

# KEEP WHICH COMMANDMENTS



The Lord promised that the Saints would be blessed with “commandments not a few.” Which of the Lord’s instructions given by revelation in our dispensation can be considered commandments, and how can we remember and obey so many?

By Jon M. Taylor

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## Introduction

One of the most oft-repeated instructions given to us in the scriptures and by our leaders is “Keep the commandments.”

As a young missionary, when we attempted to commit investigators to keep the commandments of the Lord in order to be baptized, a typical response was: “You mean the Ten Commandments?”

I would reply as best I could:

“Not just the Ten Commandments, but any commandment the Lord gives us through his living prophets.”

They would sometimes look at me quizzically until I read to them from modern scriptures the need to obey additional commandments, such as the Word of Wisdom and the law of tithing.

In various priesthood and Sunday school classes, I often heard the admonition to “keep the commandments.”

“Which Commandments?” I often asked myself.

Some teachers had explained that any time the Lord uses language such as “Thus saith the Lord” or “Thou shalt,” it could be considered a commandment.

But I also knew that two of the Ten Commandments, often called the Decalogue, were simply given in declarative language, or a definite instruction to do (or not do) something. They are:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8)

“Honour thy father and thy mother . . .” (Exodus 20:12)

A more satisfactory definition of what was a commandment was one I heard from a source I don’t recall: “A commandment is any instruction to do or not do something that is recorded in scripture, or given by living prophets in general conference or in official pronouncements from the First Presidency.”

Later, as a seminary instructor, the question came up often from my students in a different form. Since the students were aware that many modern commandments had been revealed beyond the Ten Commandments, they would sometimes ask, “What are the commandments we are expected to keep?” There was urgency in the question because of our emphasis on the importance of keeping the commandments to our spiritual well being.

I would attempt to answer by responding that we could consider any dictate of the Lord, whether from his own mouth or from his prophets as a commandment – even though not preceded by “Thus saith the Lord” or

“Thou shalt,” – as long as the instruction was given in declarative language, i.e., direct order to do or not do something. In fact, for both of the Ten Commandments that do not begin with “Thou shalt,” one could consider the words “Thou shalt” as understood or implied, though not expressed, as follows:

“[Thou shalt] remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8)

“[Thou shalt] honour thy father and thy mother . . .” (Exodus 20:12)

Regardless of grammatical considerations, we consider all ten declarations in the Decalogue to be commandments, since the Lord is declaring “the law” to Moses.

This answer did not always satisfy the more curious students, but it was the best I had to offer – other than to give examples of modern commandments such as I had done in the mission field. But there are numerous commandments, if all instructions from the Lord, such as those recorded in the scriptures, are included. This raises several questions:

Are we only obligated to keep commandments recorded in the official canon of the Standard Works?

Should declarations from other inspired sources, such as teachings of modern day prophets and statements of the First Presidency, be accepted as commandments?

Can instructions given to us by our authorized priesthood leaders be considered commandments?

Should inspired instructions given to us in patriarchal or other blessings be looked upon as commandments?

Could instructions from righteous parents to their children be viewed as commandments?

Should directives or promptings from the Holy Ghost be just as strictly followed as if they were scriptural commandments?

In summary, which of the many instructions given by the Lord through his authorized servants to the Church and to us individually are “commandments of the Lord?”

As I continued teaching in the various organizations of the church, the question of what constitutes a commandment came up again and again. My answers were never very satisfactory.

## Importance of keeping the commandments

As I searched sermons of our prophets for the past 100 years, I was struck with statements by church leaders on the supernal importance of keeping the commandments. For example, following the destruction of New York's Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, President Hinkley stated the following in the Sunday morning session of general conference:

“Our safety lies in repentance. Our strength comes of obedience to the commandments of God.<sup>1</sup>”

I remember well when President Harold B. Lee was interviewed by the press as he became the eleventh President of the Church. President Lee commented,

“The greatest message that one in this position could give to the membership of the Church is to keep the commandments of God, for therein lies the safety of the individual. Keep the commandments. There could be nothing that I could say that would be a more powerful or more important message today.<sup>2</sup>”

President Joseph F. Smith said regarding preparing for the second coming of Christ,

“We are in perilous times, but I do not feel the pangs of that terror. (This observation should apply as well to us today!) . . . I propose to so live that it will not rest upon me. I propose to so live that I shall be immune from the perils of the world, if it be possible for me so to live, by obedience to the commandments of God and to his laws revealed for my guidance.<sup>3</sup>”

The central importance of commandments is underscored by the recorded objective of sending man to earth: “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the lord their God shall command them.” (Abraham 3:25) And Jesus Christ considered it of such significance that he taught his disciples,

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” (John 15:10)

As part of this new gospel taught by Christ, He taught the Sermon on the Mount. He introduced teachings that required a new discipline of love and unselfish service. In referring to these new instructions, he admonished,

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in

the kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

The resurrected Lord later gave the same sermon to the Nephites and told them,

“And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

“Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (3 Nephi 12:19-20)

The Lord admonished us in our day:

“And again, every person who belongeth to this church of Christ, shall observe to keep all the commandments and covenants of the church.” (D&C 42:78)

Further evidence of the importance of keeping the commandments is the covenant that we renew weekly as we partake of the sacramental bread – to “keep his commandments which he has given them . . .” (D&C 20:77).

Also, we are questioned regarding our obedience to the commandments whenever being interviewed for temple recommends.

**We can choose whether or not to obey the commandments, but we cannot choose the consequences of disobedience.**

Unlike those who would excuse wickedness by saying that God's mercy extends to all and that salvation is not by works, but by the blood of Jesus; we believe God's highest rewards go to those who repent, obey the commandments, and depend on God's mercy to purify us to enter into God's rest. The commandments are divine mandates given to provide peace in this world and exaltation in the world to come. As Elder Richard G. Scott stated:

“. . . Our Eternal Father defined truth and established what is right and wrong before the creation of this earth. He also fixed the consequences of obedience and disobedience to those truths. He defended our right to choose our path in life so that we would grow, develop, and be happy, but *we do not have the right to choose the consequences of our acts*. Those who willfully, consistently disobey His commandments will inevitably learn that truth. Joseph Smith was inspired to record, "When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." (D&C 130:21.)<sup>4</sup>

God himself follows laws. Our belief in God and in the eternal plan of salvation made possible through Christ assumes that God's laws are not only just and fair, but also for our good. In other words, we can feel good about obeying God's commandments not just out of expectation of reward, but because they are inherently for our ultimate benefit. As Paul taught:

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Rom. 7:12)

We may not understand the reasons for all of God's commandments, but we can have confidence in Him because His knowledge transcends our poor perceptions. As the Lord revealed to Isaiah:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)

Paul assured us that what we don't understand will ultimately become clear to us:

"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." (1 Cor. 13:12)

## **We should know what commandments we are expected to keep.**

As I began this quest, one thing caused me much concern. If I wasn't certain which of all of the commandments that I was expected to keep, how could I comply? Joseph Smith once said, "We cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them."<sup>5</sup>

Learning what commandments the Lord expects us to keep is a good reason for regularly studying the scriptures. As the Savior said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life. . ." (John 5:39) We are also admonished in our day to "Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful . . ." (D&C 1:37)

So I embarked on a journey of scriptural discovery. I decided to begin my quest by making a list of all the commandments the Lord had given, at least those recorded in the Standard Works.

I began with the commandments given to Adam and the antediluvial prophets. We don't know what all of them were, but we do know that Adam was commanded to offer sacrifice to the Lord.

Abraham obeyed when commanded to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, which proved to be a test of his faith and obedience. For not withholding his son, Abraham was promised a great posterity through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed.

We are told that Isaac and Jacob –

". . . did none other things than that which they were commanded, and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation." (D&C 132:37)

Later Moses delivered the original Ten Commandments (also called the "Decalogue"). They are easily recognized:

#1 – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

#2 – "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

#3 – "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

#4 – "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

“But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

“For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

#5 – “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

#6 – “Thou shalt not kill.

#7 – “Thou shalt not commit adultery.

#8 – “Thou shalt not steal.

#9 – Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

#10 – “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.” (Exodus 20:3-17)

These were given, along with a host of other commandments covering many aspects of daily life, which we today refer to as “the Law of Moses.” However, in making my list, I decided to skip these temporal commandments because of the fulfillment of the Law of Moses with the coming of Christ (Matthew 5:17).

In the meridian of times, Jesus Christ gave commandments that are recorded in the *New Testament*, but these carried a new emphasis, primarily centered on a gospel of love.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” (John 13:34. See also Matthew 22:36-40)

Christ was by no means backing down on the importance of keeping commandments, for in his Sermon on the Mount he proclaimed:

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt.5:19)

Most of us are familiar with the original Ten Commandments. But when we get to our dispensation, determining which of the many commandments apply to us requires some study and understanding of the many ways in which the Lord communicates his will to us.

## **Which of the many scriptural directives can be considered commandments?**

Which of the many commandments we are expected to keep? As previously discussed, some immediately think of the original Ten Commandments – the Decalogue – given through Moses. But anyone who has carefully studied the modern revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith must view: the Ten Commandments as but primer to the directives given to us in our time.

In a revelation to the Prophet in Jackson County, the Lord indicated that the saints would “be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with *commandments not a few* . . . they that are faithful and diligent before me.” (D&C 59: 4). How literally this has been fulfilled can be appreciated by anyone who has tried to compile a list of all the commandments which are recorded in the *Doctrine and Covenants* – earlier referred to as *The Book of Commandments or Covenants and Commandments*. This modern book of scriptures contains “commandments not a few,” which defy cataloguing, for the following reasons:

1. Some commandments are often repeated but couched in different terms or in context with other commandments. “And ye must practice virtue and holiness before me continually” (D&C 46:33) is akin to “And let all things be done in cleanliness before me” (42:41) and “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” (133:5)

2. There may be some question as to which instructions should be considered commandments. The position taken in this article is that any instruction from the Lord that is given in imperative (obligatory) language can be considered a commandment. We generally accept as commandments instructions that begin with “Thou shalt,” which in common language would read “You shall (do such and such).” Examples would be “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (D&C 59:6) “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things” (59:7).

A less obvious example would be “Cease to contend with one another.” Though this instruction does not begin with “Thou shalt,” these words are taken for granted as though the lord had said, “Thou shalt cease to contend with one another.” Two of the Ten Commandments begin similarly: “Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy,” and “Honor thy father and thy mother. . .” (Ex. 20:8,12)

3. Many commandments were given to individuals or groups under special circumstances. William E. M’Lellan was cautioned, “Seek not to be cumbered.” (D&C 66:10), an instruction to help him with one of his weaknesses. Other examples are found in the many imperatives relating to the law of consecration and early missionary labors undertaken “without

purse or scrip.” However, even commandments given to individuals can be considered useful to others in similar circumstances. The Lord stated repeatedly, “. . . What I say unto one I say unto all. . .” (61:18,36, 82:5; 92:1; 93:49)

Each of us personally must remain open to the possibility that we could be given commandments that apply to us alone, such as in the case of directions given to us in a patriarchal blessing or directly from the Spirit of the Lord in answer to prayer.

Nephi often referred to promptings of the Lord to him or his father Lehi as commandments. An example was when he and his brothers were commanded to return to Jerusalem to get the plates of Laban. Nephi responded by saying to his father, “ I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he hath commanded them” (1Nephi 3:7).

4. Some commandments are given to the Church at large and can only be carried out under the direction of our priesthood leaders. Revelations relating to temple work and the commencing of missionary work in foreign lands fall in this category.

So what is a commandment? We could say it is *any instruction from the Lord*, whether through living prophets, commandments from the standard works that apply to our day, inspired directions from our priesthood leaders when carrying out their assignments, instructions and warnings in patriarchal blessings, temple covenants, or promptings to us in the form of personal revelation to direct us in our personal lives.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie provided this definition:

“Those things which men are directed to do to attain peace in this life and gain eternal life in the world to come are collectively called the commandments. They are the laws, ordinances, covenants, contracts, statutes, judgments, decrees, revelations, and requirements which come to man from God. They are “the words of eternal life,’ with reference to which it is proclaimed: ‘You shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.’”<sup>6</sup>

## Commandments not a few

I then decided to concentrate on the *Doctrine and Covenants* in identifying commandments specifically for our time. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that this book of scripture was referred to in an 1833 edition as *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*, because they include many instructions on church government for the church in this dispensation. In fact, the Lord refers to the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants as “my preface unto *the book of my commandments*” (D&C 1:6).

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, we have been given many additional commandments beyond those recorded in the Bible. In a revelation received by Joseph in 1831 the saints were told, “And they shall be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with *commandments not a few*. . .” (D&C 59:4)

Many commandments were given to individuals while the church was in its infancy. Examples are instructions to Joseph Smith regarding the translation and financing of the Book of Mormon and the need for witnesses (D&C 3, 5, 8-19).

We find more general commandments that could still apply to us today as recorded primarily in the 42nd, 59th, 88th, and 136th sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Of course, a few of these are a repeat of Biblical commandments, such as the Ten Commandments and the commandment to love God and our neighbors. But some new commandments are recorded, some of which concern our relationship with deity, for example:

“Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” (D&C 59:8)

“Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things.” (59:7)

“And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart. . .” (59:13)

“I give unto you a commandment, that ye continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.” (88:76)

Other modern commandments that may not be so well known concern our relationships with (or responsibilities toward) others, such as the following:

“Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” (42:22)

“Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm.”  
(42:27)

“And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.” (52:40)

“Cease to contend one with another. . .” (136:23-24)

“If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou has borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee.” (136:25)

“If thou shalt find that which thy neighbor has lost, thou shalt make diligent search till thou shalt deliver it to him again. (136:26)

And some commandments are directed to us primarily for our own benefit.

“. . . Thou shalt not be proud in thy heart. . .” (42:40)

“Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer.” (42:42)

“And ye must practice virtue and holiness before me continually.”  
(46:33)

“Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.

“Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet.” (58:21-22)

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing;” (88:119)

“. . . 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.” (88:124)

The Lord has also given us a commandment for the financial support of the Church:

“And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually . . .”(119:4)

In the Appendix at the end is a list of sample commandments having to do with our relationship with God, with our neighbor, and with ourselves, as well as summary commandments, which will be discussed later.

Now let's see, I said to myself, I need to –

- have a broken heart,
- fast and pray,
- be thankful,
- be virtuous,
- love my wife with all my heart,
- remember the poor and the sick,
- return what I borrow,
- find the owner of anything I find of value,
- be organized,
- prepare everything that's needed,
- submit to government authority,
- go to bed early – and arise early,
- pay my tithing

In addition, I must remember not to

- argue,
- gossip about others,
- get even with my neighbor.
- break the speed limit or other civil laws
- be proud
- be idle
- do worldly things on the Sabbath.

And I was just getting started! Truly, we are given “commandments not a few.”

As I wrote down more and more of the commandments given by the Lord as recorded in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, I soon became overwhelmed. I stopped counting after listing over 130 of them and asked myself, How can anyone be expected to comply fully with all of the commandments if they number in the hundreds?

I was tempted to give up the quest. But with time and persistence, I gained a more seasoned outlook on the question “What are the commandments of the Lord we are expected to keep?” The question deserves serious study, and I found very satisfying answers in the scriptures and teachings of living prophets.

## Book of Mormon insights

One of the greatest helps was the *Book of Mormon*, where I found in Nephi not only an ideal model of a person intent on keeping all of the Lord's commandments, but also a clear understanding of what constituted those commandments. His attitude was similar to that of the sons of Helaman who did "observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them. . ." (Alma 57:21) For Nephi, compliance with the commandments simply meant obedience to God's will. Period.

Nephi not only resolved to comply with the commandments recorded in the scriptures available to him, but he considered every spiritual prompting, whether it came in the form of the voice of the Lord or a dream to him or to his father, to be a commandment of the Lord. Examples include Lehi's dreams in which he was instructed to depart into the wilderness (1 Nephi 2:2-3) and later to return to Jerusalem to get the plates from Laban. (1 Nephi 3:2-3) His brothers murmured that this was a hard thing they were asked to do, but the words Nephi related to his father have become a beacon for the faithful:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (1 Nephi 3:7)

The events that followed resulted in Nephi obtaining the plates so that, as he put it, "we could preserve the commandments of the Lord to our children." (1 Nephi 5:21)

After two failed attempts to get the plates and Laban's attempts to kill the sons of Lehi, Nephi's brothers smote him with a rod and refused to make a third attempt, fearing the odds of surviving the ordeal were against them – even after the admonishment of an angel. But Nephi, with characteristic faith in the Lord, proceeded alone towards the house of Laban. "And I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things I should do." (1 Nephi 4:6)

Soon finding Laban drunk before him, Nephi beheld his sword and reported,

"And . . . I was constrained by the Spirit that I should kill Laban." At first Nephi balked: ". . . but I said in my heart: Never at any time have I shed the blood of man. And I shrunk and would that I might not slay him." (1 Nephi 4:10)

Nephi obviously was well aware of the commandment to Moses on Mount Sinai “Thou shalt not kill.” (Exodus 20:13) But when the Spirit commanded again, “Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into my hands” and reviewed Laban’s guilt with him and the necessity for this action, Nephi obeyed. He understood that current, living revelation took precedence.

“Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and took Laban by the hair of the head, and I smote off his head with his own sword.” (1 Nephi 4:6-18)

Other examples of Nephi’s absolute determination to keep the Lord’s commandments were his return with his brothers to Jerusalem to get Ishmael and his family (1 Nephi 7:1-2), his making plates of ore to record the history of his people (1 Nephi 9:2), and his obedience in building a ship for crossing the waters to the Promised Land. (1 Nephi 17-18) He knew that obedience to the Lord’s commandments brings great blessings:

“And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them. . .” (1 Nephi 17:3)

Nephi’s brothers were not as obedient to these same commandments and often challenged his trust in the Lord. In admonishing Laman and Lemuel at one point he said,

“Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord; yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and *remember to keep his commandments always in all things.*” (1 Nephi 15:25)

Nephi accepted the patriarchal order and helped his father as his patriarch and priesthood leader. “And thus my father had fulfilled all the commandments of the Lord which had been given unto him.” (1 Nephi 16:8)

Nephi not only obeyed his father, but also would teach his children to do the same. “Wherefore, I shall give commandment to my seed, that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men. (1 Nephi 6:6)

For me the pinnacle of Nephi’s obedient attitude is displayed when he began building a ship, only to have his brothers murmur against him. He stood firm in his resolve to complete the task the Lord had assigned him and concluded,

*“If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them. If he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it should be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.”* (1 Nephi 17:50)

So if we need a mortal model of obedience to the Lord’s commandments, we need look no further than the life of Nephi. This obedient son of Lehi considered any instruction or prompting from the Lord a commandment, whether it came from prophets as recorded in scripture or through inspiration directly to him or to his father, whom he recognized as an inspired prophet as well as the family patriarch. It is also clear that he placed a clear priority on direct revelation from the Lord and the living prophet (his father Lehi) over the written words of past prophets.

Many other Book of Mormon prophets were remarkable for the importance they placed on keeping the commandments. We should pay particular attention to the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the Nephites. For example, the savior warned against contention in these words,

*“And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.”* (3 Nephi 11:28)

An inspired translation of the Sermon on the Mount as given to the Nephites is recorded in *the Book of Mormon*. Some light is shed on some of the more obscure commandments given in the *New Testament* version and is well worth studying for that purpose. One instruction is particularly instructive in this regard:

*“Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* (3 Nephi 12:20)

Not only does this statement stress the importance of keeping the commandments, but the *timing* of their delivery. As we shall see, it is following the living oracles of the time that is the key to our salvation.

## The source of commandments

I now know that my original conception of what constitutes a commandment was very limited. We would be wise to accept and obey counsel from the living oracles as though they were issued as commandments, as well as commandments recorded in the Standard Works. President Ezra Taft Benson gave this excellent counsel,

“The prophet does not have to say ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to give us scripture.

“Sometimes there are those who haggle over words. They might say the prophet gave us counsel but that we are not obligated to follow it unless he says it is a commandment. But the Lord instructs members of the Church regarding the Prophet Joseph as follows: ‘Thou shalt give heed unto all his *words and commandments* which he shall give you’.” (D&C 21:4)<sup>7</sup>

The Word of Wisdom, first presented to the Church in Kirtland in 1833, was not originally given as a commandment, “but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days . . . .” (D&C89:2). However, any who accepted and lived it as though it were a commandment were offered wonderful promises. (D&C 89: 18-21)

Apparently it took 18 years for the Church to accept the Section 89 as a commandment. According to Elder Ezra Taft Benson, “In 1851, President Brigham Young proposed to the general conference of the Church that all Saints formally covenant to keep the Word of Wisdom. This proposal was unanimously upheld by the membership of the Church. Since that day, the revelation has been a binding commandment on all Church members.”<sup>8</sup>

Our ninth Article of Faith states that God “Will reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” Surely we would do well to accept the official directives that we have received and continue to receive from living prophets as commandments – or as part of the comprehensive commandment to “live by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.” (98:11)

President Woodruff related this incident that underscores the importance of the living oracles in giving instructions (commandments) for our day:

“I will refer to a certain meeting I attended in the town of Kirtland in my early days. At that meeting . . . a leading man in the Church got up . . . and said, ‘You have got the word of God before you here in the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants; you have the written word of God, and you who give revelations should give revelations according to

those books, as what is written in those books is the word of God. We should confine ourselves to them.’

“When he concluded, Brother Joseph turned to Brother Brigham Young and said, ‘Brother Brigham, I want you to take the stand and tell us your views with regard to the living oracles and the written word of God.’

“Brother Brigham took the stand, and he took the Bible, and laid it down; he took the Book of Mormon, and laid it down; and he took the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and laid it before him, and he said: ‘There is the written word of God to us, concerning the work of God from the beginning of the world, almost, to our day. And now,’ said he, ‘when compared with the living oracles those books are nothing to me; those books do not convey the word of God direct to us now, as do the words of a Prophet or a man bearing the Holy Priesthood in our day and generation. I would rather have the living oracles than all the writing in those books.’

“That was the course he pursued. When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation: ‘Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth.’”<sup>9</sup>

Occasionally, the First Presidency publishes a statement for the members of the church, and even for the whole world, as in the case of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”<sup>10</sup> I believe that if we are committed Latter-day Saints, we will work to help achieve the standards and goals of that proclamation as if it were stated as a commandment of the Lord. And this would be true of any of the directions that come from living prophets, sometimes (but not always) in the form of official statements from the First Presidency.

We need not concern ourselves that following the president of the Church may cause us to err. President Marion G. Romney related this incident:

“I remember years ago when I was a Bishop I had President [Heber J.] Grant talk to our ward. After the meeting I drove him home. . . . Standing by me, he put his arm over my shoulder and said: ‘My boy, you always keep your eye on the president of the Church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.’ Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, “But you don’t need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray.”<sup>11</sup>

And though we may disagree at times, we would be blessed by following the teachings of all the general authorities and those of local leaders as well. “. . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” (D&C 1:38)

One other source may be considered a commandment. That is any prompting from the Spirit of the Lord to us for our personal direction or in carrying out our callings in the Church. As demonstrated earlier, Nephi

considered such promptings as commandments, whether given to him personally or to his father.

We have many modern examples of such spiritual directions to church leaders in our dispensation. For example, Wilford Woodruff was singing with a group of saints in England when, as he reported, “the spirit of the Lord rested upon me and the voice of God said to me, “This is the last meeting that you will hold with this people for many days.” He and his congregation were astonished at this development.

The next morning Elder Woodruff went before the Lord to ask his will concerning him and was told to “go to the south; for the Lord had a great work for me to perform there, as many souls were waiting for His word.”

Elder Woodruff went south and presented himself to a wealthy farmer named John Benbow – as a missionary from America . . . *who had been sent to him by a commandment of God* as a messenger of salvation . . . The rest is an eventful chapter of church history. A harvest of eighteen hundred souls resulted from a missionary who regarded a direction from the spirit as a commandment of the Lord!<sup>12</sup>

## The Lord should not need to command in all things.

When the first latter-day converts joined the Church, many were excited to have a prophet in their midst and eagerly approached him for specific directions on a variety of concerns. However, *seeking* a multitude of commandments is a two-edged sword. Commandments spell out what is expected of us, but a “letter of the law” mentality can develop that can rob us of growth from applying revealed general principles and from seeking the guidance of the Holy Ghost in our lives.

When the saints sought the will of the Lord concerning them in gathering to Zion, the Lord gave this counsel to Joseph Smith on August 1, 1831:

“For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

“Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

“But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with a doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.” (D&C 58:26-29)

Apparently in the saints’ eagerness to have things spelled out for them, the Lord felt it necessary to put limits on how much commanding he would do. It was better that the saints learn to exercise their agency to “do good” and to live by gospel principles, rather than follow the example of the children of Israel, who were constrained to live by the law of carnal commandments. (See D&C 84:27)

On August 7, Joseph was given a set of commandments, including a reiteration of the law of love and of the Decalogue, with further instructions on Sabbath observance and on proper use and enjoyment of the food the Lord has provided for his children. The revelation closes with these interesting verses:

“And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.

“Behold, this is according to the law and the prophets; wherefore, trouble me no more concerning this matter.

“But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.” (D&C 59:21-23)

These last two scriptures suggest that the Lord would be pleased if we would mature spiritually to the point that we would seek to do good without having to have a detailed code to govern all of our daily decisions.

## **The Lord has provided summary commandments to help us in our efforts to obey the many commandments he has given us.**

Soon after returning from my mission as a young man, I sought to list all the commandments the Lord had given to make certain I didn't overlook any – but stopped after listing over 130 of them! I began to wonder how anyone could remember, let alone live, all of them.

Again, Nephi offers encouragement. When faced with the formidable task of obtaining the plates of Laban against his wishes, Nephi said,

“For I know that the Lord giveth no commandment unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” (1 Nephi 3:7)

Surely if the Lord wanted us to keep all of his commandments he would prepare a way for us to remember and keep them, whether they numbered in the dozens or in the hundreds. And he has provided a way. On further searching I found that the Lord is not without appreciation of our need to keep life simple. Just as in New Testament times he provided a “golden rule” (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) that fulfilled “the law and the prophets,” so we have been provided with summary commandments for our time.

I believe the Lord has provided means for us to stay in the straight and narrow path of obedience to the commandments by providing summary commandments, as he did during his earthly ministry.

As you may recall, the Jews in the time of Christ were still applying the Law of Moses, with some alterations. When a lawyer asked “Master, what is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus responded,

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

*“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

(Matthew 22:36-40)

Based on the last statement, this commandment to love God and man became for the saints in New Testament times a summary commandment which would simplify the process of obedient living – replacing the lengthy list of requirements of the Law of Moses which had been amplified by embellishments to become the oppressive Jewish code of conduct.

In our dispensation, these two summary commandments were repeated (D&C 59:5-6) in the 59th Section, along with several other commandments.

Christ offered this summary commandment to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon:

“I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me

with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. . . Therefore *come unto me* and be ye saved. . .” (3 Nephi 12: 19-20)

When we truly come unto Christ, we will follow him and keep his commandments.

A modern passage of scripture, which helps to simplify the whole process of obedience to the many commandments in our dispensation, is found in the 98th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.” (D&C 98:11. See also 88:43-44.)

For me, these passages truly summarize, simplify, and bring together all of the many commandments that are recorded as well as current revelation we are expected to abide by – which comes from our present church leaders, as well as from revelation to us individually. When we truly come unto Christ, avoid everything that is evil and cling to all that is good, follow the full program of the Church, and partake of every opportunity to receive instructions from the servants of the Lord, we are then living “by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God” – for “whether by mine own mouth or my the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). We will be more in tune with the promptings of the Holy Ghost, will be more likely to love God and our neighbors – thereby remembering and keeping God’s commandments.

What a relief it is to know that we do not need to maintain a detailed scorecard to keep the commandments. All we need is an attitude of love of God and of our neighbors and a desire to do all that God requires of us. With that attitude, as Nephi assured us, God will prepare the way for us to accomplish all that he commands us. (1 Nephi 3:7)

We also have the assurance from the sacramental prayer that if we “do always remember him [Christ],” we can have His Spirit to be with us. By remembering and following Jesus Christ, the Spirit can remind us and help us to apply the commandments as we go about our daily lives. And Nephi taught that if we “feast upon the words of Christ” (found in the scriptures and words of the prophets), the words of Christ will tell us what we should do. (2 Nephi 12:3)

Until we are sanctified and purified through the Holy Ghost, we may need formal commandments to guide us. But we are not fully mature spiritually until we arrive at the point of obedience modeled by Christ himself, when he said, “. . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me.” (John 5:30) We will then be motivated more by internal desire than by external influences or rules of conduct. So keeping the commandments is as much an attitude of willingness to serve and obey God, as it is compliance with a set of rules.

Jeremiah described just such a condition when –

“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)

## Blessings for keeping the commandments

In referring to the commandments recorded in our Doctrine & Covenants, the Lord admonished through the prophet Joseph Smith,

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.” (D&C 1:37)

We can depend on the promises associated with keeping all of God’s commandments. A similar principle was revealed in 1843:

“There is a law irrevocably decreed in the heaven before the foundations of the world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.” (D&C 130:20-21)

A prime example would be the law of tithing:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:10-11)

The Word of Wisdom lists several things to avoid and what food is desirable. It also promises great blessings, when coupled with “obedience to the commandments”:

“And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

“And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;

“And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.

“And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. Amen.” (D&C 89:18-20)

Modern science has confirmed many of the instructions in the Lord’s law of health – the Word of Wisdom – base on research done over 100 years after the receipt of the revelation by Joseph Smith.

Marvelous and all encompassing are the promises held out to those who keep the commandments:

“Search diligently and be believing, and *all things shall work together for your good*, if ye walk uprightly. . .” (D&C 90:24)

“ . . . But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even *peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.*” (D&C 59: 23)

Another reward for obedience is the fullness of God’s love:

“If ye keep my commandments, *ye shall abide in my love.*” (John 15:10)

Each of God’s commandments has a promise or blessing associated with it. Some promised blessings are positive, such as increased prosperity, health, and greater peace of mind and soul. Other blessings are simply protection from the consequences of sin. But all are for our ultimate joy and progress in this life and in the life to come.

## **When we disobey a commandment, repentance is provided for us to get back on course.**

What if we slip and disobey one or more commandments out of willful disobedience or from lack of understanding or motivation to comply? We must always remember that God has prepared a way of escape from the eternal consequences of sin. It is the path of repentance made possible by the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and master Jesus Christ.

We would be in error in assuming that only those who have committed major transgressions have need to repent. As Paul reminds us, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23)

A commandment directs wanderers and those who have transgressed to return to the “straight and narrow path:” “Whoso having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent?” (D&C 29:49) Then we are assured, “. . . He who repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.” (D&C 1: 32) In fact, the Lord promises: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. (D&C 5\*:42)

But we must not procrastinate if we are to enjoy the full benefits of repentance and ongoing obedience to God’s commandments. Alma taught with great earnestness:

And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and *not procrastinate the day of your repentance*;

But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.

*And may the Lord grant unto you repentance*, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be bound down by the chains of hell, that ye may not suffer the second death. (Alma 13:27 - 30)

My purpose here is not to expound on the process of repentance, as it is well explained in many places, such as in the book *Miracle of Forgiveness*, by Spencer W. Kimball<sup>13</sup>. This is merely a reminder that when we slip, which we all do at times, a merciful God has provided a way back.

## Summary and Conclusions

Obedience to the commandments of the Lord is central to our salvation, but we must know which ones we are expected to keep. However, if we attempt to catalog and memorize a list of all commandments that could possibly apply to us, the task can be daunting, especially when we include all of the commandments that have been revealed in this dispensation of the gospel. For examples, see the Appendix.

Actually, when we see things from a more spiritual perspective, we can be grateful for those instructions that God gives us for our ultimate happiness and progress. They help to bolster our obedience to the gospel and keep us from sin until such time as we have internalized righteous principles and accepted fully the will of God in our lives.

In defining which commandments we should obey, we would be wise to include not only the Ten Commandments and more obvious commandments recorded in the standard works, but also directions given to us by living prophets and by the Holy Ghost to us in our personal lives and callings.

Fortunately, we have been given summary commandments to make obedience easier. We obey the commandments by loving God and our neighbors, by avoiding evil and clinging to what is good, by following our living prophet and priesthood leaders, and by seeking and following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. We must also exercise our agency in doing good, not requiring commandments to micro-manage the details of our lives. And if we should transgress, we are assured that peace and forgiveness will come from sincere repentance.

Obedience to the commandments, then, becomes as much a matter of submission to God's will and a determination to do good as it is compliance to an arbitrary set of rules. The conclusion to our consideration of this subject is provided by a wise author and king of ancient Jerusalem:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

## NOTES

(Scriptural references are inserted after textual passages):

1. "The Times in Which We Live," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72
2. "President Harold B. Lee Ordained Eleventh President of the Church," *Ensign*, Aug. 1972, 19
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, the manual used by the priesthood and Relief Society, p. 393-4 (Chapter 44 — taught in 2001).
4. *Ensign* Nov. 1992
5. Joseph Smith, "Essay on Happiness," Aug. 1842, HC5:135
6. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966. Page 149
7. Ezra Taft Benson, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet", Devotional address at Brigham Young University, February 26, 1980
8. CR 1983 Apr:70
9. CR, October 1897, pp. 18-19
10. This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinkley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.
11. CR, October 1960, p. 78
12. *Wilford Woodruff*, by Matthias Cowley, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964, page 116
13. Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969.

## APPENDIX

### Examples of commandments from modern revelation

The commandments listed below are those that pertain to the daily conduct of all of us. Where possible, repetition of similar content is eliminated by grouping the commandments by topic, and then listing related references next to the one that expresses the essential idea. Otherwise, the list might be expanded to two or three times the sample of commandments itemized below. Also, no attempt is made to interpret or expound or to correlate scriptures with each other, but the reader is directed to the pure word of the Lord and can benefit from a further study of each commandment on his or her own initiative. It should also be noted that these commandments, as drawn from the *Doctrine and Covenants*, are not a final list of God's commandments to us.

	<b>Related references in the Doctrine &amp; Covenants</b>
<b>Commandments concerning our relationship with God</b>	
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him. (59:5)	6:36; 11:6; 38:40; 42:49
Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. (59:8)	22:4; 88:12; 90:17; 112:10
I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth. (88:76)	88:62-64; 42:68; 46:7; 61:39; 90:24; 136:28- 29
Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. (59:7)	46:32
And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.	84:54-57, 60; 18:3; 43:34; 98:11
For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. (84:43-44)	
Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. (136:21)	63: 61-64
And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy. (68:29)	59: 9-14

## Commandments concerning our relationship with our fellow men

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (59:6)	88:24-27; 42:45; 88:125; 121:45
Thou shall not kill; and he that kills shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come. And again, I say, thou shalt not kill; for he that killeth shall die. (42:18-19)	59:6
Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. And he that looketh on a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out. (42:22-23)	19:25; 88:121
Thou shalt not steal; and he that stealeth and will not repent shall be cast out. (42:20)	42:54; 51:9; 59:6
. . . Covet not that which is thy brother's. (136:20)	19:25; 88:123; 117:4
If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou hast borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee. (136:26)	
If thou shalt find that which thy brother has lost, thou shalt make diligent search till thou shalt deliver it to him.	
Thou shalt not lie; he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out. (42:21)	
Keep all your pledges one with another. (136:20)	
Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm. (42:27)	88:124; 136:23-24
Cease to contend one with another. (136:23-24)	
And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of hands.	68:25-26; 90:18; 93:40
And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple. (52:40)	88:123
Ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.	42:88-93
I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. (64:9-10)	

### Commandments relating primarily to ourselves

Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer. (42:42)	60:13; 88:124
And ye must practice virtue and holiness before me continually. (46:33)	38:24, 42; 42:41; 88:86, 121, and 124; 121: 45; 133:5
And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good . . . (98:11)	11:12
. . . Ye shall live by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (98:11)	
And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith. (88:118)	11:7; 136:32-33
Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.	
Wherefore, be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign, and subdues all enemies under his feet. (58:21-22)	
And again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.	136:4
And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.	
And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly. (89: 7-9)	
. . . 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. (88:124)	
And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord. (119:4)	64:3
Ye shall observe the laws ye have received and be faithful. (42:66)	42:78; 68:34; 136:12

### Summary commandments

Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. “ (D&C 59:5-6)

And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, that ye shall live by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God. (D&C 98:11)

## **About the author**

Jon M. Taylor fulfilled a mission to the Northern States as a young man, a full-time mission with his wife to the Church and Family History Mission, and on several part-time missions. He has taught seminary and in numerous church callings. He worked for the administrative staff at both BYU and the University of Utah. As adjunct college instructor, he has taught ethics, management, communications, and finance. He obtained BS and MBA degrees from BYU and a PhD in Applied Psychology from the University of Utah. As an entrepreneur, he has been responsible for over 40 business startups. In recent years Dr. Taylor has been active as founder and director of the Consumer Awareness Institute (web site: [www.mlm-thetruth.com](http://www.mlm-thetruth.com)) and advisor to Pyramid Scheme Alert, founded to expose and prevent pyramid scheme fraud worldwide. He and his wife JoAnn have eight children between them in a blended family, and they have 29 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren – and counting.