
Differences are Divine

Rex Williams <noreply-lcr@churchofjesuschrist.org>

Reply-To: bishoprexwilliams@gmail.com

To: bishoprexwilliams@gmail.com

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Penny Creek Ward

Hello friend,

Like you, maybe at some point, I've been on a vacation visiting extended family this past week. It's always good to connect with cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. These people are your tribe, no matter how different they are.

The family we visited this time are on my wife's side, and live in the Southwest, where I also grew up. All my young adult children were able to be there. We had a great time. But it was also a very different environment, as far as the weather goes.

When we stepped off the plane at 10:00pm in Phoenix Arizona it was 105 degrees Fahrenheit!

That was a wild, new experience for my children. I have experienced it before, but only many years ago when I was younger, it was still pretty shocking for me. Something very different.

We then drove further out in the desert where my wife's sister and her family lived. While we were there, we saw interesting critters that we weren't used to seeing, like tarantulas, rattlesnakes, millipedes, large bullfrogs, and lots of mosquitos (sure, we've seen mosquitos, but not like this where every time you go outside, you're at risk of getting multiple bites.)

Also, where we were staying, you could look in any direction and see for many miles. Wide open, clear blue skies with mountains far in the distance. This also meant that you could see storms in the distance that would form and produce amazing lightning shows every evening.

It rained heavily each night we were there (which they were very grateful for), and then was clear by morning. One time, we went up into a mountain for an evening of campfire and smores, and as soon as we arrived at our location and began to set up, the rain just dumped on us with no warning, like opening up a spigot of solid water from the sky, not the mist type of rain we experience here.

Needless to say, we had to adjust our plans that night, but it reminded us that we were in a different place.

I could tell you a lot more stories about our vacation, but that's not the point, (besides you don't want to hear about my battle with mosquitos) I wanted to use our experience of geographical differences to show that even though we can be in completely different environments, there are some things that remain the same: the principles of the gospel and human interaction.

Even though our extended family members lived in a completely different environment, they were still children of God, and we needed to love them as Christ would. It didn't matter that they loved riding horses or didn't care about a few mosquito bites.

This extends to all kinds of differences. Not only living locations, but life experiences, and even time periods. This is why the principles of the gospel have been around since the beginning of time, or since humans have been on the earth.

As you study cultures and history, you learn that people can experience quite different things. Missionaries that serve in different lands learn first-hand, in a deep and lasting way, how people can live quite differently. Like our very own Elder

Daxton Jensen who is serving in Ghana, Africa. He is experiencing some real differences, yet he is loving and teaching those people the same gospel of Jesus Christ that we talk about here.

I'd like to emphasize two points with this analogy:

1. Don't let differences get in the way of Christ-like love, care, and service for fellow human beings.
2. We're a part of something so massive and significant that it transcends time and location, and every difference imaginable: the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Contention comes from the adversary and many times can be rooted in differences. So, as we 'love one another' let's overlook differences that don't matter and celebrate our uniqueness. We can bond over the one similarity we all have in common, that we're children of Heavenly parents.

The work we're doing to gather Israel has been prophesied for centuries. It's all part of a much larger plan. You've been reserved for these 'latter days'. It's even in the title of our church to remind us that there's something different about the times we're in. I know it can be difficult but remember that we're on the winning team. The Lord needs you and all your differences.

I'm glad to be back the Great Northwest, even if we're having an 'excessive heat warning' :) Somehow, coming from Arizona, our 'heat' seems a little less significant.

Hope you've had some good and different experiences this summer. And met some 'different' people.

Take care,

Bishop Williams

P.S.

I want to apologize to those who were expecting to watch the Zoom broadcast today for Sacrament meeting. We had technical difficulties that just couldn't be overcome.

And thank you to all those who provided your insights and testimony during our second hour meeting about sharing the gospel. Here is the link to the lesson outline if you want to watch the other videos that we didn't have time to show:

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/share/fifthSundayDiscussion?lang=eng>

And here's a link to many other resources for sharing the gospel:

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/share?lang=eng>

Other Announcements:

- August 10-13 - Stake Young Men Encampment at Ensign Ranch
- August 15-20 - Stake Young Women Camp at Camp Zarahemla

Single Adult Activities:

- What: **Swila Ball (Dance & Instruction)**
- When: Saturday Aug 6, Lessons: 7:30p to 8:30p; Dancing: 8:30p to 10:30p
- Where: Seattle North Stake Center ([5701 8th Ave NE Seattle, WA 98105](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/share?lang=eng))
- Description: Free partner dance lessons: swing, latin, and ballroom. Potluck refreshments.
- What: **Regional Single Adult Fireside and Potluck**
- When: Sunday Aug 7, Potluck: 5p; Fireside: 6p
- Where: Everett Washington Stake Center ([9509 19th Ave SE Everett, WA 98208](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/share?lang=eng))
- Fireside: We will watch and discuss Sister Reyno Aburto's Conference talk, With One Accord.
- Taco/Burrito Bar Potluck: Tortillas (flour and corn), taco meat, refried beans, lettuce, and cheese will be provided. Suggested potluck items: burrito/taco toppings, chips, or a dessert.
- Zoom link if you can't make it in person:
- <https://zoom.us/j/96683469930>

