

April 2021 Restoration Women's Council – Class #2



How to Enter into Covenant, and, What Do I Promise to Do?

Now that you've read a handful of God's promises to His Covenant children, are you desirous to make your Covenant, or renew the one you've already made?

If you haven't made Covenant yet, here are the simple steps to start:

1. Repent
2. Believe in Jesus as the Savior
3. Be Baptized

See the words of the Lord that confess these principles in the five Scriptures below.

If you've already made your Covenant, perhaps reading through the following Scriptures will prove to be a reminder as to why you did this, or a conviction to start again!

Ether 2:4 And if it so be that they repent and come unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they shall be received into the kingdom of God.

D&C 16:4e Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness; and as many as repent, and are baptized in My name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.

2 Nephi 6:48 And He commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in His name, having perfect faith

in the Holy One of Israel, or they can not be saved in the kingdom of God.

Alma 5:25 Therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Genesis 6:62 Even so ye must be born again, into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of Mine Only Begotten; that ye may be sanctified from all sin; and enjoy the words of Eternal Life in this world, and Eternal Life in the world to come; even immortal glory.

These five Scriptures and many others describe the way we enter into Covenant, and most of us may have already done this. Sometimes I fear that we forget, however, that coming unto Christ and repenting is a continual process as we grow "here a little and there a little."

Daily repentance may be the most important part of fulfilling our Covenant promises.

The softened heart that accompanies true repentance allows us to keep the commandments out of love and a proper desire.

Proverbs 3:1 ...but let thine heart keep My commandments.

D&C 6:4b Say nothing but repentance unto this generation: keep My commandments, and assist to bring forth My work according to My commandments, and you shall be blessed.

WHAT DO I PROMISE TO DO?

What do the Scriptures say about Covenant living today? What is it? What does it require of us? Once we have taken the steps into Covenant living, what else does the Lord require?

The short answer is: Keep the Commandments!

Most of us can quickly think of the basic requirements or commandments that we hear often, such as repenting, praying, fasting, studying God's word and loving God and others with all our heart. There are many others, less talked about, but perhaps just as important.

As I share some of these, I hope the correlating Scriptures and testimonies will challenge you anew in your Covenant relationship. This is not an exhaustive list of His commands, but reminders that I hope each one of us will implement, if we aren't already doing so.

I have been personally blessed on multiple occasions by following the Lord's gentle commands, and I trust that similar blessings will come to you, too.

1. LOVE THE LORD AND OTHERS

Mark 12:34-36 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is; Hearken, and hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

We all know these are the two greatest commandments, and we are all probably trying to apply them. If you have some people in your life that are difficult to love, I'd like to share two things that have blessed me when trying to "love the unlovable."

The first is an understanding that people need love shown differently.

Gary Chapman's book, "The Five Love Languages" was revolutionary for me in dealing with a couple of people in my life. One I'll share. One of my children at about age seven was regularly acting rejected, defensive and depressed.

When I read Chapman's book, I tried to apply the five different ways he suggested love should be shown: touch, words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, and gifts. It was a trial and error process and a little bit of detective work, but it made the difference! We turned the corner and our relationship changed for the better.

I tend to show love through acts of service and words of appreciation. Also, physical touch is an easy one for me to express with little children. These three love languages did not speak love to this child at all! I might as well have been speaking Chinese. Hugs and kisses were followed by a push, a frown and a wiped cheek. Quality time was a little helpful. The final one I tried, gifts, really opened this child's heart. I was shocked, because gifts have never been important to me, not even when I was a child.

Love languages can also change with age so if you "figure it out" don't sit back and relax too long, because the great divide can happen again.

This principle applies with anyone, not just children. I challenge you to try sharing love in a new way with someone you are having trouble connecting with.

The second testimony happened when I was a Sophomore in high school. A girl named Jennifer had been a friend of mine since age six. We carpooled to dance lessons and were in school together. Eventually she and her mom joined our church. As we grew older we drifted apart due to a move, different schools, but most of all, different life choices. Even though we attended church together, I really had a tough time loving her.

She had a chip on her shoulder, was cutting with her words, and in my opinion quite negative. I began praying about how to love this girl. I knew she had low self esteem and conflicts at home between her parents, so she needed friends.

I really didn't know how to reach her and my heart was hard towards her. After praying for many months, one Sunday morning while getting ready for church and being in prayer, I was filled from head to toe with love for her. At that moment I was brought to tears and I felt I would do anything in the world for her.

For the first time in my life, I knew what it meant to love someone by the Spirit. This was simply a gift God gave me out of His grace, but only because I asked and prepared. It did change the way I was able to treat her.

If we have the desire to keep this first commandment, God will bless us with the ability to love everyone, especially the unlovable!

2. STUDY

D&C 85:36a Therefore, verily I say unto you, my friends, Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you; and as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books of wisdom; seek learning even by study, and also by faith.

And here is a Scripture blessing:

Proverbs 3:1-2 Forget not My law [which means we have to learn it first]; but let thine heart keep My commandments; For length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.

Seeking instruction and gaining wisdom go along with study.

Proverbs 4 [selected verses] **Let thine heart retain My words; keep My commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of My mouth. Forsake her not [wisdom], and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.**

I had an experience back in my late teen years where I committed to studying my Scriptures for 30 minutes per day and fasting once per week.

I can tell you that after several weeks of doing so, the Lord really opened my awareness and understanding of the Scriptures in a way that I had never experienced before.

During this time of diligent study, the Lord was able to give me answers to problems that I was facing by bringing His word to my mind.

At other times, I have had some long periods when Scripture study and fasting was not part of my life at all. My spirit withered as did my hope; my family suffered and I lost interest in keeping my Covenant as a result.

Once I began following **Alma 16**, which states that if we will exercise our desire to believe by experimenting on God's Word the Lord will cause a swelling in our bosom to sprout and begin to grow. He says we will know it is a good seed. This promise is true! It works!!

Just two weeks ago from the time of this writing, I was driving to work desiring of God to know what needed to change in my life. I had been in a spiritual wasteland for over two years. *[I use that term not as an overstatement. It was not just a spiritual drought, but a completely barren wasteland.]* While driving to work, I had the feeling that what I needed was to experiment on God's Word again.

God specifically placed in my mind to start by reading **Alma 16**. I'm not sure why because I had not been reading the Book of Mormon or any Scriptures for many months.

The next morning as I was leaving for work, I saw a CD of one of John Larson's Sunday School classes from last fall lying on my desk. I took it with me in the car, not knowing what it was about because I hadn't been at church that Sunday to hear it.

When I started listening, the ENTIRE class was on **Alma 16**. God provided just what I needed at the very time I needed it.

The point is that He is anxious to bless us and fulfill His part of the Covenant—but we must do our part!

3. PRAY AND FAST

Helaman 2:31 Nevertheless, they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

4 Nephi 1:13-14 And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the Word of the Lord. And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land, but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

When prayer and fasting are coupled together, great things happen!

The act of fasting teaches us that God is our provider—it emphasizes our frail human state—all in a way that, to my knowledge, no other spiritual discipline does. His Spirit is able to reach us and reveal to us in profound ways, and thus our faith grows.

Try it on a regular basis. I look forward to hearing what you discover.

4. BE A GOOD STEWARD

A friend of mine, Corey Stark, recently sent me the following testimony about applying God's financial law and how it has blessed his life and that of his family.

Corey writes: *"Tithing has been something I firmly believe in—regardless of the spiritual state of the Church. The blessings of God are eternal. Growing up, I had always heard of tithing but had never tithed regularly. When I was first out of college, I finally took inventory and calculated I owed \$154 in tithing. I didn't have the money and was working on a farm that summer for [a whopping] \$3.25 per hour. My expenses were few and I was sharing a house with my sister and brother-in-law.*

"I decided I would sacrifice something to save the money, so for three weeks I rode my bike to work [and everywhere] to save gas money, and after about a month I got paid one week [cash] and had exactly \$154.

"I was so happy. I put the cash in my sock and rode my bike home [Blue Springs at the time] with the full intent of putting that cash in an envelope as soon as possible and sending it to the Bishop.

"I walked in the house and my sister was crying. We had all gathered in and no one had any steady work yet. She said the propane tank went out and she didn't know what to do—there was no hot water in the house and she was nursing my nephew.

"Times were hard. She had no money either, but she called the propane company and they brought the minimum amount of propane and said that she could come to the office to pay the bill. They left the bill with her. It was \$152. She was crying because she didn't know what to do and how the bill was going to get paid.

"Without a word, I pulled out the [soggy] cash from my sock [summer time—riding the bike and sweating], and presented it to her. She was elated beyond words.

"I was not able to put the money in the envelope for the Bishop that day, but I knew her need was greater. I felt God wanted me to learn that it is always important that we meet our basic living needs and serve others with our substance. I was able to keep riding my bike, and by the end of the summer I did send the \$154 to the Church. I have never regretted it.

"In paying tithing for 30-ish years I have found many blessings. One blessing is simply this: each year I have owed more tithing than the previous year, which is simply an indicator that God increases our increase if we are faithful to Him.

"After Marji and I owned our first house, we were about to outgrow it and decided it was time to move. We put up a FOR SALE BY OWNER sign. I had calculated our tithing for that year, but had not taken the time to send in the statement to the Bishop as I had in years past—believing that it was 'more of a formality' than necessary.

"But there was this burning feeling that if I would take care of filling out the statement and send it in perhaps our house would sell.

*"One night, I felt urged to complete the accounting part and as I signed the paper on our kitchen table and put it in the envelope [I was going to deliver it to the post office in the morning so it would arrive to the Church ASAP], I picked up my Bible, and it fell out of my hands onto the kitchen table. It opened exactly to the verse in **Malachi** stating, **I will pour you out a blessing without room to receive.** The Spirit burned in confirmation.*

"That morning I dropped off the envelope on the way to work. By the time I arrived at work there was a message from Marji to call home [pre-cell phone days]. I called home and Marji said a family called to make an offer on the house—full asking price—and they made the offer at the exact time I was putting the tithing envelope in the post office box.

"Even more so, we wanted whoever purchased our house to have the same spiritual blessing we had had there—it turned out the family were Church members, too. They still live there to this day [22 years later].

"I have many times received blessings in multiples of the amount I tithed. A few years ago I filed our tithing and on the very next day was offered a contract for [exactly] 10 times the amount I had just committed to pay in tithing. That has happened more than once."

Corey obviously has imple-mented one aspect of his financial covenant with the Lord. He references the familiar promise in **Malachi** which is similarly referenced in **3 Nephi 11:13-15**.

Many of you have similar stories to share about financial stewardship. This command should be a pleasure to us as we see the enormous NOW blessings that follow.

I would suggest we should also be a good steward over our bodies and God's world.

D&C 85:38b addresses specific ways we are to take care of our bodies:
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.

Also read **D&C 119** and all of **D&C 86**.

Perhaps this is one of the clearest Scriptures, which states the importance of the stewardship over our own bodies:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The story of the talents found in **Matthew 25** positively pronounces the way the Lord desires to bless us for the wise use of our money and talents.

D&C 60:3e Thou shalt not idle away thy time; neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known.

Using time wisely is a steward-ship I was blessed to learn at a young age, thanks to my mother. It seems that our fast-paced world makes it even more of a challenge to have time for others.

Just two minutes ago, my son Josh asked his brother, "Do you want to watch that show?" Jacob's reply was, "Don't watch TV Josh. It's a waste of time."

Is there any area that you can improve your stewardship over your time, which really isn't yours anyway, is it?

5. FORGIVE

Two other ways we have promised to keep our Covenant with our Lord, is to forgive others and serve others.

Matthew 6:16 For if you forgive men their trespasses, ...your heavenly Father will also forgive you....

Perhaps the latter is easier than the former for many of you. When forgiveness seems like a difficult task, may I remind you that forgiveness is a mental choice, not a feeling.

I have several times made the mental choice to forgive someone that I did not FEEL like forgiving. Upon doing so [forgiving], the Lord softened my heart toward that person afterward.

Perhaps you remember hearing the testimony of Corrie Ten Boon who had been confined in the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck. Years later while speaking about her years in bondage, she came face to face with one of her captors, the very one who was responsible for her sister Betsy's execution.

Corrie states that she immediately felt hatred toward this man, who now was no longer a Nazi soldier but a professed Christian.

He confronted her and asked for her forgiveness. In her own words she says, "I could NOT forgive him. I only remembered how he tortured my sister Betsy."

However, she remembered the Lord's command that we are required to forgive everyone or we will not receive forgiveness of our own sin.

She told the man that she did forgive him and she states that instantly she felt her heart change. She states, "You have never felt the ocean of God's love until you forgive your enemies."

6. SERVE

Another way we should hold up our Covenant is to serve others. This one we know to be true from the many Scriptures that deal with service. I'll remind you of just a few.

Galatians 5:13 By love serve one another.

Mosiah 1:49 And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.

D&C 4:1b Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve Him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

Serving others starts with a heart-felt attitude. This is one that I am not very good at—it does not come naturally. I'm often too busy to even be aware of others' needs or how I can serve them.

Not only is the type of act important, [does it meet the other person's need? Or just fulfill a place of "I did good" in one's own mind?], but the timing is just as important. Taking winter coats to the needy in July might not be the best timing for their needs. Or missing an opportunity to send a get well card until someone is already well are simplistic examples of our timing being off.

Make yourself available and aware. The Lord will bless both them and you!

7. TRUST GOD [DON'T WORRY AND COMPLAIN]

Psalms 5:11 But let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy.

Psalms 28:7 The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him.

Another area of Covenant living that I have struggled with in recent years is trusting God.

This phrase has always seemed a bit trite to me, carrying little application in my young life because I usually felt confident and in control so I didn't know how to show God I trusted Him.

In the last few years I have struggled against God. I wasn't knocking, seeking or asking.

As I hit "a rock bottom" kind of low, with three or four things out of control in my life, the Lord brought to my awareness that I was not trusting Him.

Only as my pride was shattered, was I left with no other alternative than to trust Him. I was trying to take away others' agency, something I don't have the power or the right to do.

I needed to let go and trust God to take care of their choices, their pains, their learning process. This "aha" experience came quite tearfully, but I eventually recognized that God was prompting my thoughts.

I agreed to pray and fast about my lack-of-trust issue and how it was tearing me and the others apart. Since then, He has taught me, and still is teaching me, that letting Him be in control releases and frees us from daily stress. It also honors Him. I learned that pride and trust cannot co-exist in us.

In addition to the command-ments we've touched on and their subsequent promises in Covenant living, there are many more. Due to space I won't talk about each one, but I do want to leave you with a list of what the Scriptures say we have committed to doing as a Covenant child of God.

If you haven't studied, pondered, or experimented with these before, add them to your challenge for the coming months.

8. PRAISE GOD AND GIVE THANKS

9. WITNESS FOR HIM REGULARLY

10. SUPPORT OUR LEADERS [PRIESTHOOD AND NATION]

11. DEVELOP RIGHTEOUS LIVING HABITS

These would include:

- doing good to those that hate us,
- not judging or being critical,
- being giving not selfish,
- being compassionate and meek,
- repressing unnecessary wants,
- being slow to anger,
- not taking the Lord's name in vain, and
- returning what you borrow.

Can you think of others?

As you can see, there are many parts to fulfilling your promise to live in a Covenant relationship.

God also is bound to keep His part of the Covenant—promises He will fulfill.

**Psalms 89:34 My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
D&C 81:3b I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.**

How exciting and comforting to know that God fulfills His Covenant and blesses us accordingly when we keep His commandments.

He already has fulfilled His promise of sending a Savior to provide for our remission of sin and a way to Eternal Life.

This fulfilled Covenant is all we really need!

But it's nice to know He still reaches down and follows through on [perhaps in our opinion] the smaller things in our life as well.

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Your Covenant Walk—Making a Plan for Accountability

It seems clear from God's promises, and the testimonies that confirm them, that living in Covenant is the best possible choice for a fulfilling life.

I challenge you to write out the things you do or have done that help you keep your Covenant.

List the blessings you've had in your life because of these commitments to your Covenant.

My list will be different than yours, but I'll share a portion of my list here, those things that have blessed me the most, to give you ideas:

1. Study the Scriptures and attend classes:

D&C 85:36a Therefore, verily I say unto you, my friends, Call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you; 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.

As many of you may have experienced, reading the Scriptures can be difficult when you are young.

I was blessed to have a Mom that taught us from the Scriptures daily and developed a strong Sunday School program in our congregation.

As I reached my teen years, this habit carried me through the division that occurred in the Church, and the questioning that many around me were going through.

In my sixteenth year (1984, Junior in high school), the habit of searching the Scriptures kept me grounded.

I read the Doctrine and Covenants that year. Over and over again I felt the "ring of truth" in its words. This confirmed to me that God speaks to His people today and that Joseph Smith was a prophet. Section after section confirmed this to me, not in every single section, but in most.

Then, after several months I noticed that I wasn't sensing God's Spirit or the same ring of truth anymore. I was in Section 149. I flipped back a few sections to see where it was that I stopped feeling the Holy Spirit's power and it was at Section 144. My belief was that the latter leaders of the Church really weren't following God's will for the Church.

All of this happened without me discussing it with any adults, and since I lived in Texas, not in the Center Place, I wasn't privy to many of the persecutions and conversations that were going on.

Eight years later I learned that many of the “Restorationists” believe that Section 144 was the last divine revelation given.

This was amazingly confirming to me. God had truly directed my heart and not only my heart, but my future choices and the choices that would affect my family.

Who knows what direction my life would have taken if I had not developed that habit of studying my Scriptures?

2 Nephi 14:4 Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

2. Listen to the testimonies.

John 6:44 No man can come unto Me, except he doeth the will of My Father who hath sent Me. And this is the will of Him who hath sent Me, that ye receive the Son; for the Father beareth record of him; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of Him who sent Me, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just.

When you think of testimonies, do you think of Wednesday evening services? This is, of course, a wonderful place to hear testimonies, but certainly not the only place.

In my life, the most powerful testimonies I remember came from two sources—one was hearing my extended family talk about their testimonies at family gatherings.

When many families were playing games or throwing the football around, my brother and cousins and I were hearing about God changing lives.

In addition to this, we often had missionaries and other out of town visitors in our home.

The testimonies I heard from Neil Steady, Neil Simmons, Frank Fry and others, professed that God was healing, speaking in tongues, casting out evil spirits and sending heavenly messengers to teach his servants.

I certainly can't leave out the testimonies I heard at reunions. The way these testimonies strengthened my faith is hard to express in writing.

D&C 6:14c But if they reject not My words, which shall be established by the testimony which shall be given blessed are they; and then shall ye have joy in the fruit of your labors.

With the many resources we have today on Restoration websites, as well as CD's, sermons on the internet and written materials, I challenge each of us to take advantage of testimonies for strengthening our faith.

Obviously OGRB's Zion's Call is one we have right here close to home. In turn you can share these testimonies with others at appropriate times.

3. Learn praise songs, hymns and other Scripture songs by heart.

Songs that have been committed to memory can bring such great blessing on those days when you're low and may not have the brain power to read God's word for strength.

I think it's important to note that the resonance of sound waves pierces the spirit in a very physical way that even reading the Word of God doesn't do.

In my experience, the physical and spiritual blessings of God's music at the moment it is needed is both healing and encouraging.

I might add that committing songs to memory is handy for the times

when you can't stop and read, don't have a song book or recorded music along with you, or might even be stranded on a deserted island.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

The next step, in my opinion, is to apply what I have learned from the songs, as referenced in the Scripture above, because obedience brings enlightenment that strengthens faith.

I have a testimony about the combined power of music and God's Word. Though this happened when my children were small, it has been confirmed to me again in recent months.

When my children were young we always kept Christian cassette tapes in the car, listening to them frequently.

One afternoon as I was driving north on Buckner-Tarsney by myself, I was singing along with a Steve Green children's tape. I had been singing along with several songs. Suddenly one of the last songs on the tape came on and moved me to tears to such a great extent that I had to pull the van over to the side of the road.

I continued singing with joyful tears rolling down my face.

When the song ended, I wondered, "Why is this song causing me to feel such a great amount of God's joyful spirit, when all the songs on the tape are Christian?" I picked up the cassette case and pulled out the cover paper which contained the lyrics of each song.

All of the songs' lyrics were based on Christian concepts. However,

I noticed that the song that overwhelmed me was a literal Scripture found in Revelation.

This song was the Word of God.

I felt assured that the difference was in the literal power of God's word.

Since then, I have testified of the power and the healing, life-giving ministry to be given and enjoyed by Scripture songs.

Psalms 119:54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

4. Choose to forgive others and self.

This Covenant principle of forgiveness is covered at length throughout the Scriptures, beginning with the forgiveness we each find in our Messiah.

Reading the stories of the Prodigal Son, Joseph of Egypt, Alma the younger, and the well-known Corrie Ten Boon blesses me because I am freed of burden as I forgive, as is the person that is forgiven.

I am sensing that the challenge to write out your Covenant habits may be sounding like a list of do's and don'ts.

Right now I feel that God wants each of us to pause and realize that keeping Covenant should not be about a list of do's and don'ts.

God wants it to come from the heart, like Jonathan's Covenant with David.

From our first week's devotions, remember that the Scriptures tell us that Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Keeping the Covenant he made with David was not a burden.

Likewise, if we love God the commandments should not be a burden.

1 John 5:3-5 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

In case you haven't noticed, each of the examples I shared about having kept my Covenant, all had the same outcome in my life. They each strengthened my faith.

I certainly can testify that on the occasions when my heart has been softened by God's Spirit, obeying His commandments have not been grievous, but were my heart's desire.

I hope that as you finish writing your blessings from Covenant living, your faith will be strengthened and give you a renewed spirit for this next challenge:

Next, I'd like you to write out the areas where you feel your Covenant needs strengthening—the areas where you are weakest.

As you look into your heart and your living habits, what do you see that should be changed, not only to bless you, but to bless others?

For me, I believe that many see a Jill that is "on her best behavior" in front of acquaintances. Not that I am fake. Maybe I just find it easier to do the "right" thing in public.

Maybe there are fewer challenges with people I don't know as well. However, the old saying, "How

you act when no one is watching, shows who you really are," speaks the truth.

In other words, who you are in private shows your true character and condition of your heart.

This poem was written by my great uncle, Patriarch Bill Dollins, and helps us to reflect on who we really are:

THE WITNESS

**In fancy I stood at the Judgment Day
before the throne of Grace;
Jesus was looking straight at me,
With a kindly loving face.**

**"I'll not judge," he said,
"By what others say,
Not even the best who passed your way.
The witness you will hear today
Will know how you ran the race."**

**A quiet hush fell over the crowd.
Their expressions I can't erase;
I remember seeing Peter and Paul,
And others I couldn't place.**

**"Who is this," I cried aloud.
"What witness with the truth endowed
Can testify to this great crowd
Of how I ran the race?"**

**I heard the voice of Jesus call
In tones so soft and clear,
As I wondered deep within my soul
What witness would be here?**

**Suddenly I felt so small;
O'er all of me there came a pall.
The witness summoned was
My home wall!"
A witness I would fear.**

**"What of this man have you to say?
How did he treat his wife?
Your testimony will be right,
For you observed his life.**

**Just bear your witness, come what may,
You're under oath so please obey.
Let friendship not stand in your way
Although your words bring strife."**

The WITNESS (continued)

**In solemn tone spoke the wall
of my home
And with a trace of sadness,
The words sank deep within my soul
And drove me near to madness.**

**“This man did many a time bemoan
And sigh and cry, complain and groan,
And made his wife feel so alone
And seldom brought her gladness.”**

**The Master set his gaze on me,
He knew I'd not deny
The testimony of the wall;
Remorse was my reply.**

**What better witness could there be,
Than friendly walls that really see,
And saw the true, unguarded me?
I bowed my head to cry.**

What does your home wall see?
Is it quarreling? Is it laziness? Is it
muttering under your breath or holding a
grudge?

Does your home wall see a
critical nature, or frivolous spending, or
a tendency to spend time on fruitless
endeavors?

Hopefully you can say that your
home wall sees patience, kindness,
sacrificial giving of time and money, a
joyful countenance, gratefulness, self-
lessness, encouraging words and many
of the fruits of His Spirit.

As you consider your second
challenge this week, your weak areas—
look very deep—in the private places.
The length of your list doesn't matter!

I can testify to you that
weaknesses can be made into enduring
strengths with the touch of Christ's
power.

When I was 21 years old and
married less than a year, Chip and I
struggled through a hurdle that was

nearly unbearable for him and me. We
talked through the problem many times,
prayed together and read the Lord's
promises.

I doubted I would ever overcome
the pain and this would be a weakness
in our marriage for years to come. He
felt the same way.

Once we added fasting to our
prayers and I sought administration by a
couple of Elders (one came from out of
state), I was healed spiritually in a way I
immediately felt.

Since that very day 27 years
ago, I can say that that particular
weakness in our marriage has been and
continues to be an area of major
strength for us as a couple.

**Ether 5:28 I give unto men weakness,
that they may be humble; and My grace
is sufficient for all men that humble
themselves before Me; for if they humble
themselves before Me, and have faith in
Me, then will I make weak things become
strong unto them.**

Now share your list with an
accountability partner that you trust will
support you and also challenge you to
follow through with checks and balances
every so often.

I will be doing the same thing
along with you. I trust that some of your
weaknesses will be made strong and
fruit will be borne in each of our lives.

Living in Covenant must begin today!