

Personal Evaluation

Doctrine: **God the Father**

<i>Question</i>	<i>My Answers</i>
1) What truths do I already know about this subject?	
2) How has this doctrine affected my perspective on life and who I am?	
3) How has this doctrine influenced how I act every day?	
4) Where, specifically, have I learned what I wrote on #1?	
5) How has this doctrine affected our home?	
6) When and how have we discussed this topic at home with our family?	
7) What are specific things I do because I know this doctrine?	
8) What are some specific things our family does because of this doctrine?	
9) What are some things I would like to better understand about this doctrine?	

Child Evaluation

Baby to school age

Child: _____

Age: _____

Doctrine: **God the Father**

<i>Question</i>	<i>My Answers</i>
1) Why is it important to us that they learn this doctrine early in their lives?	
2) How will an understanding and testimony of this doctrine affect their daily choices and how they act at home and with their friends?	
3) What are the 1 st five things we need to teach them about this doctrine?	
4) How can we do this effectively?	
5) What are some skills we may need to work on, as parents, in order to teach them as powerfully as possible?	
6) Who are some other people in their lives that can teach and influence them on this subject?	
7) What growth do I hope to observe in them as they grow in their testimony of this?	
8) How are we going to do this? What is our plan?	

Child Evaluation

School age and up

Child: _____

Age: _____

Doctrine: **God the Father**

<i>Question</i>	<i>My Answers</i>
1) What truths am I certain they know about this doctrine?	
2) How strongly to they believe those things?	
3) What growth have I observed in them as they have grown in their testimony of this?	
4) How does their testimony of this affect their everyday choices?	
5) How does it affect how they act at home?	
6) How does it affect how they act with their friends and at school and work?	
7) What are we, as parents, doing to be an example of the power of this doctrine?	
8) What specific things do we still need to teach them?	
9) How are we going to do this? What is our plan?	
10) What are some skills that we, as parents, need to work on in order to be more effective?	

Doctrine: God the Father

Overview: God the Father is the Supreme Ruler of the universe. He is the Father of our spirits. He is perfect, has all power, and knows all things. He is also a God of perfect mercy, kindness, and charity.

Individual and Spouse Study

<i>Source</i>	<i>Truths</i>	<i>My Insights</i>	<i>My Spouse's Insights</i>
Genesis 1:26-27			
John 10:9			
Romans 8:16-17			
Alma 26:35			
Moroni 8:3			
“God the Father” True to the Faith, 74-76			

Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007) 37-44

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. "The Father and the Son," *Ensign*, April 2002, 13-18.

Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign*, November 2003, 70-73.

God the Eternal Father

Chapter 2

From the Life of Joseph Smith

Among Joseph Smith's progenitors were many who sought to know the true God in their day. Joseph's own parents were deeply spiritual, and although they did not find the full truth about God in the churches around them, they honored the Bible as God's word and made prayer a part of daily life. The Prophet's brother William recalled: "My father's religious habits were strictly pious and moral. ... I was called upon to listen to prayers both night and morning. ... My parents, father and mother, poured out their souls to God, the donor of all blessings, to keep and guard their children and keep them from sin and from all evil works. Such was the strict piety of my parents."¹ William also said: "We always had family prayers since I can remember. I well remember father used to carry his spectacles in his vest pocket, ... and when us boys saw him feel for his specs, we knew that was a signal to get ready for prayer, and if we did not notice it mother would say, 'William,' or whoever was the negligent one, 'get ready for prayer.' After the prayer we had a song we would sing; I remember part of it yet: 'Another day has passed and gone, We lay our garments by.'"²

This early spiritual training sank deep into young Joseph Smith's soul. When he became concerned about his eternal welfare and sought to know which church to join, he knew he could turn to God for answers:

"I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday, today, and forever, that he was no respecter to persons, for he was God. For I looked upon the sun, the glorious luminary of the earth, and also the moon rolling in [its] majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses; and the earth also upon which I stood, and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters; and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty, [with] power and intelligence in governing the things which are so exceedingly great and marvelous, even in the likeness of him who created them.

"And when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed, Well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God [see [Psalm 53:1](#)]. My heart exclaimed, All these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power, a Being who maketh laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds, who filleth eternity, who was and is and will be from all eternity to eternity. And when I considered all these things and that that Being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth [see [John 4:23](#)],

therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy."³

Joseph's faithful prayer for mercy and wisdom was answered with the First Vision. That vision gave the young Prophet far greater knowledge about God than any of the churches of his day possessed, knowledge that had been lost to the world for centuries. In the First Vision, Joseph learned for himself that the Father and the Son are individual beings, that Their power is greater than the power of evil, and that man is indeed fashioned in God's image—truths that are essential in understanding our actual relationship to our Father in Heaven.

Other revelations about the nature of God followed, including many that are now in our latter-day scriptures. As God's chosen instrument in restoring gospel truth to the world, the Prophet testified of God throughout his ministry. "I am going to inquire after God," he declared, "for I want you all to know Him, and to be familiar with Him. ... You will then know that I am His servant; for I speak as one having authority."⁴

Teachings of Joseph Smith

I. God is the loving Father of all mankind and the source of all that is good.

"While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes 'His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' [[Matthew 5:45](#)]."⁵

"We admit that God is the great source and fountain from whence proceeds all good; that He is perfect intelligence, and that His wisdom is alone sufficient to govern and regulate the mighty creations and worlds which shine and blaze with such magnificence and splendor over our heads, as though touched with His finger and moved by His Almighty word. ... The heavens declare the glory of a God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork [see [Psalm 19:1](#)]; and a moment's reflection is sufficient to teach every man of common intelligence, that all these are not the mere productions of *chance*, nor could they be supported by any power less than an Almighty hand."⁶

“God sees the secret springs of human action, and knows the hearts of all living.”⁷

“The purposes of our God are great, His love unfathomable, His wisdom infinite, and His power unlimited; therefore, the Saints have cause to rejoice and be glad, knowing that ‘this God is our God forever and ever, and He will be our Guide until death.’ [Psalm 48:14.]”⁸

II. When we comprehend the character of God, we comprehend ourselves and know how to approach Him.

“There are but a very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. The great majority of mankind do not comprehend anything, either that which is past, or that which is to come, as it respects their relationship to God. They do not know, neither do they understand the nature of that relationship; and consequently they know but little above the brute beast, or more than to eat, drink and sleep. This is all man knows about God or His existence, unless it is given by the inspiration of the Almighty.

“If a man learns nothing more than to eat, drink and sleep, and does not comprehend any of the designs of God, the beast comprehends the same things. It eats, drinks, sleeps, and knows nothing more about God; yet it knows as much as we, unless we are able to comprehend by the inspiration of Almighty God. If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves. I want to go back to the beginning, and so lift your minds into more lofty spheres and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to.

“... The scriptures inform us that ‘This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ [John 17:3.]

“If any man does not know God, and inquires what kind of a being He is,—if he will search diligently his own heart—if the declaration of Jesus and the apostles be true, he will realize that he has not eternal life; for there can be eternal life on no other principle.

“My first object is to find out the character of the only wise and true God, and what kind of a being He is. ...

“God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make Himself visible,—I say, if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the

person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another. ...

“... Having a knowledge of God, we begin to know how to approach Him, and how to ask so as to receive an answer. When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to Him, He begins to unfold the heavens to us, and to tell us all about it. When we are ready to come to Him, He is ready to come to us.”⁹

III. In the Godhead there are three separate and distinct personages.

Articles of Faith 1:1: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰

Joseph Smith taught the following in April 1843, later recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 130:22: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”¹¹

“I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.”¹²

“That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones.”¹³

IV. The Godhead is in perfect unity, and God the Father presides.

“There is much said about God and the Godhead. ... The teachers of the day say that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and they are all in one body and one God. Jesus prayed that those that the Father had given him out of the world might be made one in them, as they were one [see John 17:11–23]. ...

“Peter and Stephen testify that they saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all.”¹⁴

“Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the

earth. These personages ... are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the Witness or Testator.”¹⁵

“[It is] the province of the Father to preside as the Chief or President, Jesus as the Mediator, and the Holy Ghost as the Testator or Witness. The Son [has] a tabernacle and so [does] the Father, but the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit without tabernacle.”¹⁶

“The scripture says, ‘I and my Father are one’ [John 10:30], and again that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one, and these three agree in the same thing [see 1 John 5:7–8]. So did the Savior pray to the Father, ‘I pray not for the world, but for those whom ye gave me out of the world, that we might be one,’ or to say, be of one mind in the unity of the faith [see John 17:9, 11]. But everyone being a different or separate person, so are God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost separate persons, but they all agree in one or the selfsame thing.”¹⁷

V. Notes

1. William Smith, Notes on Chambers' life of Joseph Smith, ca. 1875, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. William Smith, interview by E. C. Briggs and J. W. Peterson, Oct. or Nov. 1893, originally published in *Zion's Ensign* (periodical published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now called Community of Christ); reprinted in *Deseret Evening News*, Jan. 20, 1894, p. 2; punctuation modernized.

3. Joseph Smith, History 1832, pp. 2–3; Letter Book 1, 1829–35, Joseph Smith, Collection, Church Archives.

4. *History of the Church*, 6:305; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 7, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton.

5. *History of the Church*, 4:595; from “Baptism for the Dead,” an editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, Apr. 15, 1842, p. 759; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical.

6. *History of the Church*, 2:12, 14; paragraph divisions altered; from “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad,” Jan. 22, 1834, published in *Evening and Morning Star*, Feb. 1834, p. 136; Mar. 1834, p. 142.

7. *History of the Church*, 1:317; from a letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, Jan. 11, 1833, Kirtland, Ohio; this letter is incorrectly dated Jan. 14, 1833, in *History of the Church*.

8. *History of the Church*, 4:185; from a letter from Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency to the Saints, Sept. 1840, Nauvoo, Illinois, published in *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178.

9. *History of the Church*, 6:303–5, 308; capitalization modernized; paragraph divisions altered; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 7, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton; see also the appendix in this book, page 562, item 3.

10. [Articles of Faith 1:1](#).

11. [Doctrine and Covenants 130:22](#); instructions given by Joseph Smith on Apr. 2, 1843, in Ramus, Illinois.

12. *History of the Church*, 6:474; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 16, 1844, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Thomas Bullock.

13. Quoted by William Clayton, reporting an undated discourse given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois; in L. John Nuttall, “Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book,” p. 7, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; copy in Church Archives.

14. *History of the Church*, 5:426; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 11, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff and Willard Richards.

15. Quoted by William Clayton, reporting an undated discourse given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois; in L. John Nuttall, “Extracts from William Clayton's Private Book,” pp. 10–11, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; copy in Church Archives.

16. Quoted by William P. McIntire, reporting a discourse given by Joseph Smith in early 1841 in Nauvoo, Illinois; William Patterson McIntire, Notebook 1840–45, Church Archives. William McIntire made brief reports of several discourses given by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in early 1841. This book quotes from four of these reports, none of which is dated.

17. Quoted by George Laub, in compilation of excerpts from Joseph Smith's discourses, ca. 1845; George Laub, *Reminiscences and Journal* Jan. 1845–Apr. 1857, pp. 29–30, Church Archives.

The Father and The Son

Ensign, Apr 2002, 13

A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934–42; capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling standardized.

In the early 1900s, some discussion arose among Church members about the roles of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued the following in 1916 to clarify the meaning of certain scriptures where Jesus Christ, or Jehovah, is designated as the Father. It is thought that a printing of this statement will be helpful to members as they study the Old Testament this year.

The scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed, the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for “the elements are eternal” (D&C 93:33).

So also life is eternal, and not created; but life, or the vital force, may be infused into organized matter, though the details of the process have not been revealed unto man. (For illustrative instances see [Gen. 2:7](#); [Moses 3:7](#); [Abr. 5:7](#).) Each of these scriptures states that God breathed into the body of man the breath of life. See further [Moses 3:19](#) for the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the bodies of the beasts and birds. God showed unto Abraham “the intelligences that were organized before the world was”; and by “intelligences” we are to understand personal “spirits” (see [Abr. 3:22–23](#)); nevertheless, we are expressly told that “Intelligence,” that is, “the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

The term “Father” as applied to Deity occurs in sacred writ with plainly different meanings. Each of the four significations specified in the following treatment should be carefully segregated.

1. “Father” as Literal Parent

Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification—literally that of Parent—are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title “Elohim,” is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” ([Heb. 12:9](#)). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” ([Matt. 6:9](#)).

Jesus Christ applies to Himself both titles, “Son” and “Father.” Indeed, He specifically said to the brother of Jared: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son” ([Ether 3:14](#)). Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. No extended explanation

of the title “Son of God” as applied to Jesus Christ appears necessary.

2. “Father” as Creator

A second scriptural meaning of “Father” is that of Creator; e.g., in passages referring to any one of the Godhead as “the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are” ([Ether 4:7](#); see also [Alma 11:38–39](#); [Mosiah 15:4](#)).

God is not the Father of the earth as one of the worlds in space, nor of the heavenly bodies in whole or in part, not of the inanimate objects and the plants and the animals upon the earth, in the literal sense in which He is the Father of the spirits of mankind. Therefore, scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called “the Father,” and even “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth” (see passages before cited and also [Mosiah 16:15](#)). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called “The Everlasting Father” ([Isa. 9:6](#); compare [2 Ne. 19:6](#)). The descriptive titles “Everlasting” and “Eternal” in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ*, chapter 4 [by James E. Talmage]. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

3. Jesus Christ the “Father” of Those Who Abide in His Gospel

A third sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the “Father” has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. Following are a few of the scriptures illustrating this meaning.

In fervent prayer offered just prior to His entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus Christ supplicated His Father in behalf of those whom the Father had given unto Him, specifically the Apostles, and, more generally, all who would accept and abide in the gospel through the ministry of the Apostles. Read in our Lord’s own words the solemn affirmation that those for whom He particularly prayed were His own, and that His Father had given them unto Him:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6–12).

And further:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20–24).

To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said, "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me" (D&C 50:41).

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith, the Lord Jesus addressed the woman as "my daughter" and said, "For verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (D&C 25:1). In many instances the Lord had addressed men as His sons (e.g., D&C 9:1; D&C 34:3; D&C 121:7).

That by obedience to the gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world.

"I am the same who came unto mine own and mine own received me not;

"But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen" (D&C 11:28–30).

To Orson Pratt the Lord spoke through Joseph the seer, in 1830:

"My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer;

"The light and the life of the world, a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my son" (D&C 34:1–3).

In 1830 the Lord thus addressed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon:

"Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever.

"I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (D&C 35:1–2).

Consider also the following given in 1831:

"Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I Am, even Jesus Christ—

"The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not;

"But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons" (D&C 39:1–4).

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March 1831 we read:

"For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

"I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life" (D&C 45:7–8).

A forceful exposition of this relationship between Jesus Christ as the Father and those who comply with the requirements of the gospel as His children was given by Abinadi, centuries before our Lord's birth in the flesh:

“And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?”

“Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.”

“For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?”

“Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed” (Mosiah 15:10–13).

In tragic contrast with the blessed state of those who become children of God through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ is that of the unregenerate, who are specifically called the children of the devil. Note the words of Christ, while in the flesh, to certain wicked Jews who boasted of their Abrahamic lineage: “If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . . Ye do the deeds of your father. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:39, 41–42, 44). Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them. A combined illustration showing that the righteous are the children of God and the wicked the children of the devil appears in the parable of the tares: “The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one” (Matt. 13:38).

Men may become children of Jesus Christ by being born anew—born of God, as the inspired word states:

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 Jn. 3:8–10).

Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of godhood. Of such we read: “Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:58; compare D&C 132:20, and contrast D&C 132:17 in same section; see also D&C 132:37). Yet though they be gods, they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship; and so we read in the paragraph following the above quotation: “And they are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (D&C 76:59).

By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ, being through the means by Him provided “begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:24). This solemn truth is further emphasized in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ given through Joseph Smith in 1833:

“And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

“And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21–22).

For such figurative use of the term “begotten” in application to those who are born unto God, see Paul’s explanation: “For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). An analogous instance of sonship attained by righteous service is found in the revelation relating to the order and functions of priesthood, given in 1832:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies:

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (D&C 84:33–34).

If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide in the gospel as Christ’s sons and daughters—and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied—it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth—the baptismal regeneration.

4. Jesus Christ the “Father” by Divine Investiture of Authority

A fourth reason for applying the title “Father” to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. To the Jews He said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30; see also John 17:11, 22); yet He declared, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), and further, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43; see also John 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ Himself to the Nephites (see 3 Ne. 20:35; 3 Ne. 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in the present dispensation (D&C 50:43). Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father’s name; and so far as power, authority, and godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father.

We read, by way of analogy, that God placed His name upon or in the angel who was assigned to special ministry unto the people of Israel during the exodus. Of that angel the Lord said, “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Ex. 23:21).

The ancient Apostle John was visited by an angel who ministered and spoke in the name of Jesus Christ. As we read, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1). John was about to worship the angelic being who spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was forbidden:

"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

"Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8–9).

And then the angel continued to speak as though he were the Lord Himself:

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:12–13).

The resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who had been exalted to the right hand of God His Father, had placed His name upon the angel sent to John, and the angel spoke in the first person, saying, "I come quickly," "I am Alpha and Omega," though he meant that Jesus Christ would come and that Jesus Christ was Alpha and Omega.

None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ. Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. Following are affirmative scriptures bearing upon this great truth. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Jesus Christ:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:15–19).

From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was "the firstborn of every creature," and it is evident that the seniority

here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as "the firstborn from the dead," this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20; see also 1 Cor. 15:23); and "the first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:28–29).

John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said, as before cited, "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: "Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth" (D&C 93:23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of humankind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any or all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons or daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation.

The Grandeur of God

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign*, Nov 2003, 70

In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely. As both Old and New Testaments declare, "The first of all the commandments is ... thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first [and great] commandment." 1

Little wonder then that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God." "I want you all to know Him," he said, "and to be familiar with Him." 2 We must have "a *correct* idea of his ... perfections, and attributes," an admiration for "the excellency of [His] character." 3 Thus the first phrase we utter in the declaration of our faith is, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father." 4 So, emphatically, did Jesus. Even as He acknowledged His own singular role in the divine plan, the Savior nevertheless insisted on

this prayerful preamble: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God." 5

After generations of prophets had tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

"The Father ... doeth the works," He said in earnest. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." 6 On another occasion He said: "I speak that which I have seen with my Father." "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." 7

I make my own heartfelt declaration of God our Eternal Father this morning because some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of Him. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from

the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. And if they do believe, many moderns say they might feel comfortable in the arms of Jesus, but they are uneasy contemplating the stern encounter of God. 8 Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son as operating very differently, this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.” 9

In reflecting on these misconceptions we realize that one of the remarkable contributions of the Book of Mormon is its seamless, perfectly consistent view of divinity throughout that majestic book. Here there is no Malachi-to-Matthew gap, no pause while we shift theological gears, no misreading the God who is urgently, lovingly, faithfully at work on every page of that record from its Old Testament beginning to its New Testament end. Yes, in an effort to give the world back its Bible and a correct view of Deity with it, what we have in the Book of Mormon is a uniform view of God in all His glory and goodness, all His richness and complexity—including and especially as again demonstrated through a personal appearance of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

How grateful we are for *all* the scriptures, especially the scriptures of the Restoration, that teach us the majesty of each member of the Godhead. How we would thrill, for example, if all the world would receive and embrace the view of the Father so movingly described in the Pearl of Great Price.

There, in the midst of a grand vision of humankind which heaven opened to his view, Enoch, observing both the blessings and challenges of mortality, turns his gaze toward the Father and is stunned to see Him weeping. He says in wonder and amazement to this most powerful Being in the universe: “How is it that thou canst weep? ... Thou art just [and] merciful and kind forever; ... Peace ... is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go

before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?”

Looking out on the events of almost any day, God replies: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands. ... I gave unto them ... [a] commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood. ... Wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?” 10

That single, riveting scene does more to teach the true nature of God than any theological treatise could ever convey. It also helps us understand much more emphatically that vivid moment in the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive tree, when after digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?” 11

What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor “the gospel of God” He sent! 12 How easy to love someone who so singularly loves us!

Of course the centuries-long drift away from belief in such a perfect and caring Father hasn’t been helped any by the man-made creeds of erring generations which describe God variously as unknown and unknowable—formless, passionless, elusive, ethereal, simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at all. Certainly that does not describe the Being we behold through the eyes of these prophets. Nor does it match the living, breathing, embodied Jesus of Nazareth who was and is in “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his [Father].” 13

In that sense Jesus did not come to improve God’s view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man’s view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God,

yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.” ¹⁴ In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is God’s compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in Their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” ¹⁵

I bear personal witness this day of a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns. We are created in His very image and likeness, ¹⁶ and Jesus of Nazareth, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, came to earth as the perfect mortal manifestation of His grandeur. In addition to the witness of the ancients we also have the modern miracle of Palmyra, the appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son, the Savior of the world, to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of that appearance, and in the words of that prophet I, too, declare: “Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive. ... God does not look on sin with [the least degree of] allowance, but ... the nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs.” ¹⁷

I bear witness of a God who has such shoulders. And in the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: “Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” ¹⁸—and to love Him forever, I pray. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Notes

1. Mark 12:29–30; see also Matt. 22:37–38; Deut. 6:5.
2. *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38, 42.
4. A of F 1:1.
5. John 17:3.
6. John 14:10; John 5:19.
7. John 8:38, 28; John 6:38.
8. See William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (1961), especially the chapter “Looking at the Cross” for a discussion of this modern tendency.
9. For example, 1 Ne. 10:18; 2 Ne. 27:23; Moro. 10:19; D&C 20:12.
10. Moses 7:29–33, 37.
11. Jacob 5:41; see also Jacob 5:47, 49.
12. Rom. 1:1.
13. Heb. 1:3; see also 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 42.
15. John 3:16–17.
16. See Gen. 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27.
17. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 257, 240–41.
18. 1 Jn. 4:10–11.