

Teachings Concerning Pondering and Meditation

Psalms 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God.

D&C 43:34

Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.

Proverbs 4:26

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

What is Pondering and Meditation?

Marvin J. Ashton (Quorum of the Twelve)

As I study the scriptures, I am challenged and moved by the word ponder used so frequently in the Book of Mormon. Dictionaries say that ponder means to weigh mentally, think deeply about, deliberate, meditate. ("There Are Many Gifts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 20)

Franklin D. Richards (Assistant to the Twelve)

President McKay has given us some good advice in this connection. He said, "Don't be too busy to meditate, and when the answer comes have the courage to execute it."

Order commences with meditation; and meditation includes thinking, analyzing, prayer, fasting if needs be, and always planning. Meditating requires that time be regularly set aside to consider the things that you think you have to do. Many times you find you have more to do than you can do in the time available. (Conference Report, October 1964, p.76)

Joseph B. Wirthlin (Quorum of the Twelve)

Pondering, which means to weigh mentally, to deliberate, to meditate, can achieve the opening of the spiritual eyes of one's understanding. ("Pondering Strengthens the Spiritual Life," *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 23)

Pondering—A Form of Prayer

Marion G. Romney (First Presidency)

Pondering is, in my feeling, a form of prayer. It has, at least, been an approach to the Spirit of the Lord on many occasions. Nephi tells us of one such occasion:

"For it came to pass," he wrote, "after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat *pondering* in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceeding high mountain. ..." (1 Ne. 11:1. Italics added.)

Then follows Nephi's account of the great vision he was given by the Spirit of the Lord, because he believed the words of his prophet father and had such a great desire to know more that he pondered and prayed about them.

President Joseph F. Smith tells us that "on the third of October, in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room *pondering* over the Scriptures. ..." He had

particular reference at this time to Peter's statement that Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19) while his body lay in the grave.

"As I *pondered* over these things which are written," President Smith continued, "the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great. ..." He then gives us an account of his great vision concerning missionary work among the spirits of the dead. (D&C 138:1, 11; emphasis added)

Desiring, searching, and pondering over "the words of eternal life," all three of them together, as important as they are, would be inadequate without prayer. ("Magnifying One's Calling in the Priesthood," *Ensign*, Jul 1973, p. 89)

Take Time To Ponder

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

- Take time to meditate. Ponder the meaning of the work in which you are engaged. The Lord has counseled, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds" (D&C 43:34). You cannot do that when your minds are preoccupied with the worries and cares of the world. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], p.390)
- Man must take time to meditate, to sweep the cobwebs from his mind, so that he might get a more firm grip on the truth and spend less time chasing phantoms and dallying in projects of lesser worth. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], p.390)
- President McKay and President Lee used this experience to teach that we must always be responsive to the whisperings of the Spirit. These promptings most often come when we are not under the pressure of appointments and when we are not caught up in the worries of day-to-day life.

Take time to meditate. Meditation on a passage of scripture—James 1:5—led a young boy into a grove of trees to commune with his Heavenly Father. That is what opened the heavens in this dispensation.

Meditation on a passage of scripture from the book of John in the New Testament brought forth the great revelation on the three degrees of glory.

Meditation on another passage of scripture from the Epistle of Peter opened the heavens to President Joseph F. Smith, and he saw the spirit world. That revelation, known as the Vision of the Redemption of the Dead, is now a part of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Ponder the significance of the responsibility the Lord has given to us. The Lord has counseled, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds." (D&C 43:34.) You cannot do that when your minds are preoccupied with the cares of the world.

Read and study the scriptures. The scriptures should be studied in the home with fathers and mothers taking the lead and setting the example. The scriptures are to be comprehended by the power of the Holy Ghost, for

the Lord has given this promise to His faithful and obedient: "Thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things." (D&C 42:61.)

The following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball illustrates how we may develop more spirituality in our lives:

"I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and mind and strength, and loving them more, I find it easier to abide their counsel." ("What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren and All Others of the Youth of Zion," address to Seminary and Institute personnel, Brigham Young University, 11 July 1966, p. 6.) [From "Seek the Spirit of the Lord," *Ensign*, Apr. 1988, p. 4]

The Value of Pondering and Meditation

David O. McKay (President)

I think we pay too little attention to the value of meditation, a principle of devotion. In our worship there are two elements: One is spiritual communion arising from our own meditation; the other, instruction from others, particularly from those who have authority to guide and instruct us. Of the two, the more profitable introspectively is the meditation. Meditation is the language of the soul. It is defined as "a form of private devotion, or spiritual exercise, consisting in deep, continued reflection on some religious theme." Meditation is a form of prayer. We can say prayers without having any spiritual response. We can say prayers as the unrighteous king in Hamlet who said: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

The poet, contrasting the outward form of worship, and the prayer of the soul, said:

The Power incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well-pleased, the language of the soul,
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.
(Burns, "The Cotter's Saturday Night.")

Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord. Jesus set the example for us. As soon as he was baptized and received the Father's approval, "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Jesus repaired to what is now known as the mount of temptation. I like to think of it as the mount of meditation where, during the forty days of fasting, he communed with himself and his Father, and contemplated upon the responsibility of his great mission. One result of this spiritual communion was such strength as enabled him to say to the tempter:

Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matthew 4:10.)

Before he gave to the Twelve the beautiful sermon on the mount, he was in solitude, in communion. He did the same thing after that busy Sabbath day, when he arose early in the morning, after having been the guest of Peter. Peter undoubtedly found the guest chamber empty, and when they sought him they found him alone. It was on that morning that Peter said:

... All men seek for thee. (Mark 1:37.)

Again, after Jesus had fed the five thousand he told the Twelve to dismiss the multitude, but Jesus went to the mountain for solitude. The historian says, "when the evening was come, he was there alone." (Matthew 14:23.) Meditation! Prayer!

I once read a book written by a very wise man, whose name I cannot now recall, which contained a significant chapter on prayer. The author was not a member of the Church, but evidently had a desire to keep in close communion with God, and he wanted to find the truth. Among other things he said in substance:

In secret prayer go into the room, close the door, pull down the shades, and kneel in the center of the room. For a period of five minutes or so, say nothing. Just think of what God has done for you, of what are your greatest spiritual and temporal needs. When you sense that, and sense his presence, then pour out your soul to him in thanksgiving. (Conference Report, April 1946, p.113)

Neal A. Maxwell (Quorum of the Twelve)

Reflection too is required in order to assimilate all of our on-rushing experiences. Unless the lessons from our past are humbly harvested, our storehouses of memory will contain too few relevant remembrances. Patience facilitates such pondering and reflecting. Pondering sorts things out, rearranging some of the furniture of the mind while giving place for new furnishings. (*Men and Women of Christ*, p.27)

Pondering: One of Life's Obligations

Gordon B. Hinckley

Recently I addressed a group of college-age young people about some of the obligations of life with which they are faced, now and in the future. What was discussed with them has its own application for each of us.

The four obligations I have in mind are:

1. To one's vocation
2. To one's family
3. To the Church
4. To one's self

[After speaking of the first three, he then said:]

Four: there is yet another interest that you must look after as you look forward in your lives. You need time to meditate and ponder, to think, to wonder at the great plan of happiness that the Lord has outlined for His children. You need to read the scriptures. You need to read good literature. You need to partake of the great culture which is available to all of us.

I heard President David O. McKay say to the members of the Twelve on one occasion, "Brethren, we do not spend enough time meditating."

I believe that with all my heart. Our lives become extremely busy. We run from one thing to another. We wear ourselves out in thoughtless pursuit of goals which are highly ephemeral [i.e., fleeting, momentary]. We are entitled to spend some time with ourselves in introspection, in development. I remember my dear father when he was about the age that I am now. He lived in a home where there was a rock wall on the grounds. It was a low wall, and when the weather was warm, he would go and sit on his wall. It seemed to me he sat there for hours, thinking, meditating, pondering

things that he would say and write, for he was a very gifted speaker and writer. He read much, even into his very old age. He never ceased growing. Life was for him a great adventure in thinking.

Your needs and your tastes along these lines will vary with your age. But all of us need some of it. I decry the great waste of time that people put into watching inane television. I am not antisports. I enjoy watching a good football game or a good basketball game. But I see so many men who become absolutely obsessed with sports. I believe their lives would be enriched if, instead of sitting on the sofa and watching a game that will be forgotten tomorrow, they would read and think and ponder.

They would be blessed if they were to go out into the dark of the night, look at the stars, and ponder their place in the eternal plan of the Almighty. I think David must have been by himself under the starry heavens when he declared:

“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? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

“For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Ps. 8:3–5). [*Ensign*, Feb. 1999, pp. 2,5]

The Things of God Must Be Pondered

Joseph Smith (President)

The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity -- thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [1938], p.137)

Joseph B. Wirthlin (Quorum of the Twelve)

We are constantly reminded through the scriptures that we should give the things of God much more than usual superficial consideration. We must ponder them and reach into the very essence of what we are and what we may become. (“Pondering Strengthens the Spiritual Life,” *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 23)

Pondering Righteous Things Important to Becoming Righteous

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

There is an eternal law, ordained by God himself before the foundations of the world, that every man shall reap as he sows. If we think evil thoughts, our tongues will utter unclean sayings. If we speak words of wickedness, we shall end up doing the works of wickedness. If our minds are centered on the carnality and evil of the world, then worldliness and unrighteousness will seem to us to be the normal way of life. If we ponder things related to sex immorality in our minds, we will soon think everybody is immoral and unclean and it will break down the barrier between us and the world. And so with every other unwholesome, unclean, impure, and ungodly course. And

so it is that the Lord says he hates and esteems as an abomination, “an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations. ...” (Prov. 6:18.)

On the other hand, if we are pondering in our hearts the things of righteousness, we shall become righteous. If virtue garnishes our thoughts unceasingly, our confidence shall wax strong in the presence of God and he in turn will rain down righteousness upon us. Truly as Jacob said, “... to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.” (2 Ne. 9:39.) And as Paul said, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Gal. 6:7–8.)

And yet again from Paul:

“... whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philip. 4:8.)

To enable us to keep our minds centered on righteousness, we should consciously elect to ponder the truths of salvation in our hearts. Brother Packer yesterday pleaded with eloquence that we sing the songs of Zion in order to center our thoughts on wholesome things. I would like to add that we can also—after we have had the opening song—call on ourselves to preach a sermon. I have preached many sermons walking along congested city streets, or tramping desert trails, or in lonely places, thus centering my mind on the Lord’s affairs and the things of righteousness; and I might say they have been better sermons than I have ever preached to congregations.

If we are going to work out our salvation, we must rejoice in the Lord. We must ponder his truths in our hearts. We must rivet our attention and interests upon him and his goodness to us. We must forsake the world and use all our strength, energies and abilities in furthering his work. (“Think on These Things,” *Ensign*, Jan 1974, pp. 45ff)

Pondering Necessary to Receive the Spirit

Henry B. Eyring (First Presidency)

There are two great keys to inviting the Spirit to guide what words we speak as we feed others. They are the daily study of the scriptures and the prayer of faith.

The Holy Ghost will guide what we say if we study and ponder the scriptures every day. The words of the scriptures invite the Holy Spirit. The Lord said it this way: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men” (D&C 11:21). With daily study of the scriptures, we can count on this blessing even in casual conversations or in a class when we may be asked by a teacher to respond to a question. We will experience the power the Lord promised: “Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man” (D&C 84:85).

We treasure the word of God not only by reading the words of the scriptures but by studying them. We may be nourished more by pondering a few words, allowing the Holy Ghost to make them treasures to us, than by

passing quickly and superficially over whole chapters of scripture.

Just as pondering the scriptures invites the Holy Ghost, so does daily pleading in prayer. If we do not ask in prayer, He will rarely come, and without our petition, He is not likely to linger. "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14). Heartfelt, constant pleading for the companionship of the Holy Ghost, with the pure intent to nourish our Father's children, will surely bring blessings to us and to those we love and serve. ("Feeding His Lambs," *Ensign*, Feb 2008, pp. 4–9).

Ponder Over Your Problems

Harold B. Lee (President)

I pass these wise words of counsel to others in public office for what they are worth and strongly urge that those of you having heavy responsibilities in public office or elsewhere should meditate prayerfully and give the Lord a chance to aid you in solving the problems of life. ("A Time of Decision," *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 32)

Boyd K. Packer (Quorum of the Twelve)

When you have a problem, work it out in your own mind first. Ponder on it and analyze it and meditate on it. Read the scriptures. Pray about it. I've come to learn that major decisions can't be forced. You must look ahead and have vision. What was it the prophet said in the Old Testament? "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Prov. 29:18.)

Ponder on things a little each day and don't always be in the crisis of making major decisions on the spur of the moment. If you're looking ahead in life, you can see major problems coming down the road toward you from some considerable distance. By the time you meet one another, you are able at the very beginning to take charge of the conversation. Once in a while a major decision will jump out at you from the side of the road and startle the wits out of you, but not very often. If you've already decided that you're going to do what is right and let all of the consequences follow, even those encounters won't hurt you.

I have learned that the best time to wrestle with major problems is early in the morning. Your mind is then fresh and alert. The blackboard of your mind has been erased by a good night's rest. The accumulated distractions of the day are not in your way. Your body has been rested also. That's the time to think something through very carefully and to receive personal revelation. ("Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Aug. 1975, p. 89)

Pondering Gives Time for the Spirit to Impress and Direct

Marvin J. Ashton (Quorum of the Twelve)

By pondering, we give the Spirit an opportunity to impress and direct. Pondering is a powerful link between the heart and the mind. As we read the scriptures, our hearts and minds are touched. If we use the gift to ponder, we can take these eternal truths and realize how we can incorporate them into our daily actions.

Today, millions, at President Benson's encouragement, are reading the Book of Mormon, some for the first time, others as a regular habit. We must remind all that the

fruits of this great book are the most beneficial when we ponder as we read.

Pondering is a progressive mental pursuit. It is a great gift to those who have learned to use it. We find understanding, insight, and practical application if we will use the gift of pondering. ("There Are Many Gifts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 20)

Pondering Helps Heal the Soul and Body

Robert D. Hales (Quorum of the Twelve)

My message today is how to aid the healing process of the soul. It is a message to lead you and me to the Great Healer, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a plan to read the scriptures, pray, ponder, repent if necessary, and be healed with the peace and joy of His Spirit. May I share my ponderings as I went through the healing process.

While I was lying in my hospital bed and for several weeks at home, my physical activity was severely restricted by intense pain which disabled my weakened body, but I learned the joy of freeing my mind to ponder the meaning of life and the eternities. Since my calendar was wiped clean of meetings, tasks, and appointments, for a number of weeks I was able to turn my attention away from matters of administration to matters of the eternities. The Lord has told us, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds" (D&C 43:34). I discovered that if I dwelt only upon my pain, it inhibited the healing process. I found that pondering was a very important element in the healing process for both soul and body. Pain brings you to a humility that allows you to ponder. It is an experience I am grateful to have endured.

I pondered deeply the purpose of pain and studied in my mind what I could learn from my experience and began to comprehend pain a little better. I learned that the physical pain and the healing of the body after major surgery are remarkably similar to the spiritual pain and the healing of the soul in the process of repentance. "Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul" (D&C 101:37).

I have come to understand how useless it is to dwell on the whys, [page 15] what ifs, and if onlys for which there likely will be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord's comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions Why me? Why our family? Why now? are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding.

In Proverbs we are told to "ponder the path of life" (Prov. 5:6). As we ponder the path of life, we can set our path to righteousness and feel the Spirit direct us. "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Ne. 32:3).

If you and I are to feast upon the words of Christ, we must study the scriptures and absorb His words through pondering them and making them a part of every thought and action.

Just as studying the words of Christ is an element of pondering, so too are diligent, faithful prayer and listening to the Spirit. In a revelation given to us through Joseph Smith, the Lord has told us:

"I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—

"Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; and knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:62–63).

Pondering takes our thoughts from the trivial things of this world and brings us closer to the gentle, guiding hand of our Maker as we heed the "still small voice" of the Holy Ghost (see 1 Kgs. 19:12; 1 Ne. 17:45; D&C 85:6). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord spoke to David Whitmer: "Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of ... your Maker ... ; you have not given heed unto my Spirit" (D&C 30:2).

Pondering the things of the Lord—His word, His teachings, His commandments, His life, His love, the gifts He has given us, His Atonement for us—brings about a tremendous feeling of gratitude for our Savior and for the life and blessings He has given us. ("Healing Soul and Body," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, pp. 14-15)

Pondering—A Necessary Part of Receiving a Testimony

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

To succeed in sharing the gospel, whether as full-time missionaries or as member missionaries, you must have a burning testimony of the divinity of this work. Your first obligation is to get that testimony through prayer, through fasting, through meditation, through study, through appealing to the Lord to give you the testimony, and through responding to calls when they come to you. You must know that God lives; that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God; and that the priesthood and authority of our Heavenly Father is here. ("Of the Most Worth," *New Era*, June 1989, p. 6)

Pondering Necessary For Turning Knowledge into Wisdom

Dallin H. Oaks (Quorum of the Twelve)

We also need quiet time and prayerful pondering as we seek to develop information into knowledge and mature knowledge into wisdom. ("Focus and Priorities," *Ensign*, May 2001, p. 82)

Find An Appropriate Place To Meditate

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

We should find an appropriate place where we can meditate and pray. We are admonished that this should be "in [our] closets, and [our] secret places, and in [our] wilderness" (Alma 34:26). That is, it should be free from distraction, in secret (3 Nephi 13:5-6). [*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.428]

Boyd K. Packer (Quorum of the Twelve)

The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Raucous music, with obscene lyrics blasted through amplifiers while lights flash psychedelic colors,

characterizes the drug culture. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth.

Doctors even say that our physical sense of hearing can be permanently damaged by all of this noise.

This trend to more noise, more excitement, more contention, less restraint, less dignity, less formality is not coincidental nor innocent nor harmless.

The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.

Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit. . . .

No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration. The spirit of reverence can and should be evident in every organization in the Church and in the lives of every member.

Parents, stake presidencies, bishoprics, auxiliary leaders, teachers: maintain a spirit of reverence in meetings, encourage participation in congregational singing and the use of reverential terms in prayers.

While we may not see an immediate, miraculous transformation, as surely as the Lord lives, a quiet one will take place. The spiritual power in the lives of each member and in the Church will increase. The Lord will pour out his Spirit upon us more abundantly. We will be less troubled, less confused. We will find revealed answers to personal and family problems without all the counseling which we seem now to need. ("Reverence Invites Revelation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, pp. 22-23)

Pondering Most Effective in Early Mornings

Boyd K. Packer (Quorum of the Twelve)

I have learned that the best time to wrestle with major problems is early in the morning. Your mind is then fresh and alert. The blackboard of your mind has been erased by a good night's rest. The accumulated distractions of the day are not in your way. Your body has been rested also. That's the time to think something through very carefully and to receive personal revelation.

I've heard President Harold B. Lee begin many a statement about matters involving revelation with an expression something like this: "In the early hours of the morning, while I was pondering upon that subject," and so on. He made it a practice to work on the problems that required revelation in the fresh, alert hours of the early morning.

The Lord knew something when He directed in the Doctrine and Covenants,

"Cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated." (D&C 88:124.)

I have a friend who bought a business. A short time later he suffered catastrophic reverses. There just didn't seem to be any way out for him, and finally it got so bad that he couldn't sleep. So, for a period of time he followed the practice of getting up about three o'clock in the morning and going to the office. There, with a paper and a pen he would ponder and pray and write down every idea that came to him as a possible solution or a contribution to the solution of his problem. It wasn't long before he had several possible directions that he could

go, and it was not much longer than that until he had chosen the best of them. But he had earned an extra bonus. His notes showed, after going over them, that he had discovered many hidden resources that he had never noticed before. He [page 89] came away more independent and successful than ever he would have been if he hadn't suffered those reverses.

There's a lesson in that. A year or two later he was called to preside over a mission in one of the foreign lands. His business was so independent and well set-up that when he came back he didn't return to it. He just has someone else managing it, and he is able to give virtually all of his time now to the blessing of others.

I counsel our children to do their critical studying in the early hours of the morning when they're fresh and alert, rather than to fight physical weariness and mental exhaustion at night. I've learned that the dictum, "Early to bed, early to rise" is powerful. When under pressure—for instance, when I was preparing this talk—you wouldn't find me burning the midnight oil. Much rather I'd be early to bed and getting up in the wee hours of the morning, when I could be close to Him who guides this work. ("Self-Reliance," *Ensign*, Aug. 1975, p. 89)

Pondering Before Sacrament Meeting Begins

Dallin H. Oaks (Quorum of the Twelve)

I begin with how members of the Church should prepare themselves to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. In a worldwide leadership training meeting five years ago, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the priesthood leaders of the Church how to plan and conduct sacrament meetings. "We commemorate His Atonement in a very personal way," Elder Nelson said. "We bring a broken heart and a contrite spirit to our sacrament meeting. It is the highlight of our Sabbath-day observance" ("Worshiping at Sacrament Meeting," *Liahona*, Aug. 2004, 12; *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 26).

We are seated well before the meeting begins. "During that quiet interval, prelude music is subdued. This is not a time for conversation or transmission of messages but a period of prayerful meditation as leaders and members prepare spiritually for the sacrament" (*Liahona*, Aug. 2004, 13; *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 27). ["Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament," *Ensign*, Nov 2008, pp. 17–20]

Sacrament Period For Meditation

David O. McKay (President)

I believe the short period of administering the sacrament is one of the best opportunities we have for such meditation, and there should be nothing during that sacred period to distract our attention from the purpose of that ordinance.

One of the most impressive services I have ever attended was in a group of over eight hundred people to whom the sacrament was administered, and during that administration not a sound could be heard excepting the ticking of the clock—eight hundred souls, each of whom at least had the opportunity of communion with the Lord. There was no distraction, no orchestra, no singing, no speaking. Each one had an opportunity to search himself introspectively and to consider his worthiness or unworthiness to partake of the sacrament. His was the

privilege of getting closer to his Father in heaven. That is ideal!

Brethren, we recommend that we surround this sacred ordinance with more reverence, with perfect order, that each one who comes to the house of God may meditate upon his goodness and silently and prayerfully express appreciation for God's goodness. Let the sacrament hour be one experience of the day in which the worshiper tries at least to realize within himself that it is possible for him to commune with his God. (Conference Report, April 1946, p.114)

Pondering Necessary to Acquire Spiritual Knowledge

Spencer W. Kimball (President)

- Reach for truth and hold it as each particle comes to you. You may know as numerous of your fellow members know. If your life is clean and your inclinations and desires are constructive you may know as Peter knew, as many of us know. Many in former days and in latter days have given their lives for their faith. You can know so surely that this is the divine truth that you also would give your life, your profession, or your all or any part of it for your testimony. If you do not receive this assurance, this testimony, it is your fault. The Lord is most anxious to give it to you through the Holy Ghost when you have really humbled yourself and paid the price in reaching, fasting, praying, studying, pondering, and cleansing and purging. You have spent years of intense study to gain your professional knowledge. Half as much devotion to your spiritual knowledge with the other requisites would have made your faith invincible, and you would not now be floundering. You will never resolve your conflicts unless you let the gospel be first. You cannot give it up. You already know too much to abandon it without serious repercussions. You will never forget the sweet experiences which have come to you in your spiritual ministrations. You will never forget, even in eternities, the testimonies you have heard, the warnings you have received. Even at the bar of God you will remember the earnest pleadings, the exhortations, and the testimony of your humble brother who pleads with you now. (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p.64)

- Since all of us sin in greater or lesser degree, we are all in need of constant repentance, of continually raising our sights and our performance. One can hardly do the commandments of the Lord in a day, a week, a month or a year. This is an effort which must be extended through the remainder of one's years. To accomplish it every soul should develop the same spirit of devotion and dedication to the work of the Lord as the bishop and the Relief Society president enjoy. Most often theirs is near total devotion.

This devotion needs to be applied as much in mental as in spiritual and physical effort. To understand the gospel so that true obedience can be intelligently given to its requirements takes time and application. The child born in the Church goes to Primary and Sunday School; later attends MIA and seminary and institute; works in scouting and exploring; later participates in Relief Society and much other specialized works, besides serving and attending and participating in other meetings and conferences, and all this in addition to the study of the gospel and many hours on his knees in

prayer. The adult convert can make up much of this training by intensive study and pondering and prayer. (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], pp.202-203)

Daily Pondering of the Word of God

Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Psalms 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

- May I admonish you to participate in a program of daily reading and pondering of the scriptures. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], p.557)
- Of the four great standard works of the Church -- the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price -- I would particularly urge you to read again and again the Book of Mormon and ponder and apply its teachings. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], p.557)

Neal A. Maxwell

- In a stormy season, we should thus approach the Book of Mormon and the "other books" as never before, reverently, prayerfully, and by studying them out in our minds. Such stretching and pondering involve much more than passively noting. Seeing relationships between various verses of scripture requires pondering, integrating, and appreciating. Just as Joseph did in Liberty Jail regarding many matters, when we break outside the tiny conceptual frameworks within which we have usually read the book, this will prepare us to be introduced by the Spirit to precious things which, to borrow the words of Moses, we "never had supposed" (Moses 1:10). [*But for a Small Moment* [1986], p.60]
- It is, wrote Jacob and Paul, the Spirit which aids our search: "for the Spirit ... speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13; see also 1 Corinthians 2:10). The interplay of time, experience, searching, thinking, pondering, trying, and communicating with God is facilitated by the Holy Spirit. The scriptures provide a superb way to induce this interplay, if we will but "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). [*But for a Small Moment* [1986], p.124]
- Some truths take a good deal of pondering, but not because they are complex. Because they are so powerful and cut so deeply, we must truly feel their edge--and more than fleetingly. (*Deposition of a Disciple* [1976], p.59)

Marvin J. Ashton (Quorum of the Twelve)

Next, I challenge every Latter-day Saint to come to a knowledge and an understanding of the scriptures. These sacred books are our bulwark of defense against a cunning adversary. Each person should own and use his personal copies of the scriptures. Take them to meetings and classes. Read them in leisure moments. Develop a

careful plan of study and meditation. Take them on trips as well. ("Rated A," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 73)

Pondering Scripture Helps In Asking Right Questions in Prayer

Henry B. Eyring (Quorum of the Twelve)

Pondering the scriptures will lead you to ask the right questions in prayer. And just as surely as the heavens were opened to Joseph Smith after he pondered the scriptures in faith, God will answer your prayers and He will lead you by the hand. ("Rise to Your Call," *Ensign*, Nov 2002, p. 75)

Mediation Helps Refine the Spirit

Cree-L Kofford (Seventy)

Read, meditate, and study the scriptures on a regular basis. In suggesting this, I'm not so concerned about your learning new things from the scriptures as I am about refining your spirit. Reading and pondering the scriptures simply has a way of doing that. ("Marriage in the Lord's Way, Part Two," *Ensign*, July 1998, p. 19)

Allow Time to Ponder the Temple Ordinances

Neal A. Maxwell

We are not merely to attend the temple mechanically to do the work for our dead, but when we go, we ought also to meditate and contemplate, perhaps having spiritual experiences there while at the same time we are doing what may seem to be a rather routine duty. (*Notwithstanding My Weakness* (1981), p.111)

Richard G. Scott (Quorum of the Twelve)

The endowment and sealing ordinances of the temple are so gloriously rich in meaning that you will want to allow significant time to receive those ordinances and to ponder their meaning. ...

The temple ordinances are so imbued with symbolic meaning as to provide a lifetime of productive contemplation and learning. Ponder each word and activity in the temple. Study how they interrelate. As you ponder the significance of those matters, think of them in light of your relationship to the Savior and His to our Father in Heaven. Contemplate how the understanding you receive enhances your earth life by giving proper emphasis on things which are critically important. Arrange to participate for deceased ancestors in the sealing and other ordinances as well as the endowment. I find it helpful when receiving ordinances for another, to try and relate to that person specifically. I think of him and pray that he will accept the ordinance and benefit from it. Do these things with a prayer in your heart that the Holy Spirit will enhance your understanding and enrich your life. Those worthy prayers will be answered. ("Receive the Temple Blessings," *Ensign*, May 1999, pp. 26-27)

Ponder Before Praying

David O. McKay (President)

In secret prayer go into the room, close the door, pull down the shades, and kneel in the center of the room. For a period of five minutes or so, say nothing. Just think of what God has done for you, of what are your greatest spiritual and temporal needs. When you sense that, and sense his presence, then pour out your soul to him in thanksgiving. (Conference Report, April 1946, p.114)

sing Church hymns; read uplifting literature; develop our appreciation for the cultural arts; plan family home evening study and activities; plan other family activities; friendship nonmembers; fellowship neighbors; visit the sick, the aged, and the lonely; hold interviews with family members....” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (1982), p.217)

L. Lionel Kendrick (Seventy)

Ponder before you pray. The Savior counseled, “Study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right” (D&C 9:8). The Prophet Joseph Smith was pondering the meaning of John 5:29, concerning the Resurrection. He said, “And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened” (D&C 76:19).

We must ponder before we pray. We must study, meditate, and seek for enlightenment concerning the matters for which we seek personal revelation. (“Personal Revelation,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1999, p. 8)

Fasting Should Include Pondering

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

To make a fast most fruitful, it should be coupled with prayer and meditation; physical work should be held to a minimum, and one should ponder on the scriptures and the reason for the fast. (“Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, 4)

Pondering Will Help Our Faith Grow

Joseph B. Wirthlin (Quorum of the Twelve)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” 19 “Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if [we] have faith [we] hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” 20 Latter-day Saints can rejoice in the strength of our faith because we have the fulness of the gospel. If we study, ponder, and pray, our faith in the unseen but true things of God will grow. (“Cultivating Divine Attributes,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, p. 26)

Meditation is an Appropriate Sabbath Activity

Spencer W. Kimball (President)

We encourage a thoughtful and prayerful review of the suggestions the Brethren have felt to approve for your consideration in planning Sabbath, home evening, and other weekly activities in our homes:

“As we plan our Sunday activities, we may want to set aside time for our family to be together, for personal study and meditation, and for service to others. We might want to read the scriptures, conference reports, and Church publications; study the lives and teachings of the prophets; prepare Church lessons and other Church assignments; write in journals; pray and meditate; write to or visit relatives and friends; write to missionaries; enjoy uplifting music; have family gospel instruction; hold family council meetings; build husband -- wife relationships; read with a child; do genealogical research, including the four-generation program and family or personal histories;