

Reverence, Sacrament, and Revelation

Salem Utah Stake Presidency – January 2013

As we have reflected upon the first invitation to “Receive Revelation” in our Salem Stake Vision, we have been drawn to the instruction, “We must do everything in our power to qualify for the Holy Ghost and remove anything that offends and denies the power of God in our lives – for without His guidance we will be deceived (D&C 45:57). As we live worthy of and act upon the whisperings of the spirit we grow in faith and qualify more fully to receive the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. (D&C 121:44-45)

To “receive the Holy Ghost” is one of our most important invitations in this mortal estate. The Doctrines of Christ (Repentance and Baptism) is the only way by which this special gift is given – it can come no other way. It is through the Doctrines of Christ (Atonement and Covenants) each week (through the Sacrament) we have the opportunity to participate in one of the most sacred ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - for the express purpose of asking the Father through his Son to “have his spirit to be with us” (D&C 20).

"The ordinance of the sacrament makes the sacrament meeting the most sacred and important meeting in the Church."

Dallin H. Oaks – October 2008 – “Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament”

“Sacrament meeting is the most sacred and holy of all the meetings in the Church.”

Quentin L. Cook – April 2010 – “We follow Jesus Christ”

When you really think about one of the primary reasons for the “houses” of the Lord (Temples, Meetinghouses), it is to administer the “ordinances” of the gospel. And it is in the ordinances, that the “power of God is manifest” (D&C 84: 20-21). The chapel within our meetinghouses represents an “ordinance room”. If we fully understood this, we would approach our speech, our actions, our reverence, and our preparation so much more meaningfully.

When we begin to understand the sacred connection between reverence, the sacrament, and revelation we begin to qualify for an endowment of knowledge, power, and protection that we have yet to realize. The prophets have said, “we live far below our privileges”. In regard to reverence, the sacrament, and revelation I believe this is true in the lives of so many latter-day saints.

When we enter the chapel, do we enter in a manner that demonstrates our deepest love, respect, adoration, and reverence for the immense pain, suffering, and sacrifice of our Savior for us? Do we approach this sacred ordinance in the significance it was given by our Father and His Son? Do we really understand the power, purposes, and blessings of this ordinance in our lives – especially as we navigate through the last days? Could we as a stake treat that special hour as one of the most important, reverent, special, and sacred hours of the week to show the Savior how deeply we love and need Him in our lives. If the Savior was waiting in the Chapel how would we enter, speak, and worship in a meeting with Him?

“One request Christ made of his disciples on that night of deep anguish and grief was that they stand by him, stay with him in his hour of sorrow and pain. “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” he asked longingly (Matt. 26:40). I think he asks that again of us, every Sabbath day when the emblems of his life are broken and blessed and passed.”

Jeffery R. Holland – October 1995 – “This Do In Remembrance Of Me”

Are we preparing and looking forward to the Sacrament as the focal point of our worship each week? Do we come to Sacrament meeting prepared with specific questions? Are we ready to record impressions and answers that come to us during sacrament meeting? What have we taught our children to help them prepare for this sacred meeting?

“For the sacrament to be a spiritually cleansing experience each week, we need to prepare ourselves before coming to sacrament meeting.”

Robert D. Hales – April 2012 – “Coming to Ourselves”

The invitation for us to participate more fully in the revelatory process is linked to the desires of our hearts and our understanding of the significance of reverence and of the sacrament in our daily lives. Reverence is an attitude of the heart from which actions and behavior are but expressions.

“When we contemplate the most sacred meetings in the Church, sacrament meeting is one of the most important. However, as I attend sacrament meetings, I have observed some trends that concern me: apparent lack of preparation, a general irreverence, commotion, and at times a spirit not conducive to thoughtful worship. I have wondered: How are we doing as members of the Church in remembering our Lord and Savior, His sacrifice, and our indebtedness to Him? Are we providing in our services opportunity for meditation, reflection, reverence, repentance, forgiveness?”

David B. Haight – April 1988 – Remembering the Savior’s Atonement.

“Reverence is profound respect mingled with love.”

President David O McKay

"I sense that some in the rising generation and even some adults have not yet come to understand the significance of this meeting and the importance of individual reverence and worship in it. The things I feel impressed to teach here are addressed to those who are not yet understanding and practicing these important principles and not yet enjoying the promised spiritual blessings of always having His guiding Spirit to be with them."

Dallin H. Oaks – October 2008 – “Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament”

As a Stake Presidency, we have felt the spirit invite us to make the following changes and invitation to elevate and enhance our reverence, our worship, and our qualifying to receive the rich blessings the Lord desires to give to us.

1. Sacrament meeting will be moved to be the first meeting in our Ward Sunday Meeting Block.
 - Families are encouraged to come 10-15 minutes before the meeting begins. We invite parents to have a family prayer, discuss questions or needs their children have, and help prepare a focus and reverence before entering the building.
 - Invite every member to use “temple voices” (whisper) in the Chapel. This will require that parents teach and instruct their children in FHE and through their example.
 - The Bishopric should be seated on the stand 10 minutes before the meeting begins. The Bishop is responsible for this most sacred meeting and ordinance. Announcements should be minimal and not distract from the spirit of the prelude preparation of the meeting. Meetings should not be over programmed. Music should be approved and appropriate. In all ways this meeting is to be conducted “after the manner of the workings of the spirit and by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 6:9)

- Prelude Music should be started 10 minutes before the meeting begins to invite the spirit and reverence symbolic of the temple.
- The Aaronic Priesthood should have the Sacrament table and emblems prepared 10 minutes before the meeting begins. The Aaronic Priesthood is responsible to ensure the chapel is clean and prepared for the Sacrament service (role of the Levitical/Aaronic Priesthood). Aaronic Priesthood should wear white shirts, ties and dress cloths/shoes when administering and passing the Sacrament. Hair styles or anything worldly should not distract from the sacred ordinance of the sacrament.

2. Sacrament Meeting Preparation and Reverence

- Parents have the responsibility to meet the needs of their little children in relation to food and care in the chapel. We encourage parents to avoid bringing food into the Chapel if possible. Every family is responsible to clean up their area at the end of the meeting to make it clean and orderly for the next ward.
- Parents with small children should plan ahead in sitting in locations within the Chapel where they can quickly and quietly leave and return to the sacrament service. Noisy children should be taken out of the chapel as quickly as possible to be sensitive to others seeking to worship and return as quickly as they can. The Lord does not mind the voices, cries, and fidgeting of his little ones – all things need to be done in reverence and sensitivity to others seeking to worship. We can all be tolerant and loving, patient and caring, seeking to help another. The spirit will guide in this sensitive area. Parents of small children can counsel with RS and YW leaders to seek help in ways to support them.
- Our dress has become casual in many ways. We invite each parent to discuss with their children how our dress is an outward manifestation of our love and respect to the Savior. Sensitivity to those who may be struggling to have Sunday clothes can be addressed within Bishopric, PEC, and Ward Councils to determine how to assist.

"For the past several years we have watched patterns of reverence and irreverence in the Church. While many are to be highly commended, we are drifting. We have reason to be deeply concerned.

The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth."

Reverence Invites Revelation - Boyd K. Packer, October 1991 General Conference

- Turn off all electronic devices during the entire sacrament meeting. Let the spirit teach you and avoid being distracted. Parents this is your responsibility to teach and lead.
- Teachers (Primary, Sunday school) should not leave early from sacrament meeting. It is encouraged to have your students help in cleaning the rooms, straightening chairs, and preparing for the lesson. All class rooms should be left clean and in order.
- Ward members should be considerate of the older generation to ensure they have seats that are comfortable and able to hear the speakers.

3. Renew Covenants, Return & Report, Receive Revelation

- We invite every member to come to the sacrament meeting each week to renew their personal covenants and receive divine revelation. This can be enhanced by coming prepared with specific questions or needs to seek answers and instruction for.

“When we are baptized, we take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Taking upon us His name is one of the most significant experiences we have in life. Each week in sacrament meeting we promise to remember the atoning sacrifice of our Savior as we renew our baptismal covenant. We promise to do as the Savior did—to be obedient to the Father and always keep His commandments. The blessing we receive in return is to always have His Spirit to be with us.”

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

- We invite every member to prayerfully ask during each sacrament meeting, “who can I love and serve this week?” or “What will thou have me do?”
- Come prepared to record the impressions and feelings you receive. Writing down your impressions demonstrates your appreciation and desires to follow the Savior in your life.
- Reflect upon the past weeks “assignments” and impressions to give an accounting unto the Lord. Show Him you desire to qualify for additional assignments from the spirit.

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

Boyd K. Packer – Nov 1991 – “Reverence Invites Revelation”.

As we prayerfully prepare our hearts and our minds to offer unto the Lord an “acceptable offering” in relation to our reverence, the sacrament, and our desires to seek for revelation, we know that the Lord will bring forth the marvelous blessings promised. Our homes and families will be strengthened. Our faith will increase. Our love of the Savior and his infinite Atonement will heal and bless us. The Lord has stated, “Return unto me and I will return unto you” (Mal 4) As we give to him our hearts, He will give unto us His unspeakable gifts and blessings through our obedience, our faith, and our reverence of the ordinance that reflects his Atonement.

“Their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.”

Moroni. 6:9

“Draw near unto me, and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” *De&C 88:63*

The Lord desires to endow us with power from on high. We are usually the ones that “deny the power of God” through our casual worship and lack of reverence and understanding of the laws upon which “all blessings are predicated”. We express our love and appreciation to every member of this Stake. We have been blessed and directed from above in receiving the Stake Vision. We testify that these impressions and invitations are from the whispering of the Spirit as we have sought to ask the Lord what more we could do to come closer to Him.

We Love you.

The Salem Utah Stake Presidency