

APRIL 2018

GROWING

*Faith*



# Welcome

"...[S]EEK ME DAILY, AND DELIGHT TO KNOW MY WAYS..."

ISAIAH 58:2

We're so happy to have you join in our study here at The Small Seed. We are grateful for every opportunity to link arms with you as we seek to come unto Christ together. We know blessings come as we read His word, which truly brings light and life to us in abundance!

There is no one right way to study God's word, but here are a few tips we've found helpful!

1) **BEGIN WITH PRAYER.** Start your study session by asking the Spirit to guide your study. Ask the questions of your heart that you hope are answered as you study. Ask for guidance and for the courage to act.

2) **HAVE A PAPER AND PEN READY!** As you show your commitment to record and act on your impressions, we know that God will give even more inspiration. You may be surprised about the answers that come, but we encourage you to write what you're thinking and feeling—even if it seems unrelated—and see God lead you in His way as you read and ponder.

3) **DIG IN!** Read, study, ponder, write—however seems best. If you are pulled to one specific verse and are being fed there, stay there! This guide is simply a guide, and the Spirit is ultimately the teacher.

•A note on common abbreviations and books of scripture used at The Small Seed: As we represent a community of believers, we include books of scriptures from various religions. We believe God's ways are the same and He always speaks through prophets, both in times of old and now. Thus you will find many books of scripture referenced, among which are the Bible (both Old and New Testaments, sometimes abbreviated as OT/NT), the Book of Mormon (BoM), the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C), and the Pearl of Great Price. We are always looking for additional writers and contributors to give perspective on other religions; if you would like to help in this regard, please shoot us an email at [hello@thesmallseed.com](mailto:hello@thesmallseed.com).

4) **EXPRESS GRATITUDE, ACT, AND SHARE!** End your session with a prayer of gratitude for what you've felt and learned, commit to act on it, and then share with others! As we open our mouths to share our testimony of Christ, we are given more, and can bring others to the joy we've found.

What an honor it is to study together with you. We are grateful for the good people around the world who are coming to Christ. The world needs your goodness! When sharing on social media, tag your posts with #NOURISHTHESEED or tag us @thesmallseed so we can learn from you, too!

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HOW DOES FAITH BEGIN?

HOW CAN FAITH INCREASE AND BECOME THE BEDROCK  
OF A DISCIPLE'S LIFE?

HOW CAN FAITH BECOME UNSHAKEN?

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE THE GREAT POWER AND  
MIRACLES BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH FAITH?

**FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY,**  
we have chosen to compare the process of growing faith to the life cycle of a seed.

The seed of faith is hope for things unseen, or the desire to believe.  
That desire to believe is planted in the heart and, through the nurturing of obedience, can sprout  
up through the ground into a young sapling.

Then, through repentance and sacrifice, that new tree can grow deep roots and a resilient trunk,  
providing a firm foundation for the final step of growing faith: producing fruit.

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In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught,  
“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to  
yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

- Matthew 17:20

“[B]e not faithless, but believing.” - John 20:27

# GROWING *Faith:* PLANTING THE SEED

The process to grow faith must begin with desire, a hope that things unseen are nonetheless true.  
([Hebrews 11:1](#), [Alma 32:21, 27](#))

This desire can be sparked through the influence of the Holy Spirit, hearing the word of God, seeing the faith of another in action, being drawn to God through afflictions, and in many other ways. A prophet named Alma once compared the word of God to a seed, and described the process of accepting God's word in the following manner. His description can also be applied to the seed of faith. He wrote,

"...[I]f ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me" ([Alma 32:28](#)).

- What does it mean to "give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart"?
- Alternatively, how can the seed of faith be cast out by unbelief, or resisting the Spirit of the Lord?

Remember that planting this seed, nurturing hope or the desire to believe, is an action that can and should be repeated throughout life.

- When have you experienced feelings like Alma describes-- that your soul is beginning to be enlarged, your understanding is enlightened, that God's word is delicious to you?
- What does it take to renew those feelings and maintain them in your daily life?

Throughout the New Testament, the apostle Peter's faith grows in an incredible way. From his humble beginning as a simple fisherman, to his role as Christ's chief apostle and ultimately Christ's successor as head of the church, Peter is an excellent example of one who planted the seed of faith in his heart not once, but throughout his life.

As you study the following sections, think about how hope, or a desire to believe, affected all of Peter's experiences.

[Luke 5:4-11](#): the Lord calls Peter

[Matthew 16:13-19](#): Whom say ye that I am?

[John 21:1-17](#): Peter sees and loves the resurrected Christ

[Matthew 14:25-33](#): Peter walks on water

[Mark 14:66-72](#): Peter denies Christ

[1 Peter 1](#): multiple trials of faith

- Although Peter was certainly a notable example of valiant faith, he was not immune to doubt, confusion, and missteps on his road of discipleship. How do his actions show that he never discarded hope, even when his faith was imperfect? How can you hold fast to hope when your faith falters?

- How is Peter’s life a testament that “planting the seed of faith” is not a one-time occurrence?
- Record in your journal your personal experiences with hope and the desire to believe.

Another figure in the New Testament who exhibits hope or a desire to believe can be found in [Mark 9](#). As you study [verses 14-27](#), consider the father of the boy who is brought to Jesus to be healed.

- What steps had the father of the boy already taken by the time Jesus arrives on the scene? ([v. 18](#))
- What exactly does the father of the boy request of Jesus? ([v. 22](#))
  - What can you infer from this request about the state of the father’s hope at this point?
  - How does the father respond to Jesus’ statement, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth”? ([v. 23](#)).
  - Note the contradiction in his response—and also the resulting miracle. What does this teach you about the power of hope, of even imperfect or partial faith?

• [Jeffrey R. Holland](#) recently said of this story, “This man’s initial conviction, by his own admission, is limited. But he has an urgent, emphatic desire in behalf of his only child. We are told that is good enough for a beginning. ‘Even if ye can no more than desire to believe,’ Alma declares, ‘let this desire work in you, even until ye believe.’ With no other hope remaining, this father asserts what faith he has and pleads with the Savior of the world...”

- How did the father choose to act on his hope and plant the seed of faith deep in his heart?
- Imagine an alternate scenario where the father of the boy was unable to maintain hope in the face of constant discouragement and fear for his son’s life. Obviously the story would have turned out very differently for all parties. Liking this to yourself, is there any part of your life at this time that could be turned around with persistent hope?
- Do you ever have cause to say, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief”? If so, (and I think we can all say yes at times) reflect on these additional words from [Jeffrey R. Holland](#),

“I would say to all who wish for more faith, remember this man! In moments of fear or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. In the growth we all have to experience in mortality, the spiritual equivalent of this boy’s affliction or this parent’s desperation is going to come to all of us. When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes. It was of this very incident, this specific miracle, that Jesus said, ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.’ The size of your faith or the degree of your knowledge is not the issue—it is the integrity you demonstrate toward the faith you do have and the truth you already know.”

# GROWING *Faith:* THE SEED OF FAITH SPROUTS THROUGH OBEDIENCE

“[S]trong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.” – Bible Dictionary

The seed of faith, once planted, must be nurtured and tenderly cultivated in order to further develop and progress towards fulfilment of its potential. In the case of an actual seed planted in a garden, the gardener needs to know how to care for the seed in precisely the right way to encourage new growth to spring forth, and then that knowledge must be diligently acted upon. For the individual seeking to grow her seed of faith, this means sincere and dedicated obedience to the commandments of God.

Consider the following scriptural figures who grew faith through obedience. As you study each story, ask:

- What instruction/commandment was given?
- Was an explanation (or reasoning) provided for what God asked?
- Does the story explicitly state (or can you infer) whether obedience was easy or difficult?
- What do you think God was trying to teach via this particular commandment?
- What happened to the named individual(s) as a result of obedience?
  - In each account, think of others who were affected by the decision to obey. How did obedience of one influence the life of another? How might these other people have been affected had disobedience occurred?
- How did obedience help faith to grow?

Adam & Eve | [Moses 5:4-12](#)

Naaman | [2 Kings 5:1-15](#)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego | [Daniel 3](#)

Mary, mother of Jesus | [Luke 1:26-56](#)

What do the following scriptures teach about the principle of obedience? How is obedience vital to growing faith?

[Deuteronomy 10:12-13](#)

[1 Samuel 15:22](#)

[John 7:17](#)

[1 John 2:3-6](#)

# GROWING *Faith:* FAITH FLOWERS THROUGH SACRIFICE

How can a tender young plant grow strong enough to flower? There are many outside forces that can destroy a sapling before it ever has a chance to produce a bud. Interestingly, the scriptures illustrate that faith is strengthened when it is tested. Likewise, young trees will grow stronger roots when they are exposed to wind. Pressure, rather than shelter, stimulates growth. This is why faith that is tested through times of sacrifice may deepen into a firm foundation.

Consider the following examples:

**WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH** – Study [1 Kings 16:29-34](#) and [1 Kings 17](#).

- What was the cause of the widow’s suffering? ([1 Kings 16:29-34](#) through [17:1](#))
- Have you ever been in a similar circumstance, experiencing trial or suffering as a result of another person’s unrighteousness?
- As you continue your study of this section, think about why God sometimes uses what seems to be extremely unfair situations to teach the most significant lessons.

During the famine, Elijah had followed the Lord’s instructions to drink and eat at the brook Cherith. But when the brook dried up, the Lord gave him new instructions for his sustenance ([17:9](#)).

- Why did God command, of all people, a widow with a child to sustain the prophet?
- Have you ever felt that God asked something of you that you wish he had asked someone better suited, or more capable, to do? What blessings came to you as you nonetheless made the necessary sacrifices to be obedient to the best of your limited ability?
- How does faith flower and flourish when we respond affirmatively to the call to serve amidst our own neediness?

Continuing in chapter 17, review verses [11-14](#), bearing in mind Elijah’s admonition to “fear not.”

- Think of a current situation in your life requiring sacrifice that is difficult for you. How can you fear not? What blessings do you think may come through courageous sacrifice? Can you see an opportunity to become stronger or closer to God?

Review [verse 17](#). After many days, the woman’s faith (and perhaps the prophet Elijah’s faith, as well) was again tested when her son fell deathly ill.

- Why must faith be tested again and again to grow?

Review [verses 18-24](#).

- What blessings, temporal and spiritual, were ultimately given to the widow and her son?
- What temporal and spiritual blessings might you and your family receive if you exercise your faith in sacrifice according to God’s command?

## HANNAH – Study [1 Samuel](#) chapters 1-3.

Tormented by her infertility, Hannah prayed unto the Lord “in bitterness of soul... and wept sore”; “she poured out [her] soul before the Lord... out of the abundance of [her] complaint and grief” ([1:10, 15-16](#)).

- What was Hannah’s specific request? What did she vow to do if it was granted? ([1:11](#)).
- How did Hannah fulfill her promise to God? ([1:26-28](#)).
- How was Hannah’s sacrifice blessed even beyond what she had asked for? ([2:20-21](#)).
  - How have you witnessed God bless your faithful sacrifices beyond your expectations?
- How can you exercise greater faith to make sacrifices and trust that God will bless you for them, in one way or another, perhaps beyond what you anticipate?
- Note that, in many instances, the way the Lord chooses to bless us in compensation for our willing sacrifices is not by granting the blessings we desperately seek. Our willingness to obey and sacrifice must be built upon our love for Him, and not conditioned on getting what we want.

## ESTHER – Study [Esther](#) chapters 2-8.

Esther was an orphan-turned-queen, wife of king Ahasuerus, but Jewish by birth. At the risk of her own life, she stepped in to stop a plot to kill all Jews in the king’s provinces.

Review Esther 4. When we are asked to make great sacrifices, or to courageously take on an important responsibility, it is natural to fear the limitations that indicate the impossibility of success. Esther struggled with this in [verses 10-11](#). However, after further persistence and encouragement by Mordecai, Esther sacrificed her fear and committed to go in to the king.

- What did Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews in the province (as well as commit herself and her maidens) to do in preparation for her visit to the king?
  - How does fasting give us power? ([Isaiah 58:5-12](#))
- How was Esther’s and her people’s fast blessed? How can your faith grow, flower, and flourish through a purposeful fast? If you are struggling to find the faith to make a particular sacrifice, might fasting help?

## ABRAHAM – Study [Genesis 22:1-18](#).

Note that prior to Isaac’s birth, God had explained to Abraham that He would establish His everlasting covenant with Isaac and Isaac’s seed ([Genesis 17:15-22](#)). With this promise in mind, consider what Abraham and Sarah must have experienced when the command to sacrifice Isaac, who as yet had no posterity, was given.

- How can you take courage from Abraham to move forward in faith when you receive clear direction from God, even if you have unanswered questions?
- In the end, it was not the sacrifice itself that Abraham needed to make; rather, it was the willingness to make the sacrifice that Abraham needed to develop. How can you develop a willingness to sacrifice whatsoever thing God may ask of you?
- Review [verses 15-18](#). What reason did the angel of the Lord give for pronouncing a multitude of blessings upon Abraham and his seed?
  - What are you currently withholding from God? How can you submit completely to Him?

## THE SACRIFICE OF REPENTANCE

After Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they began offering sacrifices of the firstborn of their flocks, which symbolized the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God.

Under Mosaic law, additional animal sacrifices were introduced ([Exodus 20](#)). Among these were sin offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings (for additional information on the various types of sacrifices, see [this page](#)).

Eventually, Christ's Atonement served as the great and last sacrifice, fulfilling the old law ([Matthew 5:17](#)) and ushering in a new era. What sacrifices are we now asked to make? See [Romans 12:1](#) and [3 Nephi 9:19-20](#).

One way that we can offer our self to God is repentance. [D. Todd Christofferson](#) said,

“In ancient times when people wanted to worship the Lord and seek His blessings, they often brought a gift. For example, when they went to the temple, they brought a sacrifice to place on the altar. After His Atonement and Resurrection, the Savior said He would no longer accept burnt offerings of animals. The gift or sacrifice He will accept now is “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” ... [Y]ou can offer the Lord the gift of your broken, or repentant, heart and your contrite, or obedient, spirit. In reality, it is the gift of yourself—what you are and what you are becoming.

“Is there something in you or in your life that is impure or unworthy? When you get rid of it, that is a gift to the Savior. Is there a good habit or quality that is lacking in your life? When you adopt it and make it part of your character, you are giving a gift to the Lord. Sometimes this is hard to do, but would your gifts of repentance and obedience be worthy gifts if they cost you nothing? Don't be afraid of the effort required. And remember, you don't have to do it alone. Jesus Christ will help you make of yourself a worthy gift. His grace will make you clean, even holy. Eventually, you will become like Him, ‘perfect in Christ.’”

Consider the following scriptural examples of repentance as sacrifice:

**THE LAMANITE KING**—Study [Alma 20:8-27](#); [22:1-27](#).

- What three specific things did the Lamanite king express a willingness and desire to sacrifice in order to receive of God's joy and to know Him? ([Alma 22:15, 18](#))
- This particular account is a great example of an individual whose hope and desire to believe is quickly transforming into faith. Though the king was just beginning to learn about the gospel of Jesus Christ, his willingness to sacrifice gave his new faith the opportunity to grow strong and deep.
- Wherever you may be at on your personal faith journey, are you willing to similarly sacrifice earthly possessions to taste of God's joy? Are you willing to similarly sacrifice your sins to know Him? How do you show God your willingness?
- How is repentance a sacrifice that helps your faith to flower?

**PAUL**—Study [Acts 9](#).

- Who was Paul before his conversion? ([Acts 7:58](#), [8:1-3](#), [22:19-20](#), [26:10](#))
- What miraculous event paved the way for Paul to change? ([Acts 9:4-6](#))
- How did Paul respond to Christ’s command to “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”?
- After Paul’s baptism and throughout his ministry, he suffered arrests and imprisonments, was stoned and taken for dead, was shipwrecked, and was eventually martyred for Christ’s gospel. How did obedience, repentance, and sacrifice work together to transform one very wicked man into a disciple of Christ who would later be described as the greatest missionary to ever live?

The accounts of Paul and the Lamanite king relate experiences of drastic repentance and conversion into disciples of Christ. Yet repentance is not only a precursor to discipleship but also our lifeline as we progress along the road of discipleship.

As you ponder the sacrifices you can make through repentance, consider these words by [Neal A. Maxwell](#): “Many of us have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.”

- We have discussed sacrifice as a precursor to greater faith; now consider, how is greater faith sometimes necessary **before** we are able to make certain sacrifices?
- Why do you think it sometimes takes more faith to sacrifice distracting obsessions than to avoid major sins?
- What can you do to increase your faith to be able to sacrifice such obsessions and to actively start doing acts of discipleship that you are currently omitting?

# THE FRUITS OF *Faith*

Strengthened and matured through sacrifice and repentance, our tree now has the ability to bear fruit.

“When faith is properly understood and used, it has dramatically far-reaching effects. Such faith can transform an individual’s life from maudlin, common everyday activities to a symphony of joy and happiness.” -[Richard G. Scott](#)

The fruits that your faith produces will be unique to you and can be used to bless not only your own life, but everyone around you. We invite you to take time to study and reflect upon just a few of these fruits.

## DELIVERANCE

[1 Nephi 1:20](#)      [Alma 14:26](#)      [Alma 36:27](#)      [Psalms 54:7](#)  
[Proverbs 28:26](#)      [Daniel 3:17](#)      [Joel 2:32](#)      [2 Peter 2:9](#)

Through your faith, you can gain the power to be delivered from your trials and struggles

- What deliverance have you experienced through your faith?

## CONFIDENCE

[Ephesians 3:11-12](#)      [1 John 2:28](#)      [D&C 121:45](#)

“A woman who follows Christ is a true Christian in the very best sense of the word. She is a woman of faith who trusts God and is confident and fearless.” -[Margaret D. Nadauld](#)

The [Bible Dictionary](#) states, “To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone.”

- How does your faith give you confidence—in yourself, in the future, and in your Father in Heaven?

## POWER OVER FEAR

[2 Tim. 1:6-7](#)      [D&C 6:34, 36-37](#)      [Psalm 27:1](#)      [2 Samuel 22:3](#)      [Psalm 56:4](#)

“Do not take counsel from your fears. To not take counsel from our fears simply means that we do not permit fear and uncertainty to determine our course in life... To not take counsel from our fears means that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ overrules our fears and that we press forward with a steadfastness in Him.” -[David A. Bednar](#)

Choosing to replace your fears with faith requires constant effort. All God asks is that you keep trying and keep turning to Him instead of to your fears.

- How has your faith helped you overcome fear?
- Is there a fear in your heart that is not allowing room for faith? Try for today to replace any thoughts of fear with your faith in God.

## UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE

[Hebrews 11:3](#)

[Job 32:8](#)

[John 17:3](#)

[Mosiah 5:4](#)

[Alma 32:34](#)

[D&C 76:114-116](#)

You can truly understand and know things that, without faith, would remain unknown.

- What is something you now understand or know because of your faith?
- What greater knowledge do you seek?

## ANSWERS TO PRAYERS

[Esther 4:5](#)

[2 Samuel 22:7](#)

[James 1:5-6](#)

[James 5:16](#)

[D&C 112:10](#)

[Psalms 55:17](#)

Almost every scriptural account included in this study guide has demonstrated that prayers of faith can be answered in marvelous ways.

- What answers to prayer have been instrumental in building your faith?
- What answers to prayer have you received as a fruit, or product, of your faith?

## RIGHTEOUS DESIRES

[Hebrews 11:24-27](#)

[Matthew 5:6](#)

[Abraham 1:1-2](#)

[1 Nephi 22:26](#)

[Mosiah 27:25-26](#)

[Mosiah 5:2](#)

Faith can drive you to be a force for good in this world. The desire to be a righteous woman of God comes because of faith in His words and His plan. Through faith and diligent action, even the most deeply ingrained unrighteous desires can be uprooted and replaced with goodness.

- When has your faith helped you choose good over evil?

## TESTIMONY

[Job 19:25](#)

[John 4:15](#)

[John 7:17](#)

[John 17:3](#)

“A testimony is fortified by spiritual impressions that confirm the validity of a teaching, of a righteous act, or of a warning of pending danger. Often such guidance is accompanied by powerful emotions that make it difficult to speak and bring tears to the eyes. But a testimony is not emotion. It is the very essence of character woven from threads born of countless correct decisions. These choices are made with trusting faith in things that are believed and, at least initially, are not seen. A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth, distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths in faith and the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained.” –[Richard G. Scott](#)

- Our testimonies of truth come because of our faith. Take a few moments to ponder and write down your testimony or share it with someone else.

## MIRACLES

mir·a·cle |'mirək(ə)l|

noun: miracle; plural noun: miracles

1. a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.
2. a highly improbable or extraordinary event, development, or accomplishment that brings very welcome consequences.

[Mark 5:22-43](#)

[John 3:2](#)

[Ether 12:12](#)

[D&C 35:8-11](#)

[3 Ne. 19:35](#)

[Video](#)

We often think of miracles as something grand and extreme. However, God gives us miracles every day whether they be big or small. Because of your faith, you can receive and recognize miracles.

- What miracles have you seen in your life? Did you experience a miracle today? Write down these moments where you have seen the “work of a divine agency.”

## SALVATION

[Romans 10:9-10](#)

[Ex. 15:2](#)

[Psalms 37:39](#)

[2 Nephi 2:6-9](#)

[Alma 11:37-41](#)

The ultimate fruit of faith is salvation. In order to be saved, you must believe in Christ and exercise faith in Him.

- How does the principle of salvation motivate your actions? What can you do to better prepare for eternal life and salvation?

[Spencer W. Kimball](#) wrote,

“If we can walk now by faith, if we can believe in the rich promises of God, if we can obey and patiently wait, the Lord will fulfil all his rich promises to us: ‘... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ([1 Cor. 2:9](#)).

“It takes a great faith to pay tithes when funds are scarce and demands are great. It takes faith to fast and have family prayers... It takes faith to do ... missionary work and other service, when sacrifice is required. It takes faith to fill full-time missions. But know this—that all these are of the planting, while faithful, devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvest. ...

“...Just as undaunted faith has stopped the mouths of lions, made ineffective fiery flames, opened dry corridors through rivers and seas, protected against deluge and drouth [sic], and brought heavenly manifestations at the instance of prophets, so in each of our lives faith can heal the sick, bring comfort to those who mourn, strengthen resolve against temptation, relieve from the bondage of harmful habits, lend the strength to repent and change our lives, and lead to a sure knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Indomitable faith can help us live the commandments with a willing heart and thereby bring blessings unnumbered, with peace, perfection, and exaltation in the kingdom of God.”