

# FOLLOW JESUS

Everything we do should be focused on becoming like Him. He is our hope and salvation. The scriptures, temple, commandments, families, church, all point us to Jesus. He is our only chance at getting home. True happiness and peace is found in Christ. When in doubt, be like Jesus, love like Jesus, serve like Jesus, trust like Jesus, obey like Jesus, follow Jesus.

# EMBRACE TENSIONS

Don't freak out or run away if a piece of the puzzle doesn't seem to fit. It's okay. Trust Him. Seemingly conflicting or confusing ideas give us a chance for God to teach us!

# God trusts you and gave you agency

If you aren't feeling guided, maybe God is waiting for you to use the agency He gave you. You don't have to have God tell you everything. Use reason, logic, counsel with others, and use the light of Christ inside you. God can bless any righteous choice.

# GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4:8 says that "God is love." God doesn't try to love you, it isn't a choice He makes, it is who He is. It is radiating from Him, and can't be turned off by our choices. He knows you and your imperfections, he sees you as you are and as you can become. He loves you with a love we can't comprehend.

# We are all BROKEN

We have all been wounded by mortality. UNITY IN BROKENNESS BRINGS BELONGING. So, let's be broken together instead of pretending that I am perfect or that "they" are perfect. We need each other and we all need JESUS.

# ASK of GOD not GOOGLE

God is the source of truth. Not my teacher, not my neighbor, not Google, etc. Someone's insights/interpretations are not necessarily THE insights/interpretations.

# PERSPECTIVE CHECK

Step back. Take a break from the stress of the question. Is there a bigger picture? Don't forget He loves you and has a plan for you. God's plan is for your eventual HAPPINESS.

# DISAGREEMENT does not equal DISLOYALTY

I can SUSTAIN and HONOR someone who I disagree with. I can be LOYAL and still DISAGREE.

# Beware of PRESENTISM

Presentism: Incorrectly interpreting the past through a modern-day lens. Look at HISTORICAL CONTEXT. God speaks to us where we are at in our language. Don't assume what is normal in our culture was normal in theirs.

# MORTALITY = "1<sup>st</sup> GRADE"

"We are all infants compared to the beings of glory and grandeur we are designed to become. No mortal being advances from crawling to walking to running without frequent stumbles, bumps, and bruises. That is how we learn." – Uchtdorf, April 2021

# I WONDER...

Set aside what you think the answers are. Open your mind to WONDER and PONDER and ask questions...

# Be SOURCE SAVVY

WHO is talking? WHAT is their motivation for sharing? WHEN are they talking? WHO has other sources of the same event?

# The RESTORATION is ONGOING

"The Restoration is not an event, but it continues to unfold." – Elder Ballard, Oct 2016  
God teaches us line upon line (2 Nephi 28:30).  
There ARE ANSWERS, even if we don't have them yet (D&C 101: 32)

# Beware of False PREMISES (assumptions)

How does your background and upbringing affect your view? Are you seeing through a filter that may be distorting truth? Sometimes we reach a wrong conclusion because our starting point was off.

# Look for SYMBOLISM

What could this be a symbol of? What can the symbolism teach me?

# HOLD ON to what you ALREADY KNOW

"I know that God loveth his children, nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things." (1 Nephi 11: 17)

# Beware of PRINCIPLES in ISOLATION

Life is complex. You need balance and should avoid extremes. Sometimes there are competing truths and every situation is different. Use the Spirit and humility when navigating difficulties.

(Example: Honor your parents AND Follow the Prophet AND Follow the Spirit AND Be Humble)

# THE CHURCH is true, even when the church isn't true (perfect)

The Church (buildings)  
The Church (people)  
The Church (organization/leaders)  
The CHURCH (Pure teachings of the gospel that lead us to Christ)

# Seek Solid REFERENCES

Look at other sources. What have other prophets/leaders/scholars said that might help me better understand this (ancient or modern)?

# "True and living church" does not mean we have a monopoly on truth

We may have more scripture, modern prophets, and sacred ordinances, but we don't have all that is good and true. Not all the other churches are false. There is so much good we can learn from our non-member sisters and brothers about following Christ. Maybe we can both add to each other's discipleship.

## A TESTIMONY is less like a light switch and more like a library

If a testimony is what you believe, then everyone has a testimony. It is not something that can be turned on and off. Your testimony library is full of books of experiences and beliefs. Some are volumes, some are pamphlets. Books titled "Jesus" and "Prayer" might not be the same size as "Polygamy" or "Genealogy" and that's okay. Some libraries with books titled "Kindness," "Family," and "Knowledge" belong to people who aren't members of the church. We add to our testimony library everyday.

## You're not a DOUBTER, you're a SEEKER OF TRUTH

Everyone has questions and concerns and doubts. We shouldn't shame people who have doubts and think they don't have enough faith. They are on a journey of asking the right questions, going to the right sources, and trusting when they don't have answers. It takes a humble heart and patience. We should praise the common seekers of truth.

## SEMANTICS

Words carry meaning. What a word means to me may be different than what it means to someone else. (example: "Church")

## Faith is for EVIDENCE GAPS

There have been many times in scripture and church history where a concern is raised, and no answer comes. Then after a time, evidence shows up that resolves the whole thing. It's sad to see people give up all their beliefs, membership, and covenants for something that just needed patience and faith (D&C 21:5-6). The gap between concern and resolve is where we need faith and trust in God.

## Prophets are CALLED OF GOD, but they AREN'T PERFECT

(3 questions from Patrick Mason's, PLANTED)

- 1) Can I believe that God leads the church through flawed prophets?
- 2) Can I forgive prophets for their faults, even their occasionally severe ones, and be patient with my brothers?
- 3) Am I simultaneously and authentically open to the possibility that I might be wrong and they might be right?

## ONE meaning isn't always THE meaning

The scriptures are a **complex puzzle of truths with different layers**. God probably does this on purpose to teach people on all levels of readiness and acceptance. Not only should we **continue to learn** from God's word and apply truths every time we read, but we shouldn't be satisfied with only one interpretation. **There is always more.**

## "God can't STEER a PARKED car."

As you wait for an answer or redirection, keep moving forward. Use the "let me know if this is wrong" prayer. Keep in mind that God can take you down a dead-end road to teach you a lesson or help you find the right one.

"You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you." -Pres. Lee

## Active ≠ Saved

The church doesn't save us, Jesus does. The church exists as the vehicle to carry the saving **ordinances**. But the ordinances don't save us, Jesus does. **We follow Christ, who asked us to be a part of the church and receive the ordinances.** The church is one of the best places that help us become like Christ through its beautiful brokenness. But we aren't converted to the church, we are converted to Jesus.

## It's not Utah, it's you.

While no one is perfect, not everyone in Utah (or the church) is judging you. If you assume they are, you are judging them. Sure there are judgmental people, but there actually are people who care more about you than cultural or social pressures. Saying the church or Utah is judgmental is actually a very judgmental thing to say. This may sound harsh, but the root of the judgment problem may not be Utah....

## Experience produces understanding

If you want a testimony of something or don't feel the truth of something, try living it. Experiencing the gospel will help you understand it. And sometimes things that seem confusing to us at first (sacrament, temple, etc.) are only strange because they are unfamiliar

## FAITH is not just a FEELING, it is a DECISION

If we only kept the commandments when it was convenient or we felt like it, then often we wouldn't obey. If we only lived the gospel after we felt peace and holiness, then maybe we wouldn't. **Faith is a choice to believe**, even when we sometimes don't feel it is working or we when we don't have the results or answers we hoped for.

## Beware of US vs THEM

Seek to see the perspective of someone who views this differently than you. There is usually TRUTH on both sides.

(For example: Parents vs Teenager, Conservative vs Liberal, Teacher vs Student, LDS Church vs All other churches)

## Tension ≠ Contention

There may be disagreement, misunderstanding, and confusion. But that doesn't mean we should let our pride take over and argue. Tension can be a good thing; it can lead us to reevaluate our assumptions and find truth. But that only works with humility and kindness.

## Scriptures aren't like a frustrated teacher Scriptures are like a close friend

We don't ask ourselves after every time we hang out with a friend if we learned something from them or improved our relationship while we were with them. We incorrectly think if we pick up the scriptures, we should understand them and know how to get through life- all in 10 minutes or less. The scriptures are meant to be enjoyed and lead us to Jesus over a lifetime of wonder and mystery.

## Me + enough \_\_\_\_\_ ≠ Christ Me + Christ = Enough

We falsely think if only we did enough scripture reading, enough prayer, enough temple attendance, or enough service then that will help us become perfect. We can't earn heaven, we learn heaven. No amount of "works" will save us, but in contrast, Jesus is the answer to being enough, to find happiness, joy, hope, and victory.

## Why do you ask?

When helping others navigate hard questions, it is helpful to know their story, experiences, and worldview. Understanding where they are coming from will help you find the right answers tailored to their needs without offending them or wasting their time. This will help you balance truth with tolerance.

## You can't force revelation

Just because you pray, read scripture, open your heart, and ponder, doesn't guarantee a prompting, vision, angel, or that God will speak to you. God will speak to us when He sees fit for our needs and timing, we just have to be constantly open to it. Revelation can come to the sinner or the saint, it can be recognized now or realized later. It can feel different in different times or for different people. We try to prepare for it, but we can't force revelation.

## Mental illness is an illness

It is not a personality. It is not who you are, it is something you have. It is not something to shrug off or hope it goes away. An illness needs a doctor, healing, awareness, and patience. We must support and love others who have mental illnesses, because they can be a gift to help us serve, love, and minister like Jesus.

## We don't know.

Some things in the Gospel and in God's plan haven't been revealed. Even with prophets and restoration scripture, there are still a lot of answers we don't have. From topics like the second coming, sealings, gender, sexuality, the resurrection, the millennium, and heaven, we have questions that don't have revealed answers. But we are promised that one day all things will be revealed and "nothing will be withheld" to those who endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. (D&C 121:26-32)

## The Power of Paradox

The human mind is big enough to hold two contrasting ideas that are both true. Life is not all black and white and it is sometimes healthy to be okay in the gray area. We can believe in science and reason and at the same time believe in mysteries and miracles. We can believe that prophets can be inspired and also imperfect. We can believe that God is both just and merciful. It doesn't always have to be one or the other.

## The Bible isn't a book, it's a library

The Bible is a collection of different scrolls, written by different authors, across thousands of years. It has poetry, stories, hymns, visions, sayings, letters, histories, etc. Knowing what kind of literature it is will be helpful to know how to read it and how to understand it.

## The Bible isn't to end conversations but to start them

Often, we tend to use scriptures to prove our point on a certain doctrine and end the argument once and for all. But the Bible has verses for both sides of many debates. It is written to show that life is not as black and white as we might think, it is full of paradoxes.

## Think less "history" & more HIS story

Where do you see Christ/God in this story/scripture? Names, people, animals, characteristics, nature, symbols?

## Think less "mystery" & more MY story

Where do YOU fit in this story/scripture? How is this like your life?

## As far as it is TRANSLATED correctly

How does a different translation help you understand the passage differently? Beware that some translations are not word for word but idea for idea.

## Wait...this sounds familiar....

Themes. Is there a different story in the Old Testament that this story reminds you of? How are the writers linking stories?  
Example: How is Moses like Jacob, or David like Moses? How many stories are there about snakes? Or staffs? Or heels? Or eyes? Is there a tree, water, or hill that could be a reference to other past stories?  
[Look for patterns with variation.](#)

## ~~History and facts?~~ Truth and Symbols

Writers are not worried about being historically accurate as much as teaching true principles.

Example: What is true about George Washington and the cherry tree? Or should we care if there was actually a talking snake in the garden?

## Based on a true story?

All our memories are adapted to the context in which we share them. The Bible is the same way. Ancient writers/editors of the Bible take certain freedoms in adapting history to fit their poetic narrative. They write what happened in a way that teaches certain lessons more than facts. You can trust the Bible and all scripture to have TRUTH, and be "historical," but at the same time, we might say it is "based on a true story."

## Context before Commitment

The Bible is a poetic story that points to Christ and His interactions with humans. It may not be wise to ask, how is this story about me, but it may be better to get the context of the story and then ask how is this about Christ, and then how should I act differently as a disciple of Christ and what I know about Him. Rushing to application may lead to applying a principle that is not completely true.

## Good or bad example?

Does the story teach us what to do or what not to do? Can we learn from other people's mistakes, even scriptural heroes?