

SEARCH THESE COMMANDMENTS



# Search These Commandments

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Melchizedek Priesthood  
Personal Study Guide

Published by  
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# Contents

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| Message from the First Presidency .....                                 | v    |
| Suggested Doctrine and Covenants Reading Schedule .....                 | vi   |
| Personal Study Schedule 1985 .....                                      | vii  |
| How To Use This Study Guide .....                                       | ix   |
| To the Quorum Leader .....  | x    |
| Planning Additional Melchizedek Priesthood Quorum<br>Lessons .....      | xii  |
| 1. Search These Commandments .....                                      | 1    |
| 2. Welfare Services Workshop: Caring for<br>Self and Family .....       | 9    |
| 3. Welfare Services Workshop: Caring for the<br>Poor and Needy .....    | 18   |
| 4. Welfare Services Workshop: Helping Those<br>with Special Needs ..... | 25   |
| 5. Let Every Man Learn His Duty .....                                   | 32   |
| 6. The Light of Christ .....  | 39   |
| 7. Male and Female Created He Them .....                                | 46   |
| 8. Why You Are Free to Choose .....                                     | 53   |
| 9. Receive the Servants of the Lord Sent to You .....                   | 60   |
| 10. Building the Kingdom of God .....                                   | 69   |
| 11. The Way to Perfection .....   | 77   |
| 12. Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery .....                                | 85   |
| 13. The Gospel of Love in Action .....                                  | 95   |
| 14. Multiply and Fill the Earth .....                                   | 102  |
| 15. Prepare Yourself to Teach the Gospel with Power .....               | 109  |
| 16. Being Faithful in Times of Adversity .....                          | 115  |
| 17. Obedience Is the First Law of Heaven .....                          | 122  |
| 18. Prophets Testified of Joseph Smith's Mission .....                  | 130  |
| 19. Discipline Your Children in the Home .....                          | 136  |
| 20. Be Subject to the Powers That Be .....                              | 144  |
| 21. "Man May Become like God" .....                                     | 151  |
| 22. The Quorum Is a Vehicle for Priesthood Service .....                | 159  |
| 23. Unity in Your Family .....  | 167  |
| 24. "Go Ye and Do the Works of Abraham" .....                           | 173  |
| 25. "All Things Shall Be Done by Common Consent" .....                  | 180  |

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|--|-----|
| 26. Work for the Dead .....  | 187 |
| 27. "Speak, Lord, For Thy Servant Heareth" .....   | 194 |
| 28. Justification and Sanctification .....   | 202 |
| 29. "Through the Channels Which I Have Appointed" .....                                    | 207 |
| 30. Love All of God's Children .....   | 214 |
| 31. Priesthood Correlation .....   | 222 |
| 32. Because of the Righteous Few .....   | 230 |
| 33. The Fall of Man .....  | 237 |
| 34. Prepare Your Children for Celestial Marriage .....                                     | 245 |
| 35. Spiritual Gifts: Tools of the Priesthood .....   | 252 |
| 36. Serve God by Serving Your Fellow Beings .....  | 257 |
| 37. Strengthen the Bonds of Your Family .....  | 264 |
| 38. General Conference Insert 1 "It Is the Same" .....                                     | 272 |
| 39. General Conference Insert 2 "Give Heed<br>unto All His Words" .....                    | 275 |
| Appendix 1: Performing Priesthood<br>Blessings and Ordinances .....                        | 279 |
| Appendix 2: Supplemental Readings .....  | 285 |
| "Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums,"<br>by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley ..... | 285 |
| "Strengthening the Father in the Home,"<br>by President Ezra Taft Benson .....             | 289 |
| "The Quorum," by Elder Boyd K. Packer .....  | 298 |
| Books Cited .....  | 306 |
| Index to Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guides,<br>1982-85 .....                    | 309 |

**Comments and Suggestions**

Your comments and suggestions about this manual are appreciated. Please submit them to—

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 47 East South Temple Street  
 Salt Lake City, Utah 84150  
 USA

Identify yourself by name, address, ward, and stake. Then identify the name of the manual, how you used it, your feelings regarding its strengths and weaknesses, and any recommended improvements.

# Message from the First Presidency

Beloved Brethren:

Speaking of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord told a special conference of elders in the early days of the Church that they should "search these commandments, for they are true and faithful" (D&C 1:37).

It is appropriate that this divine counsel should be followed by you who are holders of the priesthood in our day. This year you will have the opportunity of *searching* the Doctrine and Covenants in an effort to increase your faith, spirituality, and understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The word *search* indicates that your study of the scriptures should be more than a shallow reading of words. Your search should be an in-depth probe, a spiritual feast in which you come to know not only the gospel but also Him whose name it bears and the Father who sent Him to redeem us.

Along with your study of the scriptures, we hope that you will take the time to read and ponder the contents of this personal study guide. In it you will find teachings from the scriptures and the General Authorities that can help you to become better husbands, fathers, and bearers of the holy priesthood.

May you live to be worthy of the priesthood you bear and heed the Lord's command to "search these commandments."

Faithfully your brethren,  
 The First Presidency

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# “Man May Become like God”

Lesson 21

D&C 132:20

## Personal Study

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Strive to obey the gospel and become like God the Father.

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“But what is the purpose of it all?” Frank blurted out to his quorum president as they walked home together after an interview. “Why do we do all the things we are supposed to do? Yes, I know the Church is true and that we will be judged in eternity for how well we do here. But the requirements here are so precise, and the promises about future rewards are so vague. What are we seeking, really?”

Have you ever felt like Frank? Is it easy for us to sometimes forget the actual objectives that we have in the Church? Do we ever get so busy attending meetings, paying tithing, holding home evenings, and trying to do all the rest that God has required that we forget what our ultimate destiny can be if we remain faithful?

President Lorenzo Snow was one who sought earnestly to learn and did come to know the ultimate eternal opportunity which can be ours through our devotion and labor in the gospel plan. Study these passages and statements carefully, and ponder upon the significance of their meaning for you.

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### 1 God Was Once a Man As We Are Now

- When he was a young man, Lorenzo Snow was promised by the Lord through the Patriarch to the Church that through obedience to the gospel he could become as great as God, “and you cannot wish to be greater” (Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 9–10).
- President Lorenzo Snow recorded this experience that occurred when he was still a young elder: “The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noon-day, with wonder and

astonishment, the pathway of God and man." Elder Snow expressed this new found understanding in these words: "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be." Later the Prophet Joseph Smith assured him: "Brother Snow, that is true gospel doctrine, and it is a revelation from God to you" (quoted by LeRoi C. Snow, in "Devotion to Divine Inspiration," *Improvement Era*, June 1919, pp. 651-56).

■ The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

*" . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth"* (*Teachings*, pp. 345-46; italics in original).

■ President Brigham Young elaborated on this concept: "It must be that God knows something about temporal things, and has had a body and been on an earth; were it not so He would not know how to judge men righteously, according to the temptations and sins they have had to contend with" (as cited by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, p. 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1969, p. 104).

■ 3 Nephi 12:48. What are some of the meanings implied in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

Could the words "even as" have reference to the way as well as the accomplishment? Does Jesus ask that we do anything that he was not willing to do himself?

---

## 2 Our Father Advanced and Progressed Until He Became God

■ President Joseph Fielding Smith said: "*Our Father in heaven, according to the Prophet, had a Father, and since there has been a condition of this kind through all eternity, each Father had a Father*" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:47).

■ President Joseph F. Smith taught: "I know that God is a being with body, parts and passions. . . . Man was born of woman; Christ, the Savior, was born of woman; and God, the Father was born of woman" (*Church News*, 19 Sept. 1936, p. 2).

■ President Wilford Woodruff explained: "[God] has had his endowments a great many years ago. He has ascended to his

thrones, principalities and powers in the eternities. We are his children. . . . We are here to fill a probation and receive an education" (*Deseret News Weekly*, 28 Sept. 1881, p. 546).

■ How does it help us to know that the basic elements of God's life in a mortal world were the same as ours? President Brigham Young explained:

"He is our Father—the Father of our spirits—and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are. . . .

". . . There never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds and when men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through. . . .

"It appears ridiculous to the world, under their darkened and erroneous traditions, that God has once been a finite being" (*Deseret News*, 16 Nov. 1859, p. 290).

■ Philippians 2:5–12. What does this passage say that Jesus did?

Why did he feel justified in doing it? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Jesus show us the way and provide us the power, through our obedience, to do just as he has done (compare John 15:1–8)? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Through Obedience to the Gospel, Man May Become like God

■ Elder S. Dilworth Young attributed in verse the following words to our Father in Heaven as He revealed His plan to us in our premortal home:

"My children all: You see in me  
Exalted man, of flesh and bone  
And spirit pure. One time, long  
Long ago, I was as you, a spirit son  
Of an exalted Father. [see HC 6:302–17]  
You may become as now I have become  
But you must do as I have done."  
(In "The Eternal Conflict," *1978 Devotional Speeches of the Year*  
[Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1979], p. 83.)



■ What does this mean for you? \_\_\_\_\_

■ John 8:29; 3 Nephi 27:13. What example has Christ given us regarding following the ways of the Father? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are we not justified in saying that the objectives of the gospel are all right for God and Christ but too high for us? \_\_\_\_\_

■ President Joseph F. Smith said: "We are precisely in the same condition and under the same circumstances that God our heavenly Father was when he was passing through this, or a similar ordeal" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 64).

■ Psalm 82:6. What does this passage mean for us? \_\_\_\_\_

Did we receive anything from our Father that could help us become like him? \_\_\_\_\_

What can a child grow up to be? \_\_\_\_\_

What can a son of God grow up to be? \_\_\_\_\_

President Lorenzo Snow said: "We are the offspring of God, begotten by Him in the spirit world, where we partook of His nature as children here partake of the likeness of their parents. Our trials and sufferings give us experience, and establish within us principles of godliness" (*Deseret News*, 17 Feb. 1886, p. 66).

■ 3 Nephi 28:10. What is Jesus expressing to these men? \_\_\_\_\_

What does eternity hold in store for them? \_\_\_\_\_

Why could Jesus say to anyone what he has said to these men? \_\_\_\_\_

■ Revelation 3:21. What does it mean to overcome? \_\_\_\_\_

What great blessing is promised to those who do? \_\_\_\_\_

What can be the destiny of a man if he will strive with all his heart to do the best he can? \_\_\_\_\_

■ What evidence do we have that God does not jealously guard his position and power, but rather seeks to see that his children rise up to the perfection of glory, knowledge, and power that he has obtained (see Moses 1:39)? \_\_\_\_\_

■ The Prophet Joseph Smith summarized this doctrine by declaring: "Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you" (*Teachings*, pp. 346-47).

### **It Can Make a Difference!**

It is not sufficient to be born a child of God. One must actively cultivate the characteristics of God in his own life in order to really know him and become like him. Consider this counsel by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley: "That man who knows that he is a child of God, created in the image of a divine Father and gifted with a potential for the exercise of great and god-like virtues, will discipline himself against the sordid, lascivious elements to which all are exposed" (in conference Report, Oct. 1975, p. 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 39).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell pointed out that "it is much easier to believe in eternal progression than to practice daily improvement" (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, p. 71). How much easier is it to dream of becoming like God than to do the specific things we need to do today to be better members of the Church, better husbands and fathers, better citizens, and better Christians? What can you do to improve today? Are you striving daily to reach your potential?

## Quorum Training Suggestions

As the presiding officers of your quorum or group, you have regular contact with those home teachers who visit the homes of every quorum member. Are any members of your quorum like Frank, busy trying to do what is required, but not always remembering why? Your purpose in this quorum training is to help your quorum members understand and remember the objective for which we are striving. You probably have quorum members who understand that man may become like God, but do you have brethren who do not feel that it is possible for them? Use these other resources to encourage and comfort and reassure your quorum members that they can, if only they will. Encourage quorum members to study the self-study material carefully so that they will be prepared to discuss how this knowledge may help them purify their lives.

- To encourage individual study, allow the brethren to share their thoughts from their individual study by asking such questions as:

What are the implications of the statement that God was once as we are now?

Has there ever been a time when men were not passing through what we are now passing through? Why?

- Display a picture of Lorenzo Snow (OQ453).
- Challenge quorum members to ponder these questions: Why do we so frequently forget the objects that we have in the gospel? What problems could we avoid if we would always remember the ultimate purposes of the gospel? What are some things we could do to keep before us the purpose of the plan of salvation?
- Select a member of the quorum presidency to lead the quorum in a discussion of these passages. Analyze each of them and discuss what they contribute to our understanding of the doctrine that man may become like God.

Revelation 3:21

Philippians 2:5-12

D&C 130:18-21

D&C 50:24

D&C 93:11–20, 27–28

■ Discuss the implications of the following statement by President Harold B. Lee: "I . . . charge you to say again and again to yourselves, as the Primary organization has taught the children to sing 'I am a [son or daughter] of God' and by so doing begin today to live closer to those ideals which will make your life happier and more fruitful because of an awakened realization of who you are" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1973, p. 6).

■ Present and analyze this poem written by President Lorenzo Snow.

"Has thou not been unwisely bold,  
 Man's destiny to thus unfold?  
 To raise, promote such high desire,  
 Such vast ambition thus inspire?  
 "Still, 'tis no phantom that we trace  
 Man's ultimatum in life's race;  
 This royal path has long been trod  
 By righteous men, each now a God:  
 "As Abra'm, Isaac, Jacob, too,  
 First babes, then men—to gods they grew.  
 As man now is, our God once was;  
 As now God is, so man may be,—  
 Which doth unfold man's destiny.

.....  
 "The boy, like to his father grown,  
 Has but attained unto his own;  
 To grow to sire from state of son,  
 Is not 'gainst Nature's course to run.  
 "A son of God, like God to be,  
 Would not be robbing Deity;  
 And he who has this hope within,  
 Will purify himself from sin. . . ."  
 (*Improvement Era*, June 1919, pp. 660–61.)

■ Present this statement as a summary of President Snow's teaching on the possible destiny of man: "It is our duty to try to be perfect, and it is our duty to improve each day, and look upon our course last week and do things better this week; do things better today than we did them yesterday, and go on and on from one degree of righteousness to another" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, p. 13).

■ Be careful in presenting this material that you don't bring God down to man's level. Our objective is to perfect ourselves and *raise* our level to his exalted place.