

God's Merciful Invitations: A Pattern for Growth and Discipleship (37th Ward - 5th Sunday)

God's kindness and love are revealed in His perfect pattern of extending invitations to His children. These invitations are not commands to coerce but opportunities to act, grow, and choose Him. Jesus Christ exemplified this pattern, making the Father's plan His own through perfect obedience and willing sacrifice. As we use our agency to follow their example, we grow closer to Them and fulfill our divine potential.

The time between our choices and the resulting blessings or consequences is a gift of God's mercy, allowing us to learn, change, and progress. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland likened this process to the parable of the wheat and tares, where God, in His patience, allows time for growth and repentance before judgment (Matthew 13:24–30). Prophets mirror this divine approach, inviting us to make choices that draw us closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. President Russell M. Nelson extends this call with urgency and hope: "My dear brothers and sisters, in a coming day, Jesus Christ will return to the earth as the millennial Messiah. So today I call upon you to rededicate your lives to Jesus Christ" (*The Lord Jesus Christ Will Come Again*, General Conference, October 2024).

Our accountability grows as we accept these divine invitations, marked by covenants that elevate us in discipleship. The sacrament reminds us weekly of Christ's Atonement and invites us to recommit to following Him. This sacred ordinance is a powerful opportunity to renew our accountability, receive His Spirit, and progress on the covenant path. Each covenant—baptism, temple ordinances, and sacrament—draws us closer to God and builds upon the last.

In the pattern of divine invitations, the Book of Mormon stands as a tangible, collective invitation to see the Lord's tender mercies throughout history and in our own lives. It shows us that God is a welcoming and merciful Father, not a distant or angry being, and it beckons us to act on what we learn (1 Nephi 1:20; Moroni 10:3–5). Jesus Christ, as the perfect example, embodied humility and submission in fulfilling His Father's will, showing us the path to receiving clear, personal revelation. As President Henry B. Eyring testified: "The clearest answers to my questions that have ever come are when I came to the place of saying, I only want what you want, not what I want. That feeling of humility can be best described as 'Not my will, but thine, be done'" (*The Faith to Ask and Then to Act*, General Conference, October 2021).

As we reflect on God's merciful pattern, we might ask ourselves: What invitations am I being prompted to follow more diligently? These invitations are not merely calls to action; they are sacred reminders of God's trust in us, His patience with our progress, and His unwavering desire to help us return to Him. By responding to these invitations with faith and intention, we come to know Him more deeply, feel His love more profoundly, and partake of His grace more fully. Let us act on them with gratitude and humility, knowing that through His infinite love and the enabling power of Christ's Atonement, we are becoming what He knows we can be: beloved children of infinite worth, capable of eternal growth.

Points to Ponder

1. **What invitations am I being prompted to follow more carefully?** Reflect on specific promptings or impressions you have recently received. How might acting on them draw you closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?
 2. **How can I better use the sacrament as an opportunity to rededicate my life to Jesus Christ?** Consider what changes or commitments would make the weekly sacrament ordinance a more sacred and transformative experience.
 3. **What does God's patience with me teach about how to view myself and others?** Think about how recognizing God's long-suffering might influence your perspective on your growth and the growth of others.
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Suggested Assignments

1. **Create a Personal Invitation List.** Compile a list of invitations you have received from various sources, including scripture, teachings of living prophets, your patriarchal blessing, and moments of personal revelation. Reflect on how each invitation demonstrates God's trust and love for you. Identify specific actions, covenants, or callings tied to these invitations that guide you in following them. As you review your list, consider how you have responded to each invitation and what changes you could make to accept them more fully and faithfully.
2. **Sacrament Reflection Plan.** Prior to sacrament meeting, set aside 10 minutes to ponder or journal about the Savior's Atonement and its impact on your life. Reflect on His love, sacrifice, and the blessings He extends to you. Identify one specific way you will use the sacred opportunity of the sacrament to renew your commitment to follow Him more closely in the coming week. Write down this intention to guide your thoughts and actions as you partake of the ordinance.
3. **Tender Mercies Journal.** For one month, keep a daily record of the tender mercies and expressions of God's love you notice in your life. Look for small moments that reveal His hand guiding, protecting, or blessing you—whether through answered prayers, unexpected kindnesses, or subtle impressions. At the end of each week, review your entries and reflect on how these experiences have drawn you closer to Him and strengthened your faith in His care. Consider how recognizing His hand more intentionally influences your relationship with Him.