



Oaks 101: This is Real

7-Week Challenge to Know What is Real

From President Ethan Willis, Stake President of the Gilbert Arizona Seville Stake

In a world of deep fakes, artificial intelligence, and competing voices, President Oaks taught us: “You live in a season when the adversary has become so effective at disguising truth that if you do not have the Holy Ghost, you will be deceived.” I testify that there are deep truths more powerful than any deep fake—truths taught clearly by a prophet of the Lord that help us see past the confusion. President Oaks declared: “This is real. Let us be part of it.”

Since being called as an Apostle, President Oaks has given 101 general conference talks. As we prepare our hearts for April’s General Conference, I invite you to study his teachings and embrace the clarity we need in these confusing times. We can come to know, even more deeply, the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ and build an even stronger testimony that he is the prophet prepared by the Lord for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). This will be important for the conference ahead.

Step: 1

Read one talk per week.

Read or listen to one of the following seven talks given by President Oaks each week over the next seven weeks leading up to General Conference.

Step: 2

Discuss as a family.

Use the weekly discussion guide to share insights and let President Oaks' teachings prepare your hearts together.

Step: 3

Track your progress.

Mark off each completed week and share what you're learning with friends, in your journal, and social media.

Promise:

I promise that as we take this seven-week challenge, our testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be strengthened. We will know with greater conviction, as President Oaks declared, “This is real”—and we will have a greater desire to be part of it. We will gain perspective and clarity to see past the disguises and deceptions of the adversary. You will have greater Spirit in your home, and your families will be more firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. When General Conference comes, your families will be better prepared to hear the counsel and direction of the prophet. And as President Oaks points us to the Savior, Jesus Christ will “change [your] heart forever and help [you] clearly see” (Hymn 1004, “I Will Walk with Jesus”).

—President Ethan Willis





Oaks 101: This is Real

7-Week Study Guide

☐ WEEK 1: Good, Better, Best

October 2007

"We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families."



☐ WEEK 2: Be Not Deceived

October 2004

"The Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit."



☐ WEEK 3: Testimony

April 2008

"Knowledge encourages obedience, and obedience enhances knowledge."



☐ WEEK 4: The Need for a Church

October 2021

"The scriptures clearly teach the origin and need for a church directed by and with the authority of our Lord, Jesus Christ."



☐ WEEK 5: Apostasy and Restoration

April 1995

"We would be wiser if we could restore the knowledge of some important things that have been distorted, ignored, or forgotten."



☐ WEEK 6: The Challenge to Become

October 2000

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



☐ WEEK 7: Small and Simple Things

April 2018

"We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, seemingly small things bring to pass great things."





WEEK 1: Good, Better, Best

October 2007

"We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families."



As you studied this talk, what are some activities you felt you need to do more of and what are some things you felt you need to do less of?

What are some of the best things that can bless your life or the lives of others?

What is your plan to schedule those activities in?

If not private, share your plan with others. Pray and ask your Heavenly Father to help you in these efforts.



WEEK 2: Be Not Deceived

October 2004

"The Holy Ghost will protect us against being deceived, but to realize that wonderful blessing we must always do the things necessary to retain that Spirit."



Note: Originally given to young men, but principles apply to all adults and youth.

Why do you think Satan wants to deceive you?

What are some of his subtle methods he uses to deceive you?

How will you "see clearly" and not be deceived by his tactics?

Activity: Play the hymn "I Will Walk With Jesus" (#1004). What feelings do you have when you hear those words?
What is the Spirit prompting you to do?



WEEK 3: Testimony

April 2008

“Knowledge encourages obedience, and obedience enhances knowledge.”



How does knowledge help us gain truth?

What did Jesus tell Peter was the best way to learn truth? Why is that method so important to know what is real?

What role does Christ’s teaching in John 7:17 play in gaining a testimony?

President Oaks said, “This is real. Let us be part of it.” How can you engage more fully and “be part of” God’s work?

Activity: Ask someone who you know has gained a testimony to share their testimony with you.



WEEK 4: The Need for a Church

October 2021

"The scriptures clearly teach the origin and need for a church directed by and with the authority of our Lord, Jesus Christ."



What blessings, small and large, have come to you because you attend church? Make a list.

How would your experience going to church change if you focused more on helping others feel loved and welcomed?

What is one way you could lift someone at church next Sunday? (Did a name come to your mind?)

Special Teaching: How does this teaching by President Nelson help you know what is real in a confused world?

"Often, I hear the expression that we partake of the sacrament to renew covenants made at baptism. While that's true, it's much more than that. I've made a new covenant. You have made a new covenant. ... Now in return for which He makes the statement that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. What a blessing!" ("Unwavering Commitment to Jesus Christ," Ensign, Nov. 2019, see footnote #18).



WEEK 5: Apostasy and Restoration

April 1995

"We would be wiser if we could restore the knowledge of some important things that have been distorted, ignored, or forgotten."



What are some of the similarities The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has with other Christian religions?

What are some of the precious and important differences?

Why is it important to know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led by Jesus Christ Himself?

How has the unique gospel of Jesus Christ blessed your life?

Activity: Tonight in your personal prayers, express the gratitude you feel to have the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in your life.



WEEK 6: The Challenge to Become

October 2000

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



What does this teaching mean to you? "In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to know something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become something."

What is conversion and how is it different than declaring our testimony?

How can we become more converted to Jesus Christ?

What feelings do you have as you read what it means to have "the mind of Christ"? What are some ways to develop this more in your life?



WEEK 7: Small and Simple Things

April 2018

"We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, seemingly small things bring to pass great things."



How has the Resurrection of Jesus Christ given you what the Apostle Peter called "a lively hope" (1 Peter 1:3)?

What are some of the small and simple things that help us have the Holy Ghost in our lives?

What are some powerfully small and simple things you need to incorporate more fully in your life?

What are some of the constant worldly currents of the world that carry people away from the Lord?

☐ WEEK 7: Final Reflection

As you look back on the last 7 weeks of this “What is Real” challenge, what are some things you are committed to doing so you can see clearly and not be deceived by the constant worldly currents President Oaks speaks about?

Record your reflection and testimony you have gained from studying President Oaks's talks these last 7 weeks.

How has this experience prepared you to hear his voice in the upcoming conference and sustain him as the Prophet of the Lord?

