

Provo YSA Devotional with Elder M. Russell Ballard and Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Saturday, October 24, 2015.

The devotional was videotaped and found on LDS.org starting either late Tuesday, October 26 or Wednesday, October 27. Within 24 hours the talk was pulled from the site. Original link: <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/watch/provo-ysa-devotional/2015/10?lang%3Deng> Archive.org link created within 24 hours:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20151027011449/https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/watch/provo-ysa-devotional/2015/10?lang%3Deng>

Someone saved the audio, which is found here.

A transcription of that audio was made by a redditor, /u/Sunston3R. Slight modifications have been made by the MT staff. If you find any transcription errors, please notify us.

Brothers and sisters, we've been well taught, haven't we? I wish we could see all of you that are in the meeting and in the other buildings. It's remarkable that we can expand from this beautiful chapel that we're in, and filled to capacity, and I just wanted to say hello to all that are on the broadcast, wherever you might be. Let you know how much we love you, what an honor it is for us to be here.

As I've been listening to the beautiful counsel of those who have talked to you before, flashed into my mind, which often happens—thankfully the lord blesses us once in a while to have a little revelation when we need it—of an experience that I had years ago as a young man. I was in business and we were coming back from California in a small four seat single engine airplane. We had a very experienced pilot, the pilot that was flying the plane was known by the tower in Salt Lake just by his voice, because he had flown actually many, many missions: firefighting, dropping water on fires, and so forth. So he was well acquainted with all of the folks in the tower. And as we approached Salt Lake, it was very, very cloudy, and obviously it looked like we might not get in. And John, who was the pilot, called in and the tower said, “We're closing the airport. But if you want to come in, we will guide you down.” With which John turned to the three passengers, myself being one of them—I was sitting in the backseat with Brother Swangeman(?). He wanted to go back. He didn't want to take any chances, and he turned white—so the decision came between the other three: John, myself, and a

fellow by the name of Nate Wade, and we decided we'd go in. And so, I remember brother Swangeman's face. He started to get as white as your shirt is as we were moving along.

Brothers, here's the lesson I learned when John said to Nate, who was in the front seat, and Mark and I were in the back seat, John said to him, "Nate, tell me when you see the white line." Then I started to think, maybe this was a little more serious... "Tell me when you see the white line." And this was an airplane, it didn't have all the avionics in it. You knew what the elevation was, and you knew the level of the plane, but you didn't have all of the things that you have in an airliner. And so we didn't hear what John was saying. He had his headphones in his ears, and the tower was then telling him when to come down, when to move to the right, when to move to the left, I supposed. As we were getting more white-knuckled by the moment wondering where we were, because we couldn't see the ground, all we knew was that we had a pilot that was focused on what instruments he had and was following a voice that was coming from the tower of the Salt Lake City airport. And then, Nate said, "We're on the white line," and when we looked out the window, that airplane was centered on the white line, and we landed safely. And I thought to myself, "HmMMM, if an air traffic controller with what tools we had on the earth could find a little airplane that only has one engine, pattering along in a mud sky, could lead us down and land directly on the white line, what must the Holy Ghost be able to do?"

I don't know what kind of great computer there is in the sky, that's got all us nailed to it somehow, and yet, we know, if we are striving to keep the gospel and live the best we can, there are moments when you absolutely know what to do, and you know what not to do, and you know when you've done something you hadn't ought to have done. Instantly. If you're honest. It's called conscience. It's called the Spirit of Christ. Every living soul that has ever been born has the Spirit of Christ as part of their birthright, and that becomes a great gift when we start getting involved in spiritual guidance and spiritual direction. And the Holy Ghost has the power, if we are willing to listen, to guide us directly onto the white line, and he can keep us not falling over to the left, and the left side is where you don't want to go. The Lord's made it clear that on the left hand are the goats. You don't want to be a goat. Goats do a lot of dumb things. They climb up in mountains and they don't follow instruction. ~~They're~~ That's not what you want to be. But you want to be more like the sheep. He said the sheep will be on the right hand. And he told us that the sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd, and that He is the Good Shepherd, and so we want to stay on the right side of the white line. We

don't want to slip over onto the left side, where, frankly, the devil has the capacity to do a lot of damage to any one of us if we allow ourselves to slip over on the wrong side of the white line.

Umm...

Here's a question for you. What do you do, as a faithful Latter-day Saint, if you happen to have a roommate who announces to you one day that he or she is losing their faith? That he or she is questioning, for some reason, one of the doctrines of the church, or questioning some of the teachings of the church? How do you handle that? I hope you just don't just wring your hands and worry about it, but you take that issue on and try to help whoever is drifting off of the white line to the left, to make the course correction through your voice and the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God to move back and be focused on the direction that will lead them in a safe landing, safe landing back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

You, I think, have a great responsibility to each other in your apartments. I know some of you are living, I have grandchildren going to BYU forever, it seems like. We don't have as many as the Ashtons, but we do have a lot. We have 43 grandchildren, and now 72 great-grandchildren, they come like popcorn, so you can't keep track of that. We have just been told, we have three more coming, so. That's wonderful, it's wonderful and it's part of the great effort, and the great Plan of Salvation, this process of trying to help one another, but you who are roommates, and I don't know whether you've got two roommates or you've got four roommates, but shore each other up. Talk with each other, don't allow any one of your friends, or your roommate, or your boyfriend or your girlfriend or anyone else, drift over onto the left side, where the devil and his minions are very active in trying to destroy faith and trying to cause young people (and older people) to abandon what they know to be true. We have to be shepherds one to another. We have to be undershepherds to the grand and Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we have to be sure that we watch each other along the way.

That's one of the charges I would give to you tonight. I don't ever want to be guilty of taking the time, as many as we've got assembled tonight, without having you leave at least from my, with my counsel would be of something I want you to do and what the Lord wants you to do. I want you to be very, very honest and open and candid in your discussions within your own little family within your apartment while you are going to the Brigham Young University. And if there's something going on in any one of your lives that isn't what it ought to be, let's get

on top of it, and let's get from the left back to the white line, and hopefully over onto the right, where we can be led by the Good Shepherd.

That brings me to this issue. This is an issue that you've heard an awful lot about. You've heard the brethren almost in every General Conference refer to this. We don't even like to talk about it, we don't even like to think that this kind of thing is going on in the world. But we would be less than fulfilling our duty if we didn't talk to you frankly about those things we see that are very, very dangerous to your spiritual capacity to stay on the white line. One of those things is pornography.

We've talked to your stake presidents enough to know, and your bishops enough to know, that some of you are allowing yourselves to drift over onto the left side, you've drifted a little off the white line. So, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, tonight I ask anyone, young man or young woman, if you've allowed that to happen, if you're tampering in any way with pornography, to have the courage—and it takes courage, it takes a lot of courage—to say to yourself, “Tonight I am moving back onto the white line. I will not go there anymore.” Why? Because you cannot have the spiritual insight, you cannot hear the voice of the Holy Ghost and the power of God to direct your life, if you're not in a position to hear it.

It was wonderful that John had the earphones on and he was hearing the tower and was being given instructions what to do to bring that little plane down safely, so it is with the power of the Holy Ghost in your lives. You do not want to put anything that would be between you and heaven that would affect your ability to stay spiritually secure in this world that we now live in.

Now, why do you think the devil—and this is interesting, you ought to think about this—where do you think the computer came from? Why did somebody invent the computer? I'll tell you why: because the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints needed it. Why did we need it? Because family history was moving and the church was growing and the temples were expanding, and we needed more capacity to do family history. That's why I believe the computer came into existence. That's why God revealed (and you don't have to be a member of the church to have spiritual insight and promptings) the creation of that tool, the computer. And as soon as that surfaces for the purposes of God, what does the devil do on the left side? “Oh,” he said, “you're going to play that game? I'm in it. I'll put on the internet filth. I'll put on ugliness. I'll put on spiritually destructive images. We'll call it pornography. It'll be awful, and anybody that goes there, I'll

capture them.” In fact, Nephi said in the last days, in the 28th chapter, 2 Nephi, in the last days that the devil will have the power to grasp us with these awful chains, and to drag us down to misery. You cannot be on both sides of this issue and have the power of heaven guiding and directing you.

Now some of you may say, “Well, but it's a habit, I can't break it.” Yes you can. You are the captain of your own soul. You really are. Is it easy? No! What does it take? It takes deep, abiding love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes prayer every day in the morning. Prayer every night. Prayer every time there's a temptation to do something that is on the left side. And you call down the power of heaven to give you strength that you don't succumb to those things that destruct spiritual strength and spiritual power.

Now, why do I talk this straight? Because we've talked to your stake presidents, we've talked to your bishops, and thank Heavens you've got enough courage. Those of you that are struggling, and if you haven't, if you are struggling and you haven't had enough courage, courage yet, may I ask you to sit down with your bishop and get on the road to moving from the left to the right on any issue in your life that isn't what it ought to be. So heaven can be your companion and you can have the power and the prompting of the Spirit of God to know what to do and what not to do.

Let me tell you how powerful that is. As a member of the quorum of the 12, you can imagine, we have some interesting assignments. We get the call and told to go places and do things and you fear and tremble the whole way. I remember I was getting along just fine as a member of the presidency of the 70, and the phone rang and I was summoned down to president Hinckley's office. I walked in and he said, “Russ, I want you to go to Egypt, I mean to Ethiopia. We raised this 6 million dollars from this special fast, and I want you to go with the head of the welfare department and go to Ethiopia to determine how we should spend the 6 million dollars.”

Now, why he picked me, I have no idea. I didn't have a love affair with Africa. I've done some work over there, but somehow my name came into the president's mind. So, what did I do? I said, “Yes sir.” I walked out of there and went over and said, “How many shots do I have to have to go to Ethiopia?” About ten shots later, holding on for dear life, I went to the airport and we took off, Glenn Pace and I, for Ethiopia. When we arrived in Addis Ababa, through the process I had learned that we had one, one member of the church, known member of the church, in all Ethiopia, and that he was in Addis Ababa, and that he worked for Boeing Aircraft

Company. And I had him on my mind all the way from Salt Lake City to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. When we landed, I said, "Glenn, we have to find our brother. I don't know how we're going to do it, but we have to find him." So we sought on and we found him. And Sunday morning we met with him and went to his little apartment and we had a meeting and I said "How long has it been since you had the sacrament?" And he said "It's been months." "Do you have any bread?" He said "No, I haven't but I have some crackers." He let us then have a little sacrament meeting, the three of us in Addis Ababa.

I knelt down and said the sacrament prayer over the bread and we passed it to each other, little pieces of cracker. And then Glenn blessed the water and our friend now, the only member of the church we knew of in that whole country in those days, tears were streaming down his cheeks as he partook of the sacrament, being served to him by two general authorities of the church. Then, the Heavens took over. And I was a presiding authority because I was member of the presidency of the 70. Glenn at that time was not a general authority, he was the welfare, head of the Welfare Department for the church. I said "Brethren, while we're together, let's have a testimony meeting. Let's bear our testimonies." And so we did. We heard his testimony, then Glenn bore his, and then I bore mine. And a remarkable thing happened. And I think it's because I was in a position where the Holy Ghost could tell me what I should do. I was striving to be on the right side so that Heaven could speak to me. And then I said "I would like to close my testimony with a prayer." And I said under the influence of the power of the Holy Ghost, "Heavenly father, thou knowest now that we are in Ethiopia, this country is burning up in a great drought. There has been no rain in this country for many months. Thou children are suffering. So since we are here, Holy Father, and we bear the holy priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of this priesthood, Heavenly Father, let it rain, bring rain to the people of Ethiopia while we're here. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen."

That was in the morning. We went back to our hotel, because where we were headed was the feeding stations, up in Mek'ele, an experience that changed my mind. I've never seen such suffering, nor do I expect to see suffering any more severe in my lifetime than I saw when I was there. We had to hitchhike our way on air force planes that were flying in and out, taking supplies. We flew up with the RAF, and we got out with the Swedish air force. But as we were waiting Sunday afternoon to get confirmed that we could get on board, with the RAF, which was a British air force, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon we heard a clash in

the Heavens. And the rain started pouring down on Addis Ababa, and my beloved brothers and sisters, it rained everyday while we were there.

When Glenn knocked on my door and came into my room as we stood at the window and saw the people of Ethiopia running out to capture in jars and cups, in any way they could, water that was falling from the Heavens as a result of a priesthood blessing that came totally as a revealed promise that should be given and request and should be asked for by our Heavenly Father in Heaven throughout one of his general authorities. I'll never forget that. I can see it thought it was yesterday. Especially people who were gathering water as it was coming off of the roofs of the houses and the buildings.

Now, that's the way the power of God works. This is the church of Jesus Christ that we belong to. The Holy Ghost is the power by which you will know what to do and what not to do. It's also the power by which every one of us in every building you're in today or wherever you are as you listen to this, to know that you are deeply loved, you're deeply loved by your Father in Heaven. You're deeply loved by the Lord Jesus Christ. You're deeply loved by the Brethren of the General Authorities of the Church. You are the sons and daughters of God. He loves you. He will teach you. He will send to you the other comforter which is the Holy Ghost, which will come as we strive to keep ourselves on the white line, or even better, on the right hand of the white line.

So may I ask you then tonight, and if it's not convenient tonight, before the end of tomorrow night, would you find a little time when you can be alone, sit with your scriptures maybe in your lap, maybe read a little of them, and have an interview with yourself. "How do I do that, Elder Ballard?" Well, do it the way I do it quite often: In the quiet moments, try to be still and know that I am God and in those moments talk to your Heavenly father about your life. "Father, I've got this problem. I need this help. Guide me, lift me, and inspire me," whatever it is that comes into your mind. Will you do that? Will you do that from time to time? That's like listening to the tower, getting instructions from above, to keep you in the white line of life. And there you will find the courage to whatever life's circumstances are, whatever your challenges may be, and all of us have them, everyone in this room has had struggles. I'm not exempt. We learn here a little and there a little, as already we've been taught. And so, what do we do? We stay optimistic, we stay upbeat, we stay on the positive side, we see life in its beauty, we don't allow ourselves to see life in the dark side. We just make the resolve

we're not going to be over there. We're going to be on the white line or on the right.

Why is that so important? Well, the Lord has something to say about that, let's see what he said.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

May God bless you to be sheep. And to strive to be tuned into the voice of the Good Shepherd, which will guide you and lift you and bless your lives, give you the strength you need, help you make right decisions.

And, you know, Every time we look at you we, I, know you're just waiting for me to talk about marriage, aren't you? I will not want to disappoint you.

I just simply say to you brethren, wake up! Open your eyes and look around a little, and you beautiful girls, don't wander around looking like men. Put on a little lipstick now and then and look a little charming. It's that simple. I don't know why we make this whole process so hard. And realize that life is a lot easier to stay on the white line and on the right side when you have a companion than it is when you don't have one.

I recognize that there might be some of you who will never find a companion, for one reason or another that might be, that may happen. But don't you ever forget regardless of who you are or where you are that you have a loving Heavenly Father, and we have a mother there, and they watch over you and they love you, and you never, never are you alone. But I think that we need to be thinking more, and I specially speak to the young men of the church, we realize that for us to fulfil our greatest potential in life independent of the Celestial Kingdom, but today, tomorrow, and the rest of our lives, we deal with life much better when we have a companion than if we don't.

And if any of you young men are struggling with any kind of an addiction, then take hold of it tonight, get over it and move forward so these young women, when you come to know them and the sparks start flying, they're not going to be

disappointed that you got something that you're dragging along. And that would be true for you young women. Don't look for perfection. None of you are perfect. And nobody will be perfect, even the Ashtons, as good as they are, they're still trying to perfect each other. We had to lock them into a temple to get it done. So why should you not be thinking that life is a process of becoming perfect? Life is a process of overcoming those things that are in front of us and trying to be a little better every day than we were the day before. And God will bless you as you strive to keep his commandments.

Now, I want you to know that this is the church of Jesus Christ, he presides over it, he has the power to micromanage those things that need to be done in our lives when we trust fully and completely and totally in him.

I conclude with a few words from one of the great heroes of all scriptures of all of the prophets, in my judgment, that's Moronic. Listen to these words.

And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.

Last words recorded by the prophet Moroni. God bless you my dear brothers and sisters. We love you. May the peace of the Lord be with you. We only hope and we pray mildly(?) for every good thing to be in our lives. Interview yourselves on

occasion. If you drifted off the white line a little, make the course correction now. That the Holy Ghost may be your companion, that Heaven may speak to you what you need to do and what you might not need to do. Open up the ways of you getting all of the blessings, all the blessings that Heavenly Father has for those who come unto His Beloved Son and trust Him and trust our lives unto His hands, seeking to be perfected and made worthy to stand spotless before Him at that day when He shall judge the world.

I pray to our Heavenly Father to grant you these blessings. Bless you with every righteous desire of your heart. May ye be blessed to have peace in your own hearts and in your own minds, and if there are things that are troubling you and that are tugging you to the wrong side, may Heavenly Father reinforce your faith tonight that you have the courage, the personal integrity and courage to do what you need to do to be able to land safely on the white line of life, back in the presence of the Father and our Mother in the eternal Heavens.

I leave you my testimony that Jesus is the Christ. We're talking tonight about his gospel. It's wonderful to know what we know. We're so blessed. We don't have to wonder why we're here for. We don't have to question anything on the church. Don't get off into that. Just stay in the Book of Mormon. Just stay in the Doctrine and Covenants. Just listen to the prophets. Just listen to the apostles. We won't lead you astray. We cannot lead you astray. That's why there's 15 of us. We're pretty hard on each other to be sure we keep on the white line. The church, right on the white line of life.

We will do that, may God bless you to do your part now and always is my humble prayer in the sacred and beloved name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.