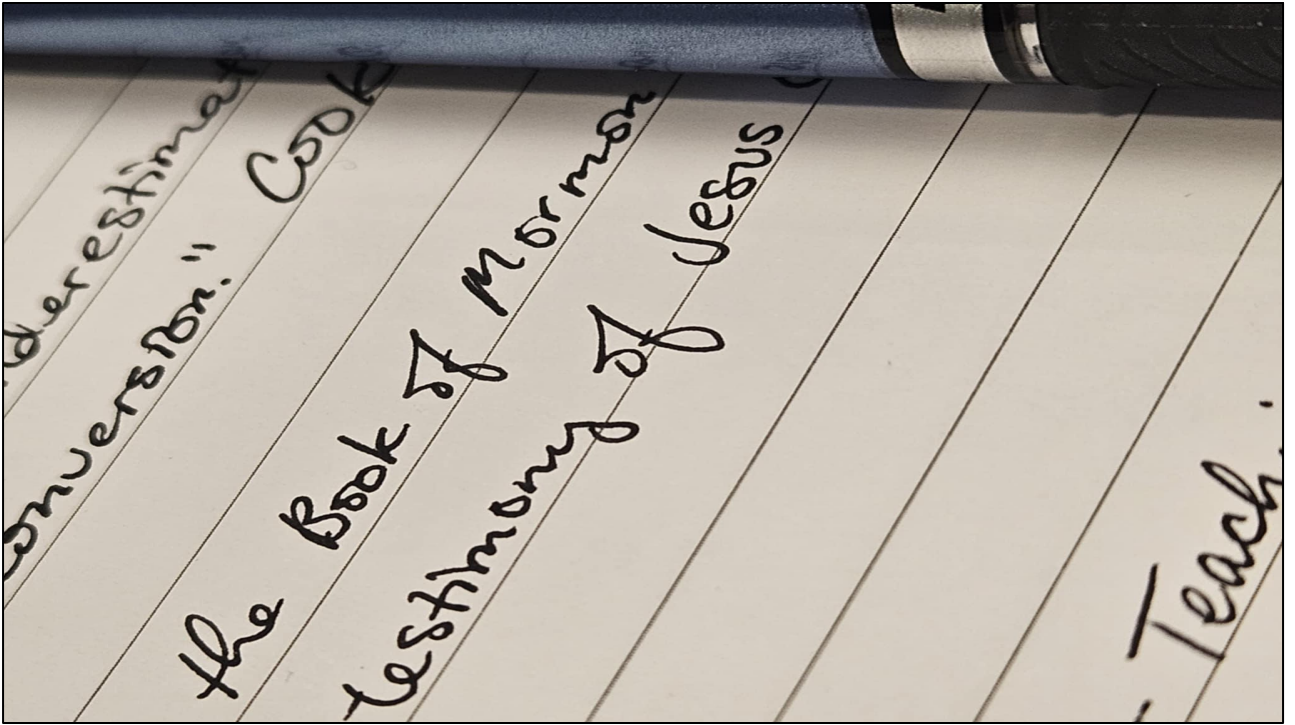




Am I On the Right Path?

Walking the covenant path with confidence

Presentation by Sierra Merrill



I urge you to take notes!

Am I On the Right Path?

What do you most want to know?/
Why did you want to come to this
class?

This will help you to find a focus
and help me to know what would
best help the majority of us to
discuss.

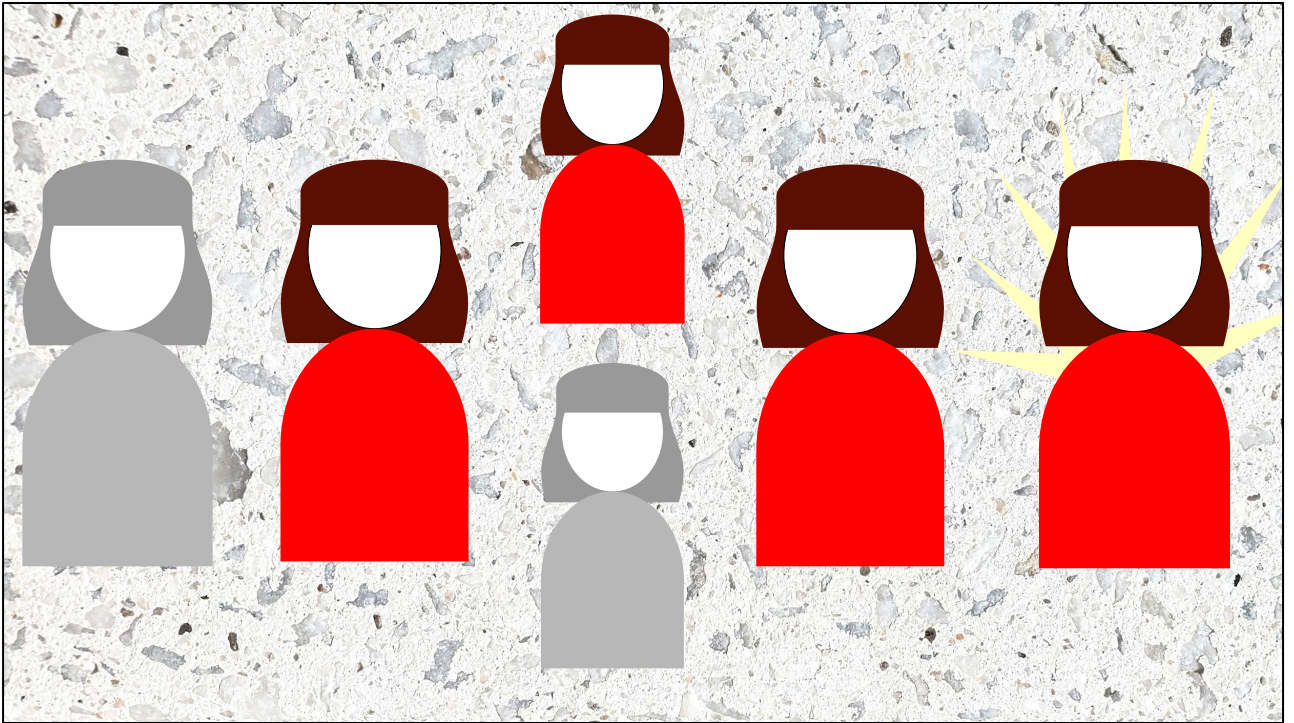
Anyone unable to scan the code,
you may use someone else's
phone to submit or may answer
vocally.



Am I On the Right Path?

1. Who Am I?
2. Who Am I Becoming?
3. Who Do I Want to Become?
4. How Can I Become Who I Want to Be?

At first, I thought of this class in terms of destinations, but that quickly morphed. For me, it's not helpful to think of the Plan of Salvation as a physical journey arriving at a destination, but rather as a personal journey of becoming, so instead of framing this as a literal path, we will consider who we will become.



The Plan of Salvation- we were spirits (greyscale), then we are born into bodies (full color), then the body dies and stays on Earth and the spirit is separated and goes to spirit paradise/prison, then the body and spirit reunite in the resurrection and then are judged and receive their ultimate glory.



Who Am I?

Who Am I?

What makes you who you are?

The first sentence of the Relief Society Declaration is: "We are beloved spirit daughters of God, and our lives have meaning, purpose, and direction."

No matter what else you are or were or will become, you will always be a daughter of a Heavenly Father who loves you.

Are we defined by our relationships with others (mother, sister, daughter, friend, etc.)?
Are we defined by our occupations and hobbies (doctor, technician, athlete, knitter, hiker, etc.)? What makes us who we are?

Ultimately, we are daughters of God. That is our divine identity and it drives our purpose.

How Can I Determine Who I Am?

"Taking inventory of where we are presently can be very helpful. For example, a business that doesn't regularly take inventory of its assets and liabilities usually doesn't thrive. Taking inventory is an opportunity for business owners to objectively determine what is valuable and should be kept and what is detrimental and should be discarded. If business owners fall into the trap of dishonesty and fool themselves about the real nature of the inventory, they won't be able to make accurate decisions about the value of their goods.

Similarly, it is important for us to take an honest look at our lives and character." Step 4: Make a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves., *Healing through the Savior: The Addiction Recovery Program 12-Step Recovery Guide*

Inventory

- How have you inventoried who you are in the past?
- How have inventories helped you in the past?
- What difficulties have you faced or do you expect to face in completing the inventories?
- What can we do to make successful inventories?

Time Inventory

Make a time inventory.

“Take an inventory of how you spend your time and where you devote your energy. That will tell you where your heart is.” Pres.

Russell M. Nelson, *We Can Do Better and Be Better*, April 2019 General Conference

- What do I do every day?
 - How much of my time do I devote to that particular task?



In the self-reliance personal finance class I was in a while ago had us start our budgets by first tracking our incoming and outgoing funds. This is the same principle, just without having to account for incoming because everyone has the same number of hours. In the probably familiar jar example of time management (if you put sand first, rocks don't fit, if you put rocks first, the sand fits), we are counting the rocks and the sand.

Keep In Mind

No matter what, at the end of your inventories, you are a beloved daughter of God.

“On the first page of [the] *Young Women Personal Progress* book, you will find these words: ‘You are a beloved daughter of Heavenly Father, prepared to come to the earth at this particular time for a sacred and glorious purpose.’

Sisters, those words are true! They are not made up in a fairy tale! Isn’t it remarkable to know that our eternal Heavenly Father knows you, hears you, watches over you, and loves you with an infinite love? In fact, His love for you is so great that He has granted you this earthly life as a precious gift of ‘once upon a time,’ complete with your own true story of adventure, trial, and opportunities for greatness, nobility, courage, and love. And, most glorious of all, He offers you a gift beyond price and comprehension. Heavenly Father offers to you the greatest gift of all—eternal life—and the opportunity and infinite blessing of your own ‘happily ever after.’” Elder Uchtdorf, *Your Happily Ever After*, Apr. 2010 General Conference

Why is it so important to keep in mind that we are daughters of God? Sometimes it's easy to be weighed down by everything we want to change about ourselves or think that we can't do it, but knowing that we have God's love unconditionally and the potential to become like our Father does wonders to ground us when and if we have doubts or struggles.



Who Am I Becoming?

WHAT COULD CLONING EXTINCT ANIMALS LEAD TO? WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF A SOCIETY WAS ESTABLISHED AND RAN BASED OFF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMANISM? HOW COULD YOU TELL IF ARTIFICIAL LIFE DEVELOPED SENTIENCE AND WHAT WOULD IT DO IF IT BECAME SENTIENT? WHAT IF TIME DIDN'T RUN THE WAY IT DOES FOR US? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE MOON BLEW UP?

WHO MIGHT I BECOME IF I CONTINUE DOING EXACTLY WHAT I DO RIGHT NOW? AT THE RATE I DO IT RIGHT NOW?

I love speculative fiction in which an intelligent, informed authors work through complicated philosophical problems they could see us facing in the future. Let's extend this same sort of thinking to ourselves- what would happen if

Who Am I Becoming?

"Take the long view. What is the effect on our future of the decisions we make in the present? ... Where will this lead?" Pres. Dallin H. Oaks, *Where Will This Lead?*, Apr. 2019 General Conference



If I spend 30 minutes every day working out, what would that mean for my future?

If I watch 15 minutes of football every day, what would that mean for my future?

If I use generative AI to compose my work emails, what would that mean for my future?

If I'm on TikTok for 2 hours a day, what would that mean for my future?

Every person has different reactions to everything at different points in your life. Tiktok when you are depressed is more dangerous. Generative AI when you are anxious or lonely is more dangerous. Working out can become unhealthy if you are feeling self-loathing or insecurity. And each person has a different tolerance to everything, often changing throughout each person's life.



Who Do I Want to Become?

Find Direction



"When faced with significant choices, how do we decide? Do we succumb to the promise of momentary pleasure? To our urges and passions? To the pressure of our peers?"

Let us not find ourselves as indecisive as is Alice in Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. She is confronted by the Cheshire cat, of whom Alice asks, "Which path shall I follow?"

The cat answers, "That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take."

Unlike Alice, we all know where we want to go, and it does matter which way we go, for by choosing our path, we choose our destination.

Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say no, the courage to say yes. Decisions do determine destiny.

I plead with you to make a determination right here, right now, not to deviate from the path which will lead to our goal: eternal life with our Father in Heaven. Along that straight and true path there are other goals: missionary service, temple marriage, Church activity, scripture study, prayer, temple work. There are countless worthy goals to reach as we travel through life. Needed is our commitment to reach them." Pres. Monson, *The Three Rs of Choice*, Oct. 2010 General Conference

Direction matters- if you want to go somewhere in particular, you need to keep that somewhere in mind. Elder Bednar often encourages us to be agents and not to be acted upon, and the gospel demands action. We will become even more if we are actively engaged in becoming more like Christ and try to be His Hands.

Non-spiritual goals

I've chosen to pursue eternal life. What about where to live, what to do for work, and the other questions that don't directly impact my spiritual goals?

Alma 37:37 says "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."

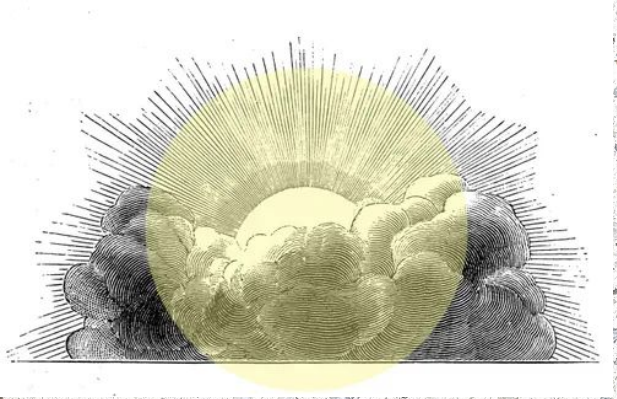
How do we know God's will for things that aren't necessarily spiritual? What does it mean to counsel with the Lord?

- Patriarchal blessings
- Regular prayers
- Regular scripture study
- Active participation in church
- Ask Him questions and expect answers
- Find or make a good spiritual environment
- Act on past revelation
- Try and if it fails, try again or try something else
- Doing nothing is the opposite of becoming
- Embrace failure

"A Framework for Personal Revelation"

1. Scriptures
 - a. Receive revelation reading
 - b. Learn how to receive revelation
2. Purview
 - a. Personal > family > ward > stake > area > church
3. Harmony with the gospel
 - a. Is it contrary to established commandments?
4. Trust prior revelation
 - a. What has God already said to you?

(Pulled from Elder Renlund, *A Framework for Personal Revelation*, Oct. 2022)



This is a fantastic talk that could be a 40 minute discussion of its own, but I took the highlights of how to receive personal revelation.

1. Prayerfully and regularly study the scriptures
2. God doesn't give revelation not in your immediate responsibility.
3. Don't ask God for something contrary to the commandments
 - a. For info about God commanding Nephi to kill Laban, read the talk. Elder Renlund has a great perspective.
 - i. Pretty much, Nephi didn't seek it out
 - b. Joseph Smith: "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, 'Thou shalt not kill'; at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire." Alma P. Burton, *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1977)
4. If God's already answered you, trust the answer. He doesn't often repeat Himself.

Do I Have to Give Up Everything?

"We make many choices between two goods, often involving how we will spend our time. There is nothing bad about playing video games or texting or watching TV or talking on a cell phone. But each of these involves what is called "opportunity cost," meaning that if we spend time doing one thing, we lose the opportunity to do another. I am sure you can see that we need to measure thoughtfully what we are losing by the time we spend on one activity, even if it is perfectly good in itself." Pres. Dallin H. Oaks, *Where Will This Lead?*, Apr. 2019 General Conference

"Just because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives. ... We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best." Pres. Dallin H. Oaks, *Good, Better, Best*, Oct. 2007 General Conference

Some things are good, but the trick is to sort out the better and the best from the good.

In 5th grade, my teacher had a poem in the classroom that said:

"Good, Better, Best:

Never let it rest

Until the good gets better,

And the better, best."

We have to sort out between good things- what do we keep? Often that's personal preference. We aren't robots who only attend church functions. What kind of life do you want? Do you want to hike 14ers? Start walking. Do you want to write poetry? Start! Do you want to be someone who can fix things? Find a project to start, a YouTube video or a class and try!

How Do I Choose?

There are many good things that I do in my life. How do I choose what to keep?



"When your greatest desire is to let God prevail, to be part of Israel, so many decisions become easier. So many issues become nonissues! You know how best to groom yourself. You know what to watch and read, where to spend your time, and with whom to associate. You know what you want to accomplish. You know the kind of person you really want to become." Pres. Nelson, *Let God Prevail*, Oct. 2020 General Conference

Our temples are beautiful buildings that require many hands to build. Think of the architects, builders, electricians, people who make the chandeliers and bouquets. We need many different people with many different skills to build the temple. Similarly, we need many different people with many different skills to build the kingdom of God.

We have a prophetic promise that if we put God first- if our greatest desire is God's will being done, many choices make themselves.

A selection of temple from around the world where new temple presidents and matrons have been called to serve, beginning in August of 2021. Top row from left to right: Accra Ghana Temple, Helsinki Finland Temple, Manaus Brazil Temple and the Palmyra New York Temple. Bottom row: Papeete Tahiti Temple, San José Costa Rica Temple, Taipei Taiwan Temple, and the Villahermosa Mexico Temple.



How Do I Become Who I Want to
Become?

Why is it Important that we Change?

"In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something. ...

"[T]he Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. ...

"To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be 'converted,' which requires us to *do* and to *become*."
Pres. Oaks, *The Challenge to Become*, Oct. 2000 General Conference

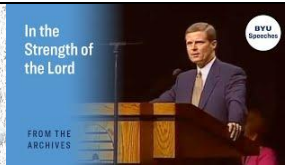


The Lord loves us how we are, but He wants us to become like Him.

Elder Uchtdorf: "Sometimes we feel discouraged because we are not "more" of something—more spiritual, respected, intelligent, healthy, rich, friendly, or capable. Naturally, there is nothing wrong with wanting to improve. God created us to grow and progress. But remember, our weaknesses can help us to be humble and turn us to Christ, who will "make weak things become strong." Satan, on the other hand, uses our weaknesses to the point that we are discouraged from even trying.

"I learned in my life that we don't need to be "more" of anything to start to become the person God intended us to become." Elder Uchtdorf, *It Works Wonderfully*, Oct. 2015

How Do I Change?



"Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient and worthy and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. I frankly do not think many of us 'get it' concerning this enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement, and I wonder if we mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

"Brothers and sisters, the gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. There is help from the Savior for the entire journey of life—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature." Elder Bednar, *In the Strength of the Lord*, Oct. 23, 2001 BYU Devotional

How Do I Change?

“Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, and effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient to triumphantly complete this mortal journey. Truly we must come to rely upon ‘the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah.’” Elder Bednar, *In the Strength of the Lord*, Oct. 23, 2001 BYU Devotional



I'm not advocating a self-help journey. We can help ourselves only so far. This is a Christ-help journey. Make Him a part of every step.

How Do I Use the Enabling Power of the Atonement?

“As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who ‘act’ rather than objects that are ‘acted upon’. ...

“The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—I wonder if we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.” Elder Bednar, *In the Strength of the Lord*, Oct. 23, 2001 BYU Devotional

As we try to become like Christ, we will fail on our own. We must rely on Him always. How do we use the Atonement? Make Him a part of everything we do. Rely on Him for guidance during conversations, work, and everything you do.

How Do I Become Who I Want to Become?

"I urge you to examine your life. Determine where you are and what you need to do to be the kind of person you want to be. Create inspiring, noble, and righteous goals that fire your imagination and create excitement in your heart. And then keep your eye on them. Work consistently towards achieving them." Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Life's Lessons Learned*, Apr. 2007 General Conference

What has helped you in making goals?

What are systems you can put in place to achieve goals?

Making goals is often an annual thing, but do we actually follow through? One thing that I have heard about lately is making systems instead of goals- essentially finding a way to restructure your life, routine, work, etc. to accomplish your goals.

Never Give Up!



"[E]xcept for Jesus, there have been no flawless performances on this earthly journey we are pursuing, so while in mortality let's strive for steady improvement without obsessing over what behavioral scientists call "toxic perfectionism." We should avoid that latter excessive expectation of ourselves and of others. ...

"Brothers and sisters, every one of us aspires to a more Christlike life than we often succeed in living. If we admit that honestly and are trying to improve, we are not hypocrites; we are human. May we refuse to let our own mortal follies, and the inevitable shortcomings of even the best men and women around us, make us cynical about the truths of the gospel, the truthfulness of the Church, our hope for our future, or the possibility of godliness. If we persevere, then somewhere in eternity our refinement will be finished and complete—which is the New Testament meaning of *perfection*.

I testify of that grand destiny, made available to us by the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself continued "from grace to grace" until in His immortality He received a perfect fulness of celestial glory. I testify that in this and every hour He is, with nail-scarred hands, extending to us that same grace, holding on to us and encouraging us, refusing to let us go until we are safely home in the embrace of Heavenly Parents. For such a perfect moment, I continue to strive, however clumsily. For such a perfect gift, I continue to give thanks, however inadequately. I do so in the very name of Perfection itself, of Him who has never been clumsy or inadequate but who loves all of us who are, even the Lord Jesus Christ." "Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually" Pres. Holland, Oct. 2017 General Conference

Time Inventory

Make a time inventory.

Check your inventory after general conference. Make a plan to change according to revelation received. Always pray before and during and after making a plan- always counsel with Him to know what to do.

Be sure to continue to try!



Additional Inventory Options

Additional Inventory Options

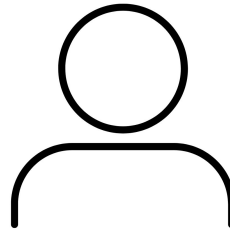
Make an inventory of yourself following Step 4 of the Addiction Recovery Guide.

1. Read Step 4
2. Read "Principles to Write an Effective Inventory"
3. Make an inventory

Additional Inventory Options

Attribute Activity

Preach My Gospel Chapter 6: Seek Christlike Attributes



Name

Daughter of God

Faith ○○○○○

Hope ○○○○○

Charity ○○○○○

Virtue ○○○○○

Integrity ○○○○○

Knowledge ○○○○○

Patience ○○○○○

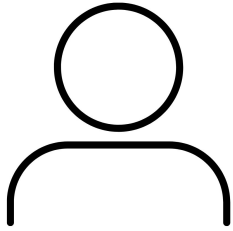
Humility ○○○○○

Diligence ○○○○○

Obedience ○○○○○

Slept well, fed

/ Tired, hungry

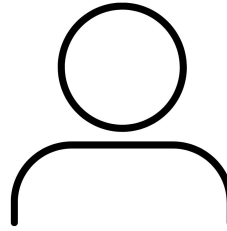


Name

Daughter of God

Faith ●●●●○
Hope ●●●●●
Charity ●●●○○
Virtue ●●●●○
Integrity ●●●●●

Knowledge ●●●●●
Patience ●●●●○
Humility ●●●○○
Diligence ●●●○○
Obedience ●●●●○



Name

Daughter of God

Faith ●●●●○
Hope ●●●○○
Charity ●●○○○
Virtue ●●●○○
Integrity ●●●●●

Knowledge ●●●●●
Patience ●●●○○
Humility ●●●○○
Diligence ●●●○○
Obedience ●●●○○

Additional Inventory Options

Alma Chapter 5

"It Works Wonderfully" by Elder Uchtdorf, Oct. 2015 General Conference

- Read the chapter or talk
- Answer the questions