

19 November 2023

## Begin with the End in Mind

Dear Sisters and Elders,

The phrase, “Begin with the end in mind” was made popular by Steven Covey in his best-selling book, “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” first published in 1989. Steven Covey was a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many people in the world have benefitted from these 7 Habits and they remain a popular approach to success today, decades after the book was first published. My purpose this week is to focus on Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind and to explain how doing this can benefit us as missionaries and throughout our lives.

President Russell M. Nelson recently published a new book titled, *The Heart of the Matter: What 100 years of Living have taught me*. The very first principle he discusses in Chapter 1 is Beginning with the End in Mind. He gives four examples as to why it is so important.

- 1) *“No surgeon begins an operation without plans to close the wound at the end of the procedure.”*
- 2) *“When a farmer plants crops, he envisions the harvest.”*
- 3) *“When a pilot directs an airplane down the runway, she knows where she intends to land.”*
- 4) *“When a contractor turns the first spade of earth, he does so from a blueprint that tells him what the structure will look like when completed.”*

He goes on to say that *“Beginning with the end in mind is vital to any task”*. And then quotes Proverbs 29:18, *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”*. Heavenly Father clarified HIS vision in Moses 1:39, *“For this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”*. And Jesus Christ was also clear about his mission, *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”* (John 6:38). This is also the reason that we have a Vision Sticker in the Ghana Kumasi Mission that we talk about at every zone conference. If we do not know where we are going, how will we know when we have arrived? Perhaps more importantly, how will we know which direction to go?

President Nelson says, *“Beginning with the end in mind literally affects everything we do. It helps us set our course, outline the steps to get there, and monitor our progress along the way. Having a vision of where we are headed makes the chances of getting there infinitely more likely.”* (Heart of the Matter, Chapter 1).

This idea of beginning with the end in mind has been one of President Nelson’s favorite principles for a very long time. In 2014, while then Chairman of the Missionary Executive Council, he spoke to the new mission presidents and their wives with this very title, “Begin with the End in Mind”. Here are three highlights from that talk.

- 1) *“Missionary work is all about gathering people out of the world, ennobling them, and enabling them eventually to dwell with God forever. This is His divine desire.”*

- 2) *"Missionaries have a solemn responsibility to act on God's fondest hope—that His children will return home to Him, and if we will help Him, He will help us."*
- 3) *"Help your missionaries envision how good their contacts would look in white baptismal clothing and how very good they would look dressed in white temple clothing."*

When we have a vision of what we want to accomplish and especially when we know what the end looks like, we will be driven to achieve that vision. In the recent 12-week training program sent to each of you, we could summarize the purpose of that program in these simple words: **"To develop missionaries who are both faithful and competent"**. That vision statement should be the goal of every missionary in the Ghana Kumasi Mission. Here are two more scriptures that reinforce the principle of beginning with the end in mind.

- 1) D&C 64:33 *"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."*
- 2) Ecclesiastes 7:8 *"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."*

This concept of beginning with the end in mind is why we have each companionship set goals at the start of every transfer. Those goals are then the foundation of your weekly and daily goals and plans. Unless we know where we are going and what it is we want to achieve, nothing really happens. If your goals are not based on spiritual confirmations and a heartfelt desire to achieve them, nothing much happens.

It is unfortunate that some missionaries begin their mission with one goal. To become a returned missionary. The problem with that approach is there is no commitment to gather Israel through obedience and hard work. Instead, that type of missionary learns to say enough right things and do just enough work to stay in the mission field. But what comes after that? Unless we come to know God and how to invoke and receive His blessings, we go home no better off than when we came. This is why I love the verse in D&C 14:7 as it provides us a vision of what is possible *"And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."* President Nelson says it best, *"Never-ending happiness is the goal. Following the path that leads to never-ending happiness is the epitome of beginning with the end in mind."*

I want to end with President Nelson's parable of the Bee and the Butter found in his new book. *"One warm summer night, Wendy and I were having dinner on our patio when a pesky bee kept buzzing around us. Though I repeatedly waved a napkin at the bee, he persisted and was fascinated with our butter. We finally gave up trying to shoo him away and watched him land on the butter and gorge himself. Moments later he was dead. In a matter of minutes, this energetic bee progressed from temptation to indulgence and then to death. He succumbed to a distraction that trapped and then destroyed him. The lesson is obvious. Your ultimate safety lies in never taking even the first enticing step in a direction you do not want to go. Do you really want to end up where that first wrong step will lead you? The bee did not want to die. So be careful. Ask yourself when you are taking a first step: **"Do I really want the end result of this choice I'm tempted to make?"***

Let's make sure we know where we want to go. Let's make sure we never take a step in a direction that will lead us away from that goal. It will take effort and desire to forego temptations, but when we begin with the end in mind and then pursue that course rigorously throughout our life, we will most likely ultimately receive what it is that we have pursued. Let's make the decision today. Every step we take in the wrong direction makes it that much more difficult to turn around and get back on the right path.

All my love,

President Kunz