorrow.
- ___ I am gentle, forgiving and benevolent of others (meek).
- ___ I hunger and thirst after righteousness as much as I want food and water.
- ___ I forgive others who have offended or wronged me (mercy).
- ___ I have no desire to do evil, but to do good continually (pure in heart).

- ___ I am kind and patient with others, even when they are hard to get along with (peacemaker).
- ___ I face adversity and afflictions calmly and hopefully (persecuted for righteousness).

From your ratings above, identify which beatitude you would like to improve on in the coming week by asking yourself which step am I struggling to climb at this time?

What must change in my heart, mind, and actions to develop this Beatitude so I can progress?

How will developing the character traits associated with this Beatitude help me to become a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?

To help you remember the character trait you want to improve on this week, write on a piece of paper or type into your smartphone the following phrase:

“This week I will be more _____.”

Use the reminder you captured in the blank space to help you develop the Christlike quality you want to live better.

Another way to help develop the individual qualities exemplified in the Beatitudes is to prepare a five-minute talk on the character trait you wish to improve on then share your thoughts with a friend. After you share your talk, discuss what impressed them most about your remarks and how they think your remarks apply to living a more Christlike life.

Loyalty, Value, and Purity Or Be Good For Nothing

First Warning from Our Savior

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

(Matthew 5:13)

Application Exercise

Just as salt preserves and flavors the food we eat, our relationship with Heavenly Father and the Savior is preserved and flavored when we obey their teachings and keep their commandments. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What happens to you when you allow impurities (unclean thoughts, influences, and actions) into your life?

2. What are some of the impure (unclean) influences of the world that you have been exposed to in the last week that contaminated you?

3. How will you avoid this contamination this week?

4. What did you do this last week to help preserve and protect your purity?

1. How will you protect and preserve your purity this week

Another way to appreciate the importance of pure salt in our everyday lives is to bake two batches of your favorite cookies. In one batch bake the cookies exactly how the recipe directs. In the second batch prepare the cookies exactly as you did in the first batch, but hold out the salt or prepare popcorn with and without salt then have your friend taste the difference.

As you share the batch of cookies properly prepared or eat the salted (flavored) popcorn discuss how important salt is to the taste of most foods then discuss how for us to be considered the salt of the earth we must develop Christlike qualities like those taught in the Beatitudes. You might also want to discuss how obedience is the first law of heaven and what specific things you can do today to protect yourself from the unclean influences of the world.

Our Good Works Glorify Our Heavenly Father

Second Invitation from Our Savior

- 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

(Matthew 5:14-16)

Application Exercise

Consider the importance of light in a darkening world to show how light and darkness can't coexist in the same space at the same time.

Get a candle or a flashlight then light them in a room you can darken, place them under a bucket or turn off the lights after everyone is still. Ask those who are with you how well they can see each other? Then slowly pull back the bucket covering the light or gradually turn up the lights and ask how well they see now until you have fully pulled up the bucket covering the light.

Discuss what it was like in the room when the candle was fully covered and how the room changed as the light was exposed. Questions you could ask to help illustrate the importance of letting our light shine:

- In what ways can you better let your light (or example) shine?
How has someone else's example been like a light in your life?
What are you going to do differently tomorrow to be a better Christian than you were today?

Next read Paul's counsel to Timothy on how to let your light shine by being an example of the believers: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

When we live the commandments of God, we surround ourselves with the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we have this spiritual light we no longer wander in the strange and darkened paths of the adversary, becoming lost, discouraged, depressed, and fearful.

Walking in the light of the gospel helps us not to lose sight of our eternal goals. Now rate the strength of your light as an example of a believer that blesses the lives of those around you:

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

_____ In "word," I have a deepening knowledge of the Word of God and make a personal study of the Gospel of Jesus Christ a priority in my life.

_____ In "conversation," I use language that lifts and inspires not harms or demeans others.

_____ In "charity," I strive to help the sick, lonely and discouraged through the pure love of Christ.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

____ In “spirit,” I radiate the love of Christ through kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and goodwill towards others.

____ In “faith,” I trust in the Lord and His gospel plan by nourishing thoughts that guide me to take positive actions recognizing that faith and doubt cannot exist at the same time in my mind.

____ In “purity,” I have peace of mind because I am clean in body, mind, and spirit through my obedience to the Word of God.

Consider how you are doing relative to these six attributes of the believers taught by Paul to Timothy. From your ratings above, identify which attribute you want to improve on to better qualify to be a light to the world through your example?

What must change in your heart, mind, and actions to develop this attribute, so you are a better light unto others?

To help you remember the attribute of a believer you want to improve on this week, write on a piece of paper or type into your smartphone the following phrase:

“This week I will be more _____.”

Use the reminder you captured in the blank space to develop the attribute of a believer you want to live better.

Jesus Came To Fulfill Not To Destroy

Second Warning from Our Savior

- 17 ¶ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
- 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
- 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- 20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:17-20)

Application Exercise

The Savior fulfilled the law of Moses when he atoned for our sins in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the Cross at Calvary. Jesus said that his disciples' righteousness should "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20). What do you think was lacking from the "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees, particularly since they thought they were living the law of Moses as they understood it?

If the scribes and Pharisees had observed the law as given to Moses, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Unfortunately, they were too focused on outward appearances of the Mosaic law ignoring the importance of inner faithfulness.

Look again at the beatitudes found in Matthew 5:3-12 and consider how important being humble or "poor in spirit," willing to allow the Lord to comfort you when you "mourn," being "meek" helps you acknowledge a greater power beyond yourself. What does it look like to you when you are meek and able to comfort those that mourn?

Think how when you "hunger and thirst after righteousness" as a "peacemaker" helps you to be "merciful" and "pure in heart." Those who have these character traits are those who will see God and know who He is. How do you know when you are a peacemaker who is merciful and who does hunger and thirst after righteousness?

Do Not Become Angry With Others

Third Warning from Our Savior

- 21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
- 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.
- 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
- 25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.
- 26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

(Matthew 5:21-26)

Application Exercise

You are better able to monitor and manage your frustration and stress that leads to anger when you choose to respond rather than react. When you respond, you make a positive and constructive mental adjustment.

When you react, it is purely emotional and rarely does anything to improve the situation; often it makes it worse. That is why we call for Emergency Response Teams, not Emergency Reaction Teams when we are in life and death situations.

When you simply react, you go with your gut emotional instinct, with little thought of the long-range consequences. When you respond, your brain is fully engaged, and your self-awareness is high. As a result, you have the long-term big picture in mind which helps you work through emotionally charged encounters.

Think back to the last time you got frustrated with someone. In that situation did you choose to respond or did you react?

If you reacted instead of responded how long was it before you lost control of your attitude and became angry?

In life, there are always going to be challenges to overcome, and there are going to be people that push your buttons. What are some of the hazards you encounter that set you back, knock you down, or make you angry?

What can you do differently to avoid anger when faced with one of life's many challenges?

(keep your faith; trust in the Lord; assume innocence)

Everything you accomplish in life will be the direct or indirect result of someone else's help. There is no limit to what you can accomplish or the joy that you can live with when you live without anger for another human being. Use the following to assess if you live with the essential behaviors required for building lasting and mutually supportive relationships.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

___ It is easy for me to accept others unconditionally?

___ By being trustworthy, I am someone others can trust?

___ I enjoy doing nice things without expecting anything in return?

___ Being loyal, even when it may not be easy is important to me?

___ I listen to understand another's point of view before I form any judgments?

Reflect on your responses to the above questions and determine what you will do differently to build better relationships with those you interact, particularly those that are the most difficult to get along with.

Do Not Lust In Your Heart

Fourth Warning and Second Higher Law from Our Savior

- 27 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.
29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.
30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.
31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

(Matthew 5:27-32)

Application Exercise

Consider the difference between Joseph the eleventh son of Jacob and first son of Rachel who was sold into slavery by his brothers and David who was born into humble circumstances yet rose to be a powerful King in Israel.

Joseph was trusted by Potiphar, a wealthy officer of Pharaoh (see Genesis 39:5-6) who when Potiphar's wife tried to tempt him to be unfaithful with her (see Genesis 39:11-12) he immediately removed himself from the situation. How can we follow Joseph's example when tempted?

What excuses might Joseph have used to justify giving in to the advances of Potiphar's wife?

What excuses do people offer today to try to justify moral transgressions?

Why are these excuses not valid justifications?

Unfortunately, Joseph also shows us that we can be subjected to punishment for being virtuous. Because he resisted the advances of Potiphar's wife (see Genesis 39:12-20) Joseph went from being overseer of Potiphar's household to being a prisoner. Discuss the increasing pressure in today's world to be immoral and how you can resist this pressure.

Even though Joseph was in prison, the Lord was with him (see Genesis 39:21-23) because he continued in faith rather than questioning or blaming God for the imprisonment that resulted from being virtuous. How have you been like Joseph in turning bad experiences and circumstances into good ones? You may want to read Romans 8:28 during this discussion.

Later we learn in Genesis 40-41 that the Lord had a divine purpose in allowing Joseph to be falsely imprisoned. In prison, Joseph correctly interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's servants. He then interpreted Pharaoh's dreams about cattle and corn. As a result of his inspired interpretation, Joseph was made ruler over all Egypt under Pharaoh. Through his leadership, the Egyptian and Israelite populations were saved from famine.

While Joseph continuously trusted in the Lord with all his heart throughout his many trials, even forgiving his brothers for selling him into slavery because of his righteousness, Joseph was greatly blessed. Joseph is a wonderful example of how God will bless us by making all things work together for our good if we are faithful.

David, on the other hand, commits adultery with Bathsheba then arranges the death of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. His fall began as he was walking on his roof when he saw Bathsheba and was tempted to commit adultery with her (see 2 Samuel 11:2). What should David have done when he saw Bathsheba bathing?

(look away).

What did David do that led him to sin with her? (see 2 Samuel 11:2-4)

What leads people to be tempted to commit sexual sin?

What can we do to avoid being tempted to commit sexual sins?

(Fill your mind with uplifting thoughts; Choose media that will inspire you to do good; Love your spouse with all your heart.)

What made matters worse for David was his attempt to cover up his sin when he learned that Bathsheba was with child (see 2 Samuel 11:6-13). When Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, would not return home to her so that the unborn child would appear as Uriah's; David committed murder in an attempt to hide his immorality (see 2 Samuel 11:14-17). How do people try to cover up sins today?

What happens when we try to cover our sins?

An Apostle of God said: "Do not take comfort in the fact that your transgressions are not known by others. That is like an ostrich with his head buried in the sand. He sees only darkness and feels comfortably hidden. In reality he is ridiculously conspicuous. Likewise our every act is seen by our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son. They know everything about us. ... If you have seriously transgressed, you will not find any lasting satisfaction or comfort in what you have done. Excusing transgression with a cover-up may appear to fix the problem, but it does not. The tempter is intent on making public your most embarrassing acts at the most harmful time. Lies weave a pattern that is ever more confining and becomes a trap that Satan will spring to your detriment." ¹

If David had quickly looked away on that hot evening when he was on his roof and saw Bathsheba bathing, he would have avoided the consequences of his sins (see 2 Samuel 12:10-14 with the fulfillment of these prophecies found in 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and subsequent chapters of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings). Note that while adultery is a serious sin, David forfeited his exaltation because the Lord held him accountable for the murder of Uriah.

Even if David had looked away, he still needed to dismiss the unclean thoughts he had for Bathsheba from his mind. His failure to do this was his ruin. Below is some inspiring thinking from another Apostle of Jesus Christ about how to dismiss unclean thoughts that have entered our minds uninvited:

“The mind is like a stage. Except when we are asleep, the curtain is always up. There is always some act being performed on that stage. It may be a comedy, a tragedy, interesting or dull, good or bad; but always there is some act playing on the stage of the mind.

“Have you noticed that without any real intent on your part, in the middle of almost any performance, a shady little thought may creep in from the wings and attract your attention? These delinquent thoughts will try to upstage everybody. If you permit them to go on, all thoughts of any virtue will leave the stage. You will be left, because you consented to it, to the influence of unrighteous thoughts.

“If you yield to them, they will enact for you on the stage of your mind anything to the limits of your toleration. They may enact a theme of bitterness, jealousy, or hatred. It may be vulgar, immoral, even depraved. When they have the stage, if you let them, they will devise the most clever persuasions to hold your attention. They can make it interesting all right, even convince you that it is innocent—for they are but thoughts.

“What do you do at a time like that, when the stage of your mind is commandeered by theimps of unclean thinking, whether they be the gray ones that seem almost clean or the filthy ones which leave no room for doubt? If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits, even degrading personal habits. If you can learn to master them, you will have a happy life.

“This is what I would teach you. Choose from among the sacred music of the Church a favorite hymn, one with words that are uplifting and music that is reverent, one that makes you feel something akin to inspiration. Go over it in your mind carefully. Memorize it. Even though you [may] have had no musical training, you can think through a hymn.

“Now, use this hymn as the place for your thoughts to go. Make it your emergency channel. Whenever you find these shady actors have slipped from the sidelines of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, put on this record, as it were. As the music begins and as the words form in your thoughts, the unworthy ones will slip shamefully away. It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is uplifting and clean, the baser thoughts will disappear. For while virtue, by choice, will not associate with filth, evil cannot tolerate the presence of light.

“In due time you will find yourself, on occasion, humming the music inwardly. As you retrace your thoughts, you discover some influence from the world about you encouraged an unworthy thought to move on stage in your mind, and the music almost automatically began.

“Once you learn to clear the stage of your mind of unworthy thoughts, keep it busy with learning worthwhile things. Change your environment so that you have things about you that will inspire good and uplifting thoughts. Keep busy with things that are righteous.”²

Joseph taught us the blessings that come from immediately removing ourselves from a compromising situation while David shows us the consequences of not looking away then dwelling on what he saw. What can you do to keep yourself from ever being exposed to any offensive material? ?

When exposed to that which you shouldn't see, what can you do "to clear the stage of your mind of unworthy thoughts?" ?

See the ninth warning that teaching us that what we see affects who we are taught in Matthew 6:22-23 for another application exercise on remaining morally clean.

¹ Elder Richard G. Scott, Ensign, May 1995, 77

² Elder Boyd K. Packer, Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 99–100

Watch Your Language

Third Invitation and Third Higher Law from Our Savior

- 33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
- 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
- 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

(Matthew 5:33-37)

Application Exercise

In matters of honesty and integrity, there are no shortcuts, no little white lies or big black lies. There is only the simple, honest truth spoken and lived by.

Consider how a skyscraper that can take years to construct can be brought down in seconds with a series of well-placed detonations. The process is called an implosion, in contrast with an explosion.

We develop and nurture our lives over a period of years, yet it is the highly charged circumstances when mistakes are made that our true selves appear. Am I true to my oaths and the words I think and speak?

Yes No Sometimes

This is either a yes or no answer. If you said sometimes, then this is an area to work on.

When our action compromises the oaths we make than we compromise ourselves, and ultimately there will be an implosion, then a cloud of dust is all that is left until we correct ourselves through the power of repentance. Where do you feel you could do better to be true to your word?

William Shakespeare said: "To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." ² How is being true to your word help you honor your commitments?

What happens over time when you don't do what you say you are going to do?

Hold a dictionary in your hands and talk about all the good words that are available to use when we speak. Point out that even though we have more good words than we could select from to count, we at times will choose words which are not good, words which are vulgar and have impure meaning.

Reread what Jesus said about swearing in the first part of Matthew 5:34, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all." Then read and discuss an earlier verse in Matthew 5 where Jesus explained why we should not use vulgar language, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man" (Matthew 5:18). How does swearing defile us?

What effect does our swearing have on those who hear us swear?

Lastly, what does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain? (see Doctrine and Covenants 63:60-64 to help answer this question).

How can you position yourself so that you only use the names of Deity in a worshipful, respectful way?

Be Forgiving, Generous and Accommodating

Fourth Invitation and Fourth Higher Law from Our Savior

- 38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.
41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
(Matthew 5:38-42)

Application Exercise

A great example for us to follow in forgiving those who have wronged us is Joseph who was sold by his brothers into slavery as found in Genesis 37:12-28. How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers sold him to be a slave in Egypt?

Even though the Lord was with Joseph and helped him become an important man in Egypt (see Genesis 41:38-43). His rise to prominence took many years. How do you think Joseph was able to keep in check any hard feelings for his brothers who were the initial cause of all his problems?

When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to get food because they were out of food in their country they ultimately found out that Joseph was still alive and that he was an important man in Egypt (see Genesis 42:1-8; 45:1-15). How do you think Joseph felt to be with his brothers again?

How do you think Joseph's brothers felt toward him?

How did Joseph show he had forgiven his brothers? (see Genesis 45:5-15).

The perfect example of being willing to forgive is the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ that involved unthinkable cruelty to Jesus from the soldiers. They beat Him, crowned His head with thorns, and spit on Him. They drove nails through his hands and feet and hung him on a cross to die; Jesus forgave the soldiers.

He was never angry with the soldiers for what they had done to him. In Luke, as Jesus prayed to Heavenly Father just before he died He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). How does Jesus' example inspire you to be more forgiving of others who offend you of far lesser offenses?

Love Your Enemies

Fifth Invitation and Fifth Higher Law from Our Savior

- 43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
44 But I say unto you, 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;
45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?
(Matthew 5:43-47)

Application Exercise

In the Book of John, Jesus said: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). How do you define love?

Ask ten people what love means, and you will get ten different answers. This is because love is so unique to each of us and our different experiences associated with being loved and being in love.

For those who conclude that, love cannot be defined. *I.e* there is no way to explain it, and it is something we cannot understand. These people are thinking incorrectly about love. Those who think of love as it is can define it, explain it, and understand it.

Another incorrect and irrational attitude people have about love is that love is merely a mystical feeling, a mysterious power that takes over; and when it comes, we “fall into it,” helpless to control it.

People who are prone to think of love in this way will see love vanish as mysteriously as it came. They hold to the belief that they are helpless to prevent its leaving. If this is your view on love, how do you stop thinking of love as a mysterious power that has control over you?

Love is not a mystical feeling or a mysterious power or a trap into which one may fall. Those who hold these beliefs become lost and confused in their relationships.

Love is manifested in how you treat other people, rather than as something that happens to you. With this view of love, you go from being helpless to having power over your ability to be loving.

Consider what Ann Landers had to say about love: "Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses." ¹ How is the ability to give love as well as to receive it an essential Christlike quality to incorporate within ourselves?

Why do you think it can be easier to be kind to people we hardly know than to our family members, the people we should love the most?

What can we do to avoid being thoughtless or even cruel to a family member by our words and actions?

Everything you accomplish in life will be the direct or indirect result of your ability to love those you interact with. There is no limit to what can be accomplished when you love others as the Savior loves you. Use the following to assess how you are doing at being a loving person pulled from key thoughts provided by Dr. Erich Frohm, in his book *The Art of Loving*: ²

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

_____ A loving person cares about the loved one. Parents who love their children take good care of them. A person who says, "I love flowers," but who doesn't water and cultivate his flowers, really is not loving his flowers. A person who says, "I love dogs," but who doesn't feed his dog, is not giving love to that dog. Loving is caring.

_____ A loving person respects other persons. A part of respecting people is not to force them. It may be necessary at times for an adult to force a child to do something against his wishes; but when two grown people are relating to each other, if there is love between them, there is no force. We may try to persuade a person to see our point of view, or we may try to convince them to do something we would like them to do, yet if we love him, we never force them.

_____ A loving person responds to others. Since some people have more ability to love than others, it is reasonable for us to conclude that some people have more ability to respond than others, yet we can always learn to improve our responses. Loving is empathizing, trying to understand how the other person feels and letting him know that we understand.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

_____ A loving person has concern for the welfare, progress, and happiness of the loved one. They not only have a concern; they do something about it by making their resources available to the loved one. Loving is giving. It is the giving of material things to others, but even more important, it is the giving of one's time.

_____ An important dimension of loving is that the loving person also makes a conscious effort to receive. They are willing to receive not only physical gifts but also suggestions, advice, and acts of kindness. Have you ever known a person who will not allow you to do anything for them? Who will not even permit you to open the door for them, but always insists that you go first? Who will not allow you to pay for refreshments when you are accompanying them on an outing? A person who is not willing to receive deprives others of giving. Receiving is an important part of loving.

_____ Who is richer: she who has much or he who gives much? The giver is the richer, for she always receives for having given. A true gift of love is one that is given with no strings attached; it is given with no concern about what will be received in return.

_____ Loving is sharing. Have you ever seen a rainbow or a beautiful sunset when you were alone and thought, "Wouldn't it be lovely to share this with someone?" Or have you ever been alone during a time of illness or trouble and thought, "Wouldn't it be consoling to have someone here to help me through this experience"?

_____ Loving is forgiving. A loving person forgives one who has wronged her, and she also forgives herself for mistakes she has made. Guilt feelings can have some value in motivating a person to stop whatever it is that is causing her to feel guilty. To keep the guilt feelings beyond this point only interferes with a person's effective living and happiness. It is a mistake for one not to forgive him or herself for something they have done that they consider to be wrong.

_____ Another word for love is charity. Thus, when Paul tells us what charity is in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, he is explaining what love is. A loving person suffers long and is kind. His love is of long duration; he envies not. He is not puffed up. Arrogance, boastfulness, and conceit are not his ways; he is humble. A loving person does not behave himself unseemly; he thinks no evil; he bears all things; he endures all things, and he is not easily provoked to anger. A loving person does not hold a grudge against others; she realizes that to do so is to bring more harm to herself than to them.

_____ Real love is the same in all human relationships, whether between a grandfather and a grandmother, a newly married couple, or a mother and her child. It involves caring, respecting, responding, empathizing, having a concern, giving, receiving, sharing, forgiving. Notice that these words being used are verbs and verbs denote action. Loving requires action.

_____ A person who says to another, "You have killed all the love I ever had for you," does not understand the art of loving. Nothing can kill love; if it dies, it commits suicide, because love is not a measure of the one being loved, but of the one doing the loving. Whether or not we give love should not depend on another person's attributes and behavior. It may be easier to love one person than another because one may be more charming, more pleasant, and more physically attractive. But our loving should not be determined by the nature and the behavior of another person; it is not just a feeling—it is a way of treating a person.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

_____ Love sees more, not less; but because it sees more, it is willing to see less. The mature lover is other-centered in his loving, not self-centered. He and she are patient and willing to prepare for a good marriage. If a man and a woman are mature in their way of loving, their love relationship will enhance their growth as individuals.

Reflect on your responses to the above statements on being a loving person and determine what you will do differently to love as the Savior loves with those you care for and interact with?

See the eleventh invitation in Matthew 7:9-12 concerning the Golden Rule for another application exercise on the effect of our attitude towards others compared to that which we would like to have extended to us.

¹ Source unknown

² Dr. Erich Fromm, "The Art of Loving," New York: Harper & Row, 1956

Become Perfect

Sixth Invitation from Our Savior

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

(Matthew 5:48)

Application Exercise

How does applying the alternate Greek translation of the word “perfect” which is “complete, finished, fully developed,” change your view to the commandment to be perfect?

The Savior isn’t expecting us to live perfected lives. His goal is for us to “be ye therefore perfect” by being engaged in the process of becoming perfect. Our achievement of this goal is a lifetime pursuit. The Lord said, “Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected” (Doctrine & Covenants 67:13). How is this good advice for all of us?

Two of the last three verses in the Book of Mormon has the following invitation from Moroni, “Yea, come unto Christ, 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, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, 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.” (Moroni 10:32-33). How do the teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount help us “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him”?

Acting on the invitations and avoiding the warnings taught throughout the Sermon on the Mount is how we become like the Savior. There is no limit to what we can do when we deny ourselves of all ungodliness as we develop the character traits of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Read each invitation and warning on the next page carefully. Choose the most appropriate response from the response key relative to how true that statement is about you. Remember, spiritual growth is a gradual process, and no one is perfect. Your goal is to be honest with yourself and accept that you will rate yourself better on some items than on others.

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

- _____ I am better today than I was yesterday in living the qualities reflected in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).
- _____ I am loyal to God by striving to be pure in my thoughts and actions (Matthew 5:13).
- _____ I try to help others everyday in glory to my Heavenly Father (Matthew 5:14-16).
- _____ I show I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior by striving to obey His teachings (Matthew 5:17-20).
- _____ I avoid getting angry with others who inconvenience me (Matthew 5:21-26).
- _____ I look away when I am exposed to offensive and degrading material (Matthew 5:27-32).
- _____ I do what I say I am going to do and I avoid using offensive language. (Matthew 5:33-37)
- _____ I am forgiving, generous and accommodating to others more than I am not (Matthew 5:38-42).
- _____ I love those who are unkind, thoughtless and mean (Matthew 5:43-47).
- _____ I am better today than I was yesterday in living the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:48).
- _____ When I give to the poor, I do so in secret (Matthew 6:1-4).
- _____ I am thoughtful in my morning, evening and meal prayers (Matthew 6:5-13).
- _____ I forgive others even when they have caused me great pain and suffering (Matthew 6:14-15).
- _____ When I fast, I do so in private (Matthew 6:16-18).
- _____ My heart is set on realizing the treasures in heaven not of this world (Matthew 6:19-21).
- _____ My heart is set on realizing the treasures in heaven not of this world (Matthew 6:19-21).
- _____ I am careful about what I allow into my home and in what I choose to be entertained by (Matthew 6:22-23).
- _____ I seek to do God's will everyday (Matthew 6:24).
- _____ I don't worry or get upset about things outside of my control (Matthew 6:25-32).
- _____ My focus is on the kingdom of God while working through today's problems (Matthew 6:33-34).
- _____ I try to assume innocence and not to judge others prematurely (Matthew 7:1-5).
- _____ I keep holy things sacred (Matthew 7:6).
- _____ I am quick to *Ask, Seek, and Knock* after knowledge (Matthew 7:7-8).

Response Key: 1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost Always 5 = Always

_____ I am always striving to do unto others as I would have them do unto me (Matthew 7:9-12).

_____ I avoid doing those things that would keep me from the strait gate and narrow way that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

_____ I am careful who I choose to listen to and follow (Matthew 7:15-20).

_____ I strive to do the will of the Father so that He will know me (Matthew 7:21-23).

_____ The wisdom I am acquiring is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone .(Matthew 7:24-27; Ephesians 4:19-20).

From your ratings above, identify which invitation or warning you think would help you in your pursuit of perfection in the coming week. Ask yourself: what must change in my heart, mind, and actions to develop this quality?

How will developing this Christlike trait help me become a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?

To help you remember the character trait you want to improve on this week, write on a piece of paper or type into your smartphone the following phrase:

“This week I will be more _____.”

Use the reminder you captured in the blank space to help you develop the Christlike quality you want to live better.

Another way to help develop the individual qualities exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount is to prepare a five-minute talk on the Christlike character trait you wish to improve on then share your thoughts with a friend. After you share your talk, discuss what impressed them most about your remarks and how they think your remarks can be applied to living a more Christlike life.

¹ Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 2:18–19

² Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye in Holy Places, pg 342