



# *Don't Look Around, Look Up!*

BY: Elder Yoon Hwan Choi

My purpose is to “invite others to come unto Christ.” This is your purpose too. We can fulfill this purpose by looking up to Jesus Christ.

I was baptized with my parents when I was 16 years old. My younger brother, Kyung-Hwan, who was 14 years old, joined the Church through my uncle, Young Jik Lee, and invited us to his church. Each of the 10 members in our family belonged to a different church, so we were happy to find the truth and wanted to share that happiness we found in the gospel of Jesus Christ after we were baptized.

My father was the most excited among us to learn and share the truth. He used to wake up early in the morning to study the scriptures for over two hours every day. After work he went with the missionaries to visit our family, friends, and neighbors nearly every day. Seven months after we were baptized, 23

of my family and relatives became members of the Church. That was followed by the miracle of seeing 130 people baptized in the following year through my father's member missionary work.

Family history was also important to him, and he completed eight generations of our ancestors. From that time on, the fruits of our family conversion, started by my 14-year-old brother, have increased in countless ways not only among the living but also among the dead. Building upon the work of my father and others, our family tree now spans to 32 generations, and we are now completing temple work for many branches. Today I am amazed and feel great joy linking our ancestors and our descendants.

President Gordon B. Hinckley recorded a similar experience in the Columbus Ohio Temple: “Reflecting on the lives of [my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father] while I was seated in the temple, I looked down at my daughter, at her daughter, ... and at her children, my great-grand-



children. I suddenly realized that I stood right in the middle of these seven generations—three before me and three after me.

“In that sacred and hallowed house there passed through my mind a sense of the tremendous obligation that was mine to pass on all that I had received as an inheritance from my forebears to the generations who have now come after me.”

All of us are in the middle of an eternal family. Our role can be a turning point at which significant changes can occur in positive or negative ways. President Hinckley continued, “Never permit yourself to become a weak link in the chain of your generations.” Your faithfulness in the gospel will strengthen your family. How can we ensure we will be a strong link in our eternal family?

One day, a few months after my baptism, I heard some members criticizing each other in church. I was very disappointed. I went home and told my father that maybe I should not go to church anymore. It was difficult to see members criticize others like that. After listening, my father taught me that the gospel had been restored and it is perfect but members are not yet, neither himself nor me. He firmly said, “Do not lose your faith because of the people around you, but build a strong relationship with Jesus Christ. Don’t look around, look up!”

Look up to Jesus Christ—the wise advice of my father—strengthens my faith whenever I face challenges in life. He taught me how to apply the teachings of Christ, as in these words: “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”

When I was presiding over the Washington Seattle Mission, it rained many days of the year. Still, our missionaries were instructed to go out and proselyte in the rain. I used to tell them, “Go out in the rain, look up to heaven, open your mouth, and drink it! When you look up, you will be strengthened to open your mouth to everyone without any fear.” It was a symbolic lesson for them to look up when they faced

challenges even after their mission. Please don’t try this in polluted areas.

While still serving in the Seattle mission, I received a phone call from my oldest son, Sunbeam, who is a pianist. He said he would have the privilege of performing at Carnegie Hall in New York because he won an international competition. We were so happy and very thrilled for him. However, that evening, while praying with gratitude, my wife recognized that we could not join him for his performance and said to Heavenly Father something like this: “Heavenly Father, I am grateful for the blessing Thou hast given to Sunbeam. By the way, I am sorry that I cannot go there. I could have gone if Thou had given this blessing either before or after this mission. I am not complaining, but I have a little feeling of sorry.”

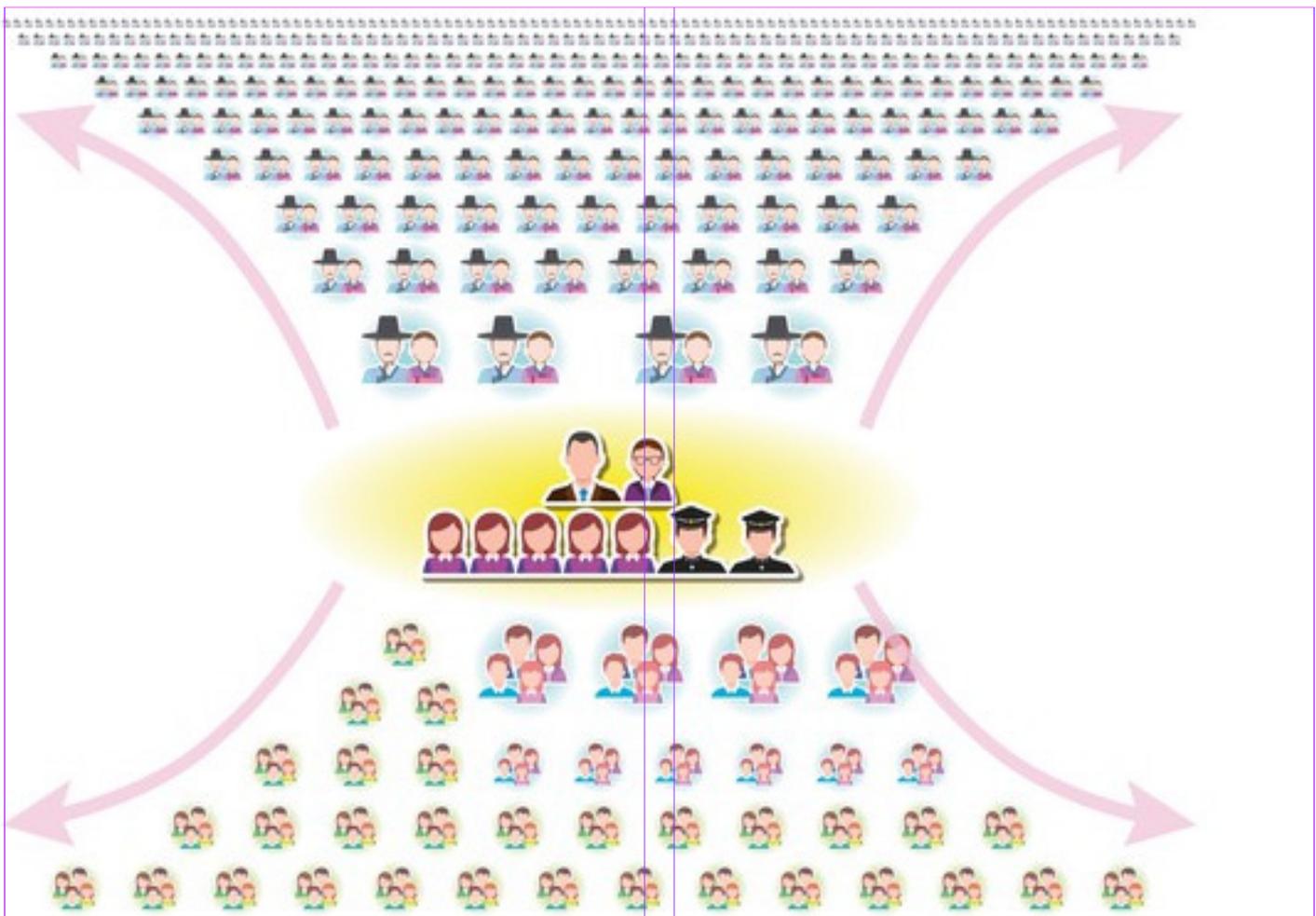
As soon as she finished this prayer, she heard a clear voice: “Because you cannot go, your son has been given this privilege. Would you rather trade?” My wife was surprised. She knew children would be blessed through their parents’ faithful work in the Lord’s kingdom, but it was the first time she understood her role with

such clarity. She replied to Him right away: “No, no, it is OK for me not to go. Let him have that honor.”

Dear brothers and sisters, it is not easy for us to recognize the love of Heavenly Father when we look around with our temporal eyes, because we see inconvenience, loss, burdens, or loneliness first. On the other hand, we can see the blessings beyond when we look up. The Lord has revealed, “When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.” To all those who embark in any service of God, know that you are a solid connection for powerful blessings to those before you and to generations after you.

Today I am grateful to see that many of our family members are faithful on the covenant path but am saddened to imagine any empty seats next to us. Elder M. Russell Ballard said: “If you choose to become inactive or to leave the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where will you go? What will

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you do? The decision to ‘walk no more’ with Church members and the Lord’s chosen leaders will have a long-term impact that cannot always be seen right now.”<sup>6</sup> President Thomas S. Monson encouraged us, “May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.”

It is never too late to look up to Jesus Christ. His arms are always open to you. There are generations before us and after us depending on us to follow Christ so that we can be an eternal family of God.

When I was released from my calling as a stake president, my sons were excited about spending more time with me. Three weeks later I was called as a Seventy. At first I thought they might be disappointed, but my youngest son’s humble response was “Daddy, don’t worry. We are an eternal family.” What a simple and clear truth it was! I worried a little because I looked around at this mortal life first, but my son was happy because he did not look around but looked up with eyes toward eternity and the purposes of the Lord. It’s not always easy to look up when your parents are opposed to the gospel, when you are a member of a small Church unit, when your spouse is not a mem-

ber, when you are still single although you did your best to marry, when a child has strayed, when you find yourself a single parent, when you are physically or emotionally challenged, when you are a victim in a disaster, and so on. Hold on to your faith in those hard times. Look up to Christ for strength, balance, and healing. Through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, “all things shall work together for [your] good.”

I bear witness of Jesus Christ, that He is our Savior and Redeemer. When we follow our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, we look up to Jesus Christ. As we pray and study the scriptures every day and partake sincerely of the sacrament every week, we gain the strength to always look up to Him. I am happy to be a member of this Church and to be a part of an eternal family. I love to share this great gospel with others. Inviting others to come unto Christ is our purpose, and we can fulfill this purpose by looking up to Jesus Christ. I humbly testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.