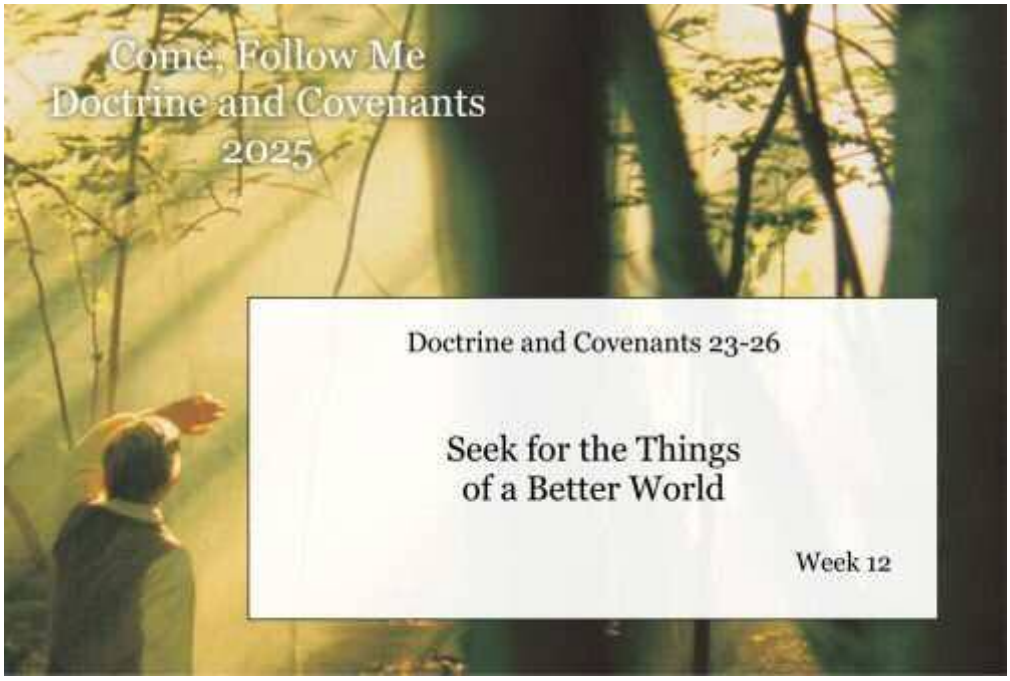

To seek for the things of a better world is not an easy proposition. Seeing anything beyond our own mortality requires help.

Introduction

Doctrine and Covenants 25 let's us peek in on the life of Emma Smith. I don't know if this revelation came unbidden or was requested. The heading of this section doesn't say why the revelation was sought or given, just that it was received by Joseph and it about Emma. Emma doesn't always get a good reputation among the Saints, because she didn't go west with the body of the church, and she helped in the organization of the Reorganized church. But we need to remember that her life wasn't an easy one. Here is a just a tiny snippet of her life in the gospel that happened over just the course of a few weeks. This kind of thing was common throughout her life with Joseph. Emma wanted to be baptized. This should have been an easy thing. It should have been a joyous occasion, but it wasn't.

Emma's baptism needed to take place in a stream, but no deep pool existed in the stream. They had to dam the stream in order to make the water deep enough to perform the ordinance. The first time they dammed the stream some persecutors destroyed it before they could use the pool. Emma lived with that kind of senseless spite for decades.

Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, Volume 1, The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846, Chapter 09 Come Life or Come Death

> Emma was all too familiar with opposition to Joseph and his message. Some people called him a fraud and accused him of trying to profit off his followers. Others mocked believers, calling them “Mormonites.” Wary of trouble, Emma and the others returned to the stream early the next day and repaired the dam. Once the water was deep enough, Oliver waded into the middle of the pool and baptized Emma, Joseph and Polly Knight, and ten others.
>
> During the baptisms, some men stood along the bank, a short distance back, and heckled the believers. Emma and the others tried to ignore them, but when the group headed back to the Knight farm, the men followed, shouting threats at the prophet along the way. At the Knights’ house, Joseph and Oliver wanted to confirm the newly baptized women and men, but the group of hecklers outside swelled to a noisy mob of fifty.
>
> Worried they might be attacked, the believers fled to a neighboring house, hoping to finish the confirmations in peace. But before they could perform the ordinances, a constable arrested Joseph and carried him off to jail for causing an uproar in the community by preaching the Book of Mormon.
>
> Joseph spent the night in custody, unsure if the mob would capture him and carry out their threats. Emma, meanwhile, waited anxiously at her sister’s house while she and their Colesville friends prayed for Joseph’s safe release.

Today we consider it a trial if the water in the indoor font is too cold for our liking. Emma was heckled by haters and had to worry that her husband might be killed before she could see him again. All she wanted to do was to get baptized, but she had to do so while enduring constant heckling from people who hated her and the others for their beliefs. Do we ever really consider how hard Satan and the world made Emma's life, and all because she supported her husband, the prophet? If, after more than twenty years of a life of running and hiding from mobs, burying dead children, and eventually her husband, she chose a path of peace for the remainder of her days in mortality, who are we to judge Emma for not going to Utah with the Saints?

With this life in mind, a life of persecution, deep personal loss, poverty, and never being able to feel settled or that she belonged anywhere except where Joseph was, go back and read Doctrine and Covenants 25 again. What Christ asked of Emma was not an easy thing. This revelation is almost like a Patriarchal blessing, except that it doesn't declare her lineage.

> 5 And the office of thy calling shall be for a comfort unto my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness.

I am just guessing, but perhaps Emma figured her work for the Lord was finished when she buried her husband. God didn't tell her any different.

The directive

For this week's lesson verse 10 is our focus.

> 10 And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.

We have already briefly looked at Emma's life with Joseph during the opening of the Restoration. How does this counsel apply to each of us? How it applied to and was achieved in Emma's life really isn't any of our business. We need to be concerned with how we understand this counsel and apply it to ourselves.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf gave a talk entitled "Continue in Patience" in 2010. He describes a study that has to do with this week's lesson. It is about marshmallows.

> In the 1960s, a professor at Stanford University began a modest experiment testing the willpower of four-year-old children. He placed before them a large marshmallow and then told them they could eat it right away or, if they waited for 15 minutes, they could have two marshmallows.
>
> He then left the children alone and watched what happened behind a two-way mirror. Some of the children ate the marshmallow immediately; some could wait only a few minutes before giving in to temptation. Only 30 percent were able to wait.
>
> It was a mildly interesting experiment, and the professor moved on to other areas of research, for, in his own words, “there are only so many things you can do with kids trying not to eat marshmallows.” But as time went on, he kept track of the children and began to notice an interesting correlation: the children who could not wait struggled later in life and had more behavioral problems, while those who waited tended to be more positive and better motivated, have higher grades and incomes, and have healthier relationships.
>
> What started as a simple experiment with children and marshmallows became a landmark study suggesting that the ability to wait—to be patient—was a key character trait that might predict later success in life.

These young children were experiencing what all of us go through in mortality. The world tells us that time is short and that we shouldn't wait for anything, because when life is over it is over, and there is nothing after this life. This places a real sense of urgency to accumulate, to experience, and to "live life to the fullest" today, because it is our only chance to do so. This is the lie we are sold on every front, news, entertainment, education, social customs, etc. This attitude underlies almost everything we encounter on a daily basis. Yet in verse 10 the Lord is telling Emma (us) to "lay aside the things of this world." How do we do that?

What are we being asked to do?

When the Lord tells us to "lay aside the things of this world" he is telling us that what is important to the world isn't really what is important. God has other things we need to focus on that we can't presently see. The problem with this is that we tend to value as most important the things we can see with our eyes. Those things that are right in front of us, that can effect us in some way physically, emotionally, financially, or socially seem to be the most urgent matters in our mind. To this end we wind up chasing financial success, job promotions, social success, or finding new ways to have more fun than anyone ever thought possible through harrowing adventures like bungy jumping or skydiving, etc. We learn to live in the moment, instead of living today for our life in the eternities.

In order to live for the eternities we must remember today that this life is only a temporary proving ground, a testing ground to see if we can sit patiently in front of our marshmallow, because we have been promised to have a much richer reward if we are willing to wait for it. In both cases we must rely on the promise of the reward, for there is no physical evidence that can guaranty the promised reward. This is where our testimony and our faith comes into the equation.

The gospel does provide immediate rewards. We are promised peace that surpasses mortal understanding, spiritual insights that cannot be had from any other source than from the Holy Ghost. We are promised happiness and serenity in a world of contention and turmoil. But all these wonderful blessings are still only a taste, if you will, like letting the child take a single lick of the marshmallow to whet their appetite for the final blessing. The blessings of the gospel aren't meant to be realized in full in this life, but in the next.

The gospel is designed to create within us a desire for eternal advancement, eternal increase, and eternal enjoyment of the lifestyle of the gods. The gospel promises that those who are able to exercise patience and diligence in keeping the commandments today will have their loved ones around them to enjoy their celestial life together forever. And this is just a superficial taste of the real blessings God has in store for those who prove to be faithful.

Probably the hardest thing any of us can do is to "lay aside the things of this world," for we have been inundated with them from birth. Many of the things of this world are so much a part of us that we don't even realize we have embraced them. They are so "natural" to us that they are part of our reflexive thinking, like flinching when something comes flying into your field of vision. Some of the things of this world must be revealed to us in order for us to find a way to leave them behind.

The Lord is understating the reality of the next life when He only refers to it as having "things of a better." Better meaning better life.

Spiritual treasures

In October of 2019 President Russell M. Nelson gave a talk entitled "Spiritual Treasures" in the women's session of Conference. He spoke specifically about the women of the church, but almost every point made can be equally applied to the men of the church, for the principles he addressed are universal. Here are some of his opening remarks.

> … you have the right to draw liberally upon the Savior’s power to help your family and others you love.
>
> Now, you might be saying to yourself, “This sounds wonderful, but how do I do it? How do I draw the Savior’s power into my life?”
>
> You won’t find this process spelled out in any manual. The Holy Ghost will be your personal tutor as you seek to understand what the Lord would have you know and do. This process is neither quick nor easy, but it *is* spiritually invigorating. What could possibly be more exciting than to labor with the Spirit to understand God’s power—priesthood power?
>
> What I *can* tell you is that accessing the power of God in your life requires the same things that the Lord instructed Emma and each of you to do.

President Nelson then sends each of us back to Doctrine and Covenants 25. He gives us the following counsel.

> Part of this endeavor will require you to put aside many things of this world. Sometimes we speak almost casually about walking away from the world with its contention, pervasive temptations, and false philosophies. But *truly* doing so requires you to examine your life meticulously and regularly. As you do so, the Holy Ghost will prompt you about what is no longer needful, what is no longer worthy of your time and energy.
>
> As you shift your focus away from worldly distractions, some things that seem important to you now will recede in priority. You will need to say no to some things, even though they may seem harmless. As you embark upon and continue this lifelong process of consecrating your life to the Lord, the changes in your perspective, feelings, and spiritual strength will amaze you!

We need to remember that in order for the Holy Ghost to teach us as President Nelson is talking about, we need to be deliberately seeking His influence in our life. Following the Spirit and seeking the Lord's counsel on how we are living our life must become a matter of constant prayer and daily practice. This must be deliberate discipleship, not casual religion. This kind of knowledge as to what we need to discard from our life and what we need to include comes at a price. Until we are willing to pay that price gladly we won't be given that knowledge. God isn't being stingy with the knowledge. He really wants us to have it, but it is we who must seek it and be willing to pay the price for having it. That is the cost of the exalted life, the holy life.

Be sure to read President Nelson's warning about what will happen to us as we seek to gain spiritual power that enables us to more fully come unto Christ and leave the teachings of the world behind. This is very important that we understand that there will be pushback seen by Satan and the world for our efforts. Go read the talk!

Final thoughts

Emma Smith fulfilled her God-given role to support Joseph Smith in his earthly calling. She suffered with him and encouraged him and kept God's commandments. She was truly an elect lady. Her life was not easy. It was filled with trials and heartache, the likes of which very few of us will ever be able to comprehend. She lived almost daily with the threats of hatred and persecutions, having to rely on the generosity of others for their

daily support. She never had her own home for more than a little while at a time before she was driven out again and again.

We all have trials unique to our own life. None of us are immune from hardships. All of us are under the same obligation from God to look at our life and try to see how our situations can teach us to live our life using godly virtues instead of reacting in the ways of the world. It is our universal responsibility as members of Christ's kingdom to seek the Spirit and put off those things of the natural man and seek to incorporate into our life the patterns of godliness that will bring us the peace that only God can give. God is anxious to bless us in this endeavor. This is His work and His glory. He wants to bless us in every way possible. But it is we who must seek for those blessings, and we who must be willing to live in such a way as to be worthy of them.

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