



Robyn and Joe Staples

Talk on March 17, 2018 in the Saturday Night Session of Stake Conference as 2nd Counselor in the Willow Creek Stake Presidency. He was sustained as Stake President the next day on March 18, 2018.

Good evening brothers and sisters. I love the Saturday night session of Stake Conference the most. The reason is because of who attends. I had a stake president who called the attendees of this session, “The Saturday night people.” Your goodness and faithfulness just invite a wonderful spirit.

Last Sunday we concluded number ten of our ten ward conferences. They were all wonderful. They ranged from the Westridge Branch consisting of a group of about 60 teens, wonderful youth who are having challenges finding their way in life, to the Wentworth Branch, a group of 30 or so faithful members of the church – average age 85 years old – to everything in between. We met with each of the ward councils a few days before each ward conference, and counseled together on timely topics.

During the second hour of each ward conference, you’ll recall that we watched a church video titled “Christlike Attributes” There are no spoken parts in this video, just scenes from the Savior’s life and then printed one or two word attributes. Humble, obedient, healer, kind, teacher, courageous, servant, submissive, selfless, full of love. We then, you’ll remember, had a discussion about those attributes and how to obtain them. Your answers were profound. I don’t think I left a single one of those meetings without learning something.

With all that collective discussion, and we have an advantage over you in that we participated ten times, I then pondered, “What is the answer? If we are to be like the Savior and to develop His attributes, how do we do it?” I came to a conclusion, at least one that makes sense to me. I’d like to share with you this evening. To develop the attributes of Christ, I believe there are two parts.

First, we have to come to know Him. Really know Him. We need to study His life. We need to ponder on the things He taught. On our knees, we need to be familiar with the voice of the Father, as mediated through the Son.

You'll remember that almost a year ago, in general conference, President Nelson, then the president of the twelve, said,

Earlier this year, I asked the young adults of the Church to consecrate a portion of their time each week to study *everything* Jesus said and did as recorded in the standard works.⁹ I invited them to let the scriptural citations about Jesus Christ in the Topical Guide become their personal core curriculum.¹⁰

I gave that challenge because I had already accepted it myself. I read and underlined *every* verse cited about Jesus Christ, as listed under the main heading and the 57 subtitles in the Topical Guide.¹¹ When I finished that exciting exercise, my wife asked me what impact it had on me. I told her, "I am a different man!"

"I am a different man?" At that time, he was 92 years old. He'd served as a stake president, as a regional representative, and had been an apostle for 33 years! Yet that exercise of studying the life of the Savior had changed him.

In the 11th chapter of Matthew and again in sections 19 and 58 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Savior invited us, "learn of me and listen to my words."

So first, in order to develop the attributes of Christ, we need to make the effort, consecrate the time to come to know him.

The second way that I believe we develop those attributes is to serve him. To be on the Lord's errand.

As you walk in the front door of our home there is a Spring time painting by St. George artist Michael Bedard. The painting is of a small section of one of the walls of the Navuoo temple. I call it a painting, but to clarify, it's a print. Original paintings are too pricey. We did have the artist add something to print, it reads: The Staples inviolate marriage devotions. Inviolate isn't a word you hear very often, but I love it in this context. It means no compromise. Non-negotiable. There is absolutely no way you are going to violate it. I actually think we got the word from something Camilla Kimball said.

So, the Staples inviolate marriage devotions are:

To faithfully love one another
To raise an eternal family
To build the kingdom of God

Building the kingdom of God isn't always easy one is it? You sacrifice. You give of your time, your talent, your resources, but you do it because you love the Lord.

Elder Uchdorf taught, “Brothers and sisters, we each have a covenant responsibility to be sensitive to the needs of others and serve as the Savior did—to reach out, bless, and uplift those around us.”

Elder Carl B. Clark, Of the Seventy said, “The opportunity to serve is one of the great blessings of membership in the Church.² The Lord has said, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me,”³ and we serve Him by serving others.⁴

As we serve, we draw closer to God.⁵ We come to know Him in ways that we otherwise might not. Our faith in Him increases. Our problems are put into perspective. Life becomes more satisfying. Our love for others increases, as well as our desire to serve. Through this blessed process, we become more like God, and we are better prepared to return to Him.”

Do we get weary when we serve? Sure. I think it might be part of the refiner’s fire for many of us, as we drive by that beautiful Willow Creek golf course on the way to our church meetings, or mutual activity, or home teaching or visiting teaching appointment. But it’s who we are and it’s what we do, isn’t it?

I love the words of President Marion G. Romney who said, “Service is not something we endure on this earth so we can earn the right to live in the celestial kingdom. Service is the very fiber of which an exalted life in the celestial kingdom is made.”

Years ago I heard a story of Elder Neal A. Maxwell. He said one day he received an ongoing assignment from President Hinkley. After receiving the assignment, he made an appointment to speak with President Hinkley. Elder Maxwell said something to the effect of, “President, I’ll do whatever you ask, but know that this assignment will conflict with my personal ministry.” For years, Elder Maxwell had been going to the hospital to meet with and serve the patients there.

Let me tell you a story of a woman named Kathy. Kathy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Shortly after diagnosis, Kathy’s husband decided he didn’t want to go down this road with her and he filed for divorce. As her condition degraded, she went from using a cane, then to two canes, then to a wheelchair. Kathy needed help and her ward family responded. Each night, two brethren would arrive at her home, get her mail, arrange things at the house, then together they would lift Kathy from her wheelchair into bed and arrange pillows and blankets, make her comfortable, plug in her wheelchair. Fifty different men would participate in this. At last count, they’d done this 3,000 times, 365 days a year, for over seven years. Now of course this was a blessing to Kathy, but to hear the words from the men that participated, there was the true miracle! “Every time I go to care for Kathy, I feel like it heals a part of my soul” “As one helps the other, the other is helped as well.” “I was at my lowest point. I needed healing. Serving Kathy is what it did, it healed me.”

So, my message tonight is that if we want to be like the Savior, to develop the attributes He has, we need to study His life and teachings, and we need to be on His errand as we serve those around us.

Brothers and sisters, I love this gospel, just like you do. I love being a member of Christ's church, just like you do. I'd do anything for it. Just like you would. I'm so grateful to live amongst you. The journey in life can be challenging, but what a blessing to have friends and associates like you. What a blessing to know who it is who we follow and strive to be like.

Testimony

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.