

The Purpose of Covenants and Ordinances - YW Man 1 Lesson 17
(quotes from “The Power of Covenants” by D. Todd Christofferson are italicized)

Present the “covenant” visual aid. These are two empty #10 cans covered with paper. The top can symbolizes God’s promise to sustain, sanctify, and exalt us. The bottom can is our commitment to serve God and keep His commandments. They are bound together by a ribbon which represents a covenant: a divine agreement between God and man, an accord whose terms are set by God.

There is a great power inherent to making and keeping covenants. They are essential steps to returning to our Heavenly Father, as well as being the source of great moral and spiritual power; “the power to smile through hardships, to convert tribulation into triumph, to “be anxiously engaged in a good cause, ... and bring to pass much righteousness”. The flowers inside the cans represent this power.

PETAL 1: The Power of Making and Keeping Covenants

- Where can we learn the terms of our covenants with Heavenly Father?

PETAL 2: Read Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.

Point out that our receiving the blessings depends on our keeping our part of the agreement. We can count on Heavenly Father to be completely reliable.

Explain that many priesthood ordinances require that we make covenants with the Lord when we receive the ordinance. (Write the word ordinances on the chalkboard.)

- What is an ordinance?

“An ordinance is an earthly symbol of a spiritual reality. It is usually also an act of symbolizing a covenant or agreement with the Lord”

Display the pictures of baptism, the sacrament, and a temple. Point out that baptism, the sacrament, and temple sealing are all ordinances. When we receive each of them, we show that we have made certain agreements, or covenants, with Heavenly Father.

- Why are the covenants and ordinances of the gospel necessary? Why isn’t it enough to just try to be a good person?

PETAL 3: Strengthened by Gifts and Blessings

“As we walk in obedience to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we enjoy a continual flow of blessings promised by God in His covenant with us. Those blessings provide the resources we need to act rather than simply be acted upon as we go through life. For example, the Lord’s commandments in the Word of Wisdom regarding the care of our physical bodies bless us first and foremost with “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19). Furthermore, they lead to a generally more healthy life and freedom from destructive addictions. Obedience gives us greater control over our lives, greater capacity to come and go, to work and create. Of course, age, accident, and illnesses inevitably take their toll, but even so, our obedience to this gospel law enhances our capacity to deal with these challenges. All this is not to say that life in the covenant is free of challenge or that the obedient soul should be surprised if disappointments or even disasters interrupt his peace. If you feel that personal righteousness should preclude all loss and suffering, you might want to have a chat with Job.

PETAL 4: Read 1 Nephi 17:3 (fruits of obedience)

Just as Nephi was blessed in the wilderness for his obedience, we are promised blessings as we live up to the covenants we have made. (Personal experience...)

PETAL 5: Strengthened with Increased Faith

This brings us to a second way in which our covenants supply strength—they produce the faith necessary to persevere and to do all things that are expedient in the Lord. Our willingness to take upon us the name of Christ and keep His commandments requires a degree of faith, but as we honor our covenants, that faith expands. In the first place, the promised fruits of obedience become evident, which confirms our faith. Secondly, the Spirit communicates God's pleasure, and we feel secure in His continued blessing and help. Thirdly, come what may, we can face life with hope and equanimity, knowing that we will succeed in the end because we have God's promise to us individually, by name, and we know He cannot lie (see Enos 1:6; Ether 3:12).

PETAL 6: Read Enos 1:15-17

Discuss how Enos' faith grew each time his prayers were answered. After he had prayed and received answers for himself, then for his people, then for the records - he had complete trust in the Lord, and with that trust, great peace - "his soul did rest". Our faith grows in the same way as our obedience is rewarded with peace and assurance that God knows us and keeps His promises.

PETAL 7: Strengthened through the "Power of Godliness"

We have considered, first, the empowering blessings and, second, the endowment of faith that God grants to those who keep their covenants with Him. A final aspect of strength through covenants that I will mention is the bestowal of divine power. Our covenant commitment to Him permits our Heavenly Father to let His divine influence, "the power of godliness" (D&C 84:20), flow into our lives. He can do that because by our participation in priesthood ordinances we exercise our agency and elect to receive it. Our participation in those ordinances also demonstrates that we are prepared to accept the additional responsibility that comes with added light and spiritual power.

In all the ordinances, especially those of the temple, we are endowed with power from on high. This "power of godliness" comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is part of the new and everlasting covenant. It is an essential part of our baptism, the baptism of the Spirit. It is the messenger of grace by which the blood of Christ is applied to take away our sins and sanctify us (see 2 Nephi 31:17). It is the gift by which Adam was "quickened in the inner man" (Moses 6:65). It was by the Holy Ghost that the ancient Apostles endured all that they endured and by their priesthood keys carried the gospel to the known world of their day.

When we have entered into divine covenants, the Holy Ghost is our comforter, our guide, and our companion. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are "the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment" (Moses 6:61). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are testimony, faith, knowledge, wisdom, revelations, miracles, healing, and charity, to name but a few (see D&C 46:13–26).

PETAL 8: D&C 84:19-22, D&C 46:13-26 (The Holy Ghost)

Discuss the role of the Holy Ghost in giving us the "Power of Godliness"

When we make covenants with the Lord, we make sacred promises to “always remember him and keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77). Once we have made covenants with the Lord, we then are responsible to **remember** our promises and to **keep** them.

How is the course of your life affected if you do not make covenants?

(see D&C 58:30; 132:7)

How is the course of your life affected if you make covenants but do not keep them?

(see D&C 1:14–15; 58:29)

How is the course of your life affected if you make covenants and remain faithful to them?

(see D&C 54:6; Mosiah 5:7, 15)

*“God ... because of his love for us, condescended to make covenants with us, in order that we may be spared from failure, from sorrow, from regret, and that we may rise to the full heights of glory that are promised to those who are faithful and endure to the end”
-ElRay L. Christiansen*