

11. “We claim the privilege of worshiping the Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience and allow all men the same privilege. Let them worship how, where or what they may.”

This article of faith is the only one that has a different beginning: We claim....

Worship means to give respect or reverence to a divine being; in this case our Heavenly Father. (See Webster’s dictionary)

“Worship is the voluntary homage of the soul.” Elder James E Talmage

Privilege means a right or a favor, an advantage. (See Webster’s dictionary)

Tolerance means enduring or sympathy towards something. (See Webster’s dictionary)

“Teach Us Tolerance and Love”
by Russell M. Nelson

[Russell M. Nelson, “Teach Us Tolerance and Love,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 69](#)

Dear brothers and sisters, I join my brethren in extending Easter greetings to each of you, while expressing personal gratitude for the atonement of Jesus Christ, for His example, and for His teachings that have motivated my message today.

I have been impressed to speak on the subject of tolerance—a virtue much needed in our turbulent world. But in discussing this topic, we must recognize at the outset that there is a difference between *tolerance* and *tolerate*. Your gracious tolerance for an individual does not grant him or her license to do wrong, nor does your tolerance obligate you to tolerate his or her misdeed. That distinction is fundamental to an understanding of this vital virtue.

I attended a “laboratory of tolerance” some months ago when I had the privilege of participating in the Parliament of the World’s Religions. There I conversed with good men and women representing many religious groups. Again I sensed the advantages of ethnic and cultural diversity and reflected once more on the importance of religious freedom and tolerance.

I marvel at the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he penned the eleventh article of faith: “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” [A of F 1:11]

That noble expression of religious tolerance is particularly poignant in light of the Prophet’s personal persecution. On one occasion he wrote, “I am at this time persecuted the worst of any man on the earth, as well as this people, ... all our sacred rights are trampled under the feet of the mob.”

Joseph Smith endured incessant persecution and finally heartless martyrdom—at the hands of the intolerant. His brutal fate stands as a stark reminder that we must never be guilty of *any* sin sown by the seed of intolerance.”

Two Great Commandments to Love

Revealed to that revered prophet was the fulness of the gospel. He was tutored by the resurrected Christ, whom Joseph adored. He taught doctrines declared by the Lord, including these He gave in response to the question of an exacting lawyer:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

“Jesus said unto him, 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.”

Hence, our highest priorities in life are to love God and to love our neighbors. That broadly includes neighbors in our own family, our community, our nation, and our world. Obedience to the second commandment facilitates obedience to the first commandment. “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.” ...

Missionary Responsibilities

Latter-day Saints throughout the world work side by side with others—regardless of race, color, or creed—hoping to be good examples worthy of emulation. The Savior said: “I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, ... prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

“And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness.”

This we are to do with tolerance. While in Moscow in June 1991, in that spirit of preparation and with sincere respect for leaders of other religious denominations, Elder Dallin H. Oaks and I had the privilege of meeting with the presiding official of the Russian Orthodox Church. We were accompanied by Elder Hans B. Ringger and the mission president, Gary L. Browning. Patriarch Aleksei was most gracious in sharing a memorable hour with us. We perceived the great difficulties endured for so many years by this kind man and his fellow believers. We thanked him for his perseverance and for his faith. Then we assured him of our good intentions and of the importance of the message that missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would be teaching among his countrymen. We affirmed that ours is a global church and that we honor and obey the laws of each land in which we labor.

To those with an interest in the fulness of the restored gospel—regardless of nationality or religious background—we say as did Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Keep all the truth and all the good that you have. Do not abandon any sound or proper principle. Do not forsake any standard of the past which is good, righteous, and true. Every truth found in every church in all the world we believe. But we also say this to all men—Come and take the added light and truth that God has restored in our day. The more truth we have, the greater is our joy here and now; the more truth we receive, the greater is our reward in eternity. This is our invitation to men [and women] of good will everywhere.”

Each of you with a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel has opportunity to share that precious gift. The Lord expects you to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness.”

Baptism Transcends Background

On every continent and across isles of the sea, the faithful are being gathered into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Differences in cultural background, language, gender, and facial features fade into insignificance as members lose themselves in service to their beloved Savior. Paul’s declaration is being fulfilled: “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Only the comprehension of the true Fatherhood of God can bring full appreciation of the true brotherhood of man. That understanding inspires desire to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation.

Our Creator decreed “that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.”

Intolerance seeds contention; tolerance supersedes contention. Tolerance is the key that opens the door to mutual understanding and love.

Risks of Boundless Tolerance

Now may I offer an important note of caution. An erroneous assumption could be made that if a little of something is good, a lot must be better. Not so! Overdoses of needed medication can be toxic. Boundless mercy could oppose justice. So tolerance, without limit, could lead to spineless permissiveness.

The Lord drew boundary lines to define acceptable limits of tolerance. Danger rises when those divine limits are disobeyed. Just as parents teach little children not to run and play in the street, the Savior taught us that we need not tolerate evil. “Jesus went into the temple of God, and . . . and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers.” Though He loved the sinner, the Lord said that He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.” His Apostle Paul specified some of those sins in a letter to the Galatians. The list included “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

“Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, . . . wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

“Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.”

To Paul’s list I might add the regrettable attitudes of bigotry, hypocrisy, and prejudice. These were also decried in 1834 by early Church leaders who foresaw the eventual rise of this church “amid the frowns of bigots and the calumny of hypocrites.” The Prophet Joseph Smith prayed that “prejudices may give way before the truth.” Hatred stirs up strife and digs beneath the dignity of mature men and women in our enlightened era.

Paul’s list included “uncleanness.” As members of the Church entrusted with its holy temples, we are commanded that “no unclean thing shall be permitted to come into [His] house to pollute it.”

That assignment requires great fortitude as well as love. In former days, disciples of the Lord “were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin.” In latter days, devoted disciples of the Lord are just as firm. Real love for the sinner may compel courageous confrontation—not acquiescence! Real love does not support self-destructing behavior.

Tolerance and Mutual Respect

Our commitment to the Savior causes us to scorn sin yet heed His commandment to love our neighbors. Together we live on this earth, which is to be tended, subdued, and shared with gratitude. Each of us can help to make life in this world a more pleasant experience. Not long ago the First Presidency and the Twelve issued a public statement from which I quote: “It is morally wrong for any person or group to deny anyone his or her inalienable dignity on the tragic and abhorrent theory of racial or cultural superiority.

“We call upon all people everywhere to recommit themselves to the time-honored ideals of tolerance and mutual respect. We sincerely believe that as we acknowledge one another with consideration and compassion we will discover that we can all peacefully coexist despite our deepest differences.”

That pronouncement is a contemporary confirmation of the Prophet Joseph’s earlier entreaty for tolerance. Unitedly we may respond. Together we may stand, intolerant of transgression but tolerant of neighbors with differences they hold sacred. Our beloved brothers and sisters throughout the world are *all* children of God. He is our Father. His Son, Jesus, is the Christ. His church has been restored to the earth in these latter days to bless all of God’s children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

“Tolerance, the Beginning of Christlike Love” by Ann N. Madsen

Ann N. Madsen, “Tolerance, the Beginning of Christlike Love,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 26

One of my earliest childhood memories is of my father, who was a blessed peacemaker, settling disputes in our family by using a Samoan saying he had learned on his mission in the South Seas a few years before. “E eseese pato,” he would say, which meant literally, “Ducks are different”—or in other words, “Each of us is unique; be tolerant. People *are* different, but that’s not necessarily bad.”

I feel certain that this oft-repeated experience with my father was the beginning of my understanding about differences in people.

President Gordon B. Hinckley recently commented on a problem that is related to the principle my father taught. He said: “We live in a society that feeds on criticism. Faultfinding is the substance of columnists and commentators, and there is too much of this among our own people. It is so easy to find fault, and to resist doing so requires much discipline. . . . The enemy of truth would divide us and cultivate within us attitudes of criticism which, if permitted to prevail, will only deter us in the pursuit of our great divinely given goal. We cannot afford to permit it to happen.” (*Ensign*, May 1982, p. 46.) How *should* we respond in these troubled times as we are faced with daily criticism and hostility in the world? and how should we respond to the everyday frictions and failings in our own lives?

I would like to suggest that part of the answer can be found in two phrases in our own Articles of Faith. The eleventh article of faith reads: “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and *allow all men the same privilege*, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” (Italics added.)

“Allow all men the same privilege” expresses, of course, the idea of religious *tolerance*. And I like to think that this is a gospel principle that can be extended to include tolerance in all its forms, which is what my father wanted me to understand.

In the thirteenth article of faith is another phrase that is related to the first: “We believe . . . in doing good to *all men*.” (Italics added.)

It seems to me that “doing good to all men” expresses a quality that goes a step beyond “allowing all men the same privilege”—something we might call *compassion*, or the Savior’s kind of love. I believe tolerance leads to compassion, and that there are no shortcuts to Christlike love which can bypass tolerance.

The opposite of tolerance, of course, is intolerance, or self-righteousness—other words for the faultfinding and criticism President Hinckley described. Why *are* we sometimes critical and intolerant of those around us?

I suggest that it’s because of the kinds of differences my father pointed out to me. We separate ourselves from others by the differences we see. We feel comfortable with those who dress like we do, think like we do, and act like we do; and we feel uncomfortable with those who are different. Physical deformities or differences, for example, can sometimes cause discomfort. Of course, most people would never openly draw attention to such differences. But would you put forth the effort to get past the difference to establish a *warm* relationship? The gospel teaches us that that which is eternal in us provides kinship that no physical differences should undermine.

Tolerance so often does lead to love. Most of our missionaries serving throughout the world would bear testimony to that, as would those who have returned. What an inspired program, sending us as missionaries all over the world, where we personally confront different languages, often different dress, different customs, and different food. We arrive as strangers and foreigners, uncomfortable and very aware of differences, but with a precious message of restored truth to deliver. That message motivates us to look beyond the differences; and as we teach these strangers who they are—the children of our Heavenly Father, our own brothers and sisters in an eternal family—differences give way to kinship.

Because my father served for three years in Samoa, I grew up loving the Samoan people, their customs, their food, and their language. My brother served in Alaska. Our son served in Germany. Our

daughter served in Argentina. My husband and I served in New England. We've also spent much time in Israel and have had extended visits to Yugoslavia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. So in three generations my family has had the blessing of going over much of the world delivering a message, but also bringing home a message of kinship and love for many peoples.

That knowledge also helps us in relationships where there are differences that *do* matter—differences involving values, principles, truth, and the confirming religious experience we call testimony. Truth demands our allegiance, but it should not be a barrier to tolerance and compassion and love. To accept and love others, we do not have to adopt their ideas or be condescending. When others differ from us in these essential matters, we must learn to see with eyes that separate people from their traditions and sins. Good people can have mistaken beliefs.

If we can learn patience, allowing all men the privilege of seeing truth at their own pace, we will have moved measurably toward the compassion and love of the Savior, who saw no enemies among his crucifiers. His example stands for all time to teach us the tender path from tolerance to compassion and perfect love.

Activity:

Have the children look up and mark the Parable of the Tares in Matthew 13:24-30. What are tares? Why didn't they want tares in the field of wheat? What did they want to do with the tares? What was the response from the man who owned the field? What does this mean in our day?

If you have a chance, go to a wheat field that has been planted and the grain is fully developed. Ask if you can have a stalk of wheat and also a tare or worthless stalk of grass that is the same height as the wheat. This gives a great visualization to the story.

Activity:

Invite a young youth group (same age as yours) from another church to participate in an activity full of games and fun. It can be like a 'silly, mix-up day', a service project-type of activity, or tying a couple of baby quilts for the neo-natal unit at the hospital.

“Eleventh Article of Faith Word Maze”

By La Ree Graves

La Ree Graves, “Articles of Faith Word Maze,” *Friend*, Sept. 1997, 26

Find a letter path through the maze by connecting the letters that spell out the eleventh article of faith by reading forward, backward, down, up, and diagonally. Your path must never cross itself. Be careful—some of these are tricky! We have started you off with the first two words, *We claim*. (See A of F 1:11.)

Start

C	O	D	U	B	F	K	S	Y	W	B	F	Z	O	R	L
W	G	R	H	O	I	O	L	E	E	O	M	W	T	X	S
E	N	F	T	A	C	T	M	T	H	C	E	G	L	H	M
P	M	C	D	I	I	R	A	E	W	T	L	N	E	S	I
R	O	E	V	N	Q	D	M	P	M	T	A	L	R	X	P
N	Q	S	H	G	R	T	C	R	A	I	I	G	I	I	L
S	N	U	T	E	T	O	X	C	I	V	H	W	O	M	N
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A	S	W	M	E	L	A	L	A	Y	E	H	R	E	S	T
B	L	L	A	M	S	E	H	E	G	A	R	W	T	O	L
W	I	Y	O	A	Y	S	P	T	T	B	F	L	R	W	G

Finish