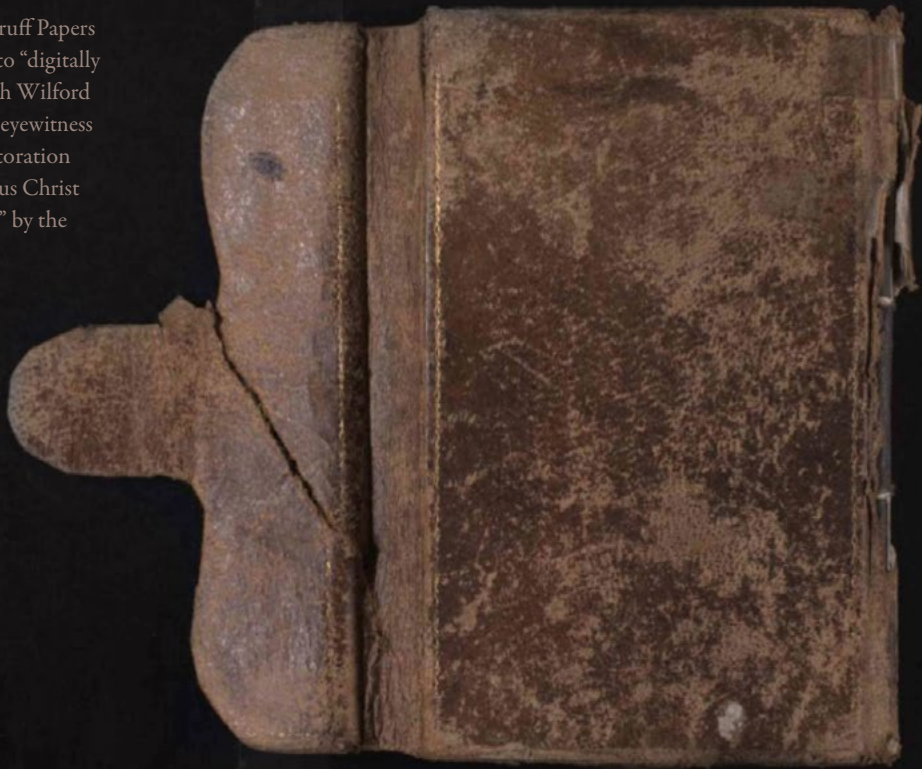


Our Blessings, Privileges, and Powers

Jennifer Ann Mackley

The Wilford Woodruff Papers Foundation strives to “digitally preserve and publish Wilford Woodruff’s faithful eyewitness account of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from 1833 to 1898” by the year 2030.



¹Journal (January 1, 1843 – December 31, 1844),” p. 360, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed September 8, 2021

“Every one of us... shall have to give an account before the God of Heaven... for the use of this Priesthood... the blessings, privileges, and powers which we enjoy in connection therewith... the ordinances of his house and the power that is put into our hands to accomplish the work of God.” Wilford Woodruff

Our Blessings

We are participants in the work of God and responsible for the choices we make in relation to all He has blessed us with.

In the third article of faith, Joseph Smith stated, “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”¹

All mankind... those yet to be born, those who have passed beyond the veil, and those now living into whose hands blessings, privileges, and powers have been mercifully given. Into whose hands God has entrusted His work to bring to pass the eternal life of all His children.

Our blessings are through our Savior’s willing Atonement, our obedience to His laws, our covenants within the ordinances of His Gospel, and our participation in His work. He chose to give His life for us. He said, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.”² He chose to do His Father’s will. We can choose to follow His example.

Wilford Woodruff consecrated his life to the work of God, dedicating ten of his first fifteen years in the Church to sharing the Gospel with the living, and the remaining fifty-four years focused on administering temple ordinances to bless those living on Earth and beyond the veil. I am now directing the Wilford Woodruff Papers Project to share his testimony of the Restoration and his inspiring stories with the world.³

Wilford Woodruff wisely said, “Our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters occupy a very important position in this generation, far more so than they realize or understand. Upon [your] shoulders... rests, in a great measure, the responsibility of correctly developing the mental and moral powers of the rising generation... Such is the influence of woman.”⁴

We are engaged in the work of God.

As women do we understand the privilege we have to influence, to engage, and to bless each other and the rising generation? To help them understand the gift of the Atonement, the gift of agency, and the blessings of obedience to God’s laws?

Our Privileges

Knowing these truths, each of us must choose if we will accept God’s will, if we will be obedient to His laws and faithful to our covenants. That is our privilege: to know and choose truth, to understand God’s will, and to choose to become like Him. Not just once, but every day and every hour.

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My crucible of faith actually occurred after my prayers were answered.

I was diagnosed with a severe form of diabetes at the age of eleven and was told by my doctors I would never be able to bear children. I asked God for direction. In my patriarchal blessing He promised me that I would have the health and strength “to bear and rear the children I desired.”

At age twenty-three, I was diagnosed with vulvar cancer. I asked God for a miracle. In a priesthood blessing, I received His assurance that He would keep His promise. Seven surgeries followed. When I was thirty-one, my husband and I learned that not only were we pregnant, but pregnant with twins.

As my pregnancy progressed, my gratitude for miracles and my faith in God’s promises were overshadowed by the responsibility I felt to protect our children and the fear that I was not capable of that overwhelming task.

I was sixteen weeks along when I found myself in the emergency room due to premature labor. My obstetrician used every means to stop the contractions and help our children survive. Over the ensuing weeks, she took round-the-clock responsibility for the three of us.

At one visit she gently cautioned me that my anxiety about protecting our children, the children that God had promised me I would have the strength to bear, was harming them. I was devastated. I left her office and sobbed uncontrollably. They weren’t even born, and I felt I had already failed as their mother.

Sitting alone in my car, I realized I had to choose between faith in God and faith in myself. My choice included whether to accept priesthood power or rely on my own, whether to depend on eternal relationships or earthly ones, and whether my Savior took upon Himself not only my sins but also my “pains and sicknesses.”⁵

Could I, like my Savior, honestly say, “not my will, but thine be done”⁶ and accept His will? Would I lose the children He had promised, or would He “remove this cup from me”?

I had often repeated the scripture “with God all things are possible,” but did I believe it? Did I believe His strength could replace my weakness?⁷ Did I trust Him to keep His promise? Did I have a choice?

Yes. I chose to believe in the Atonement and God’s laws. I chose to put myself and my children in His hands. I let go and trusted His grace would be sufficient.

He kept His promise.

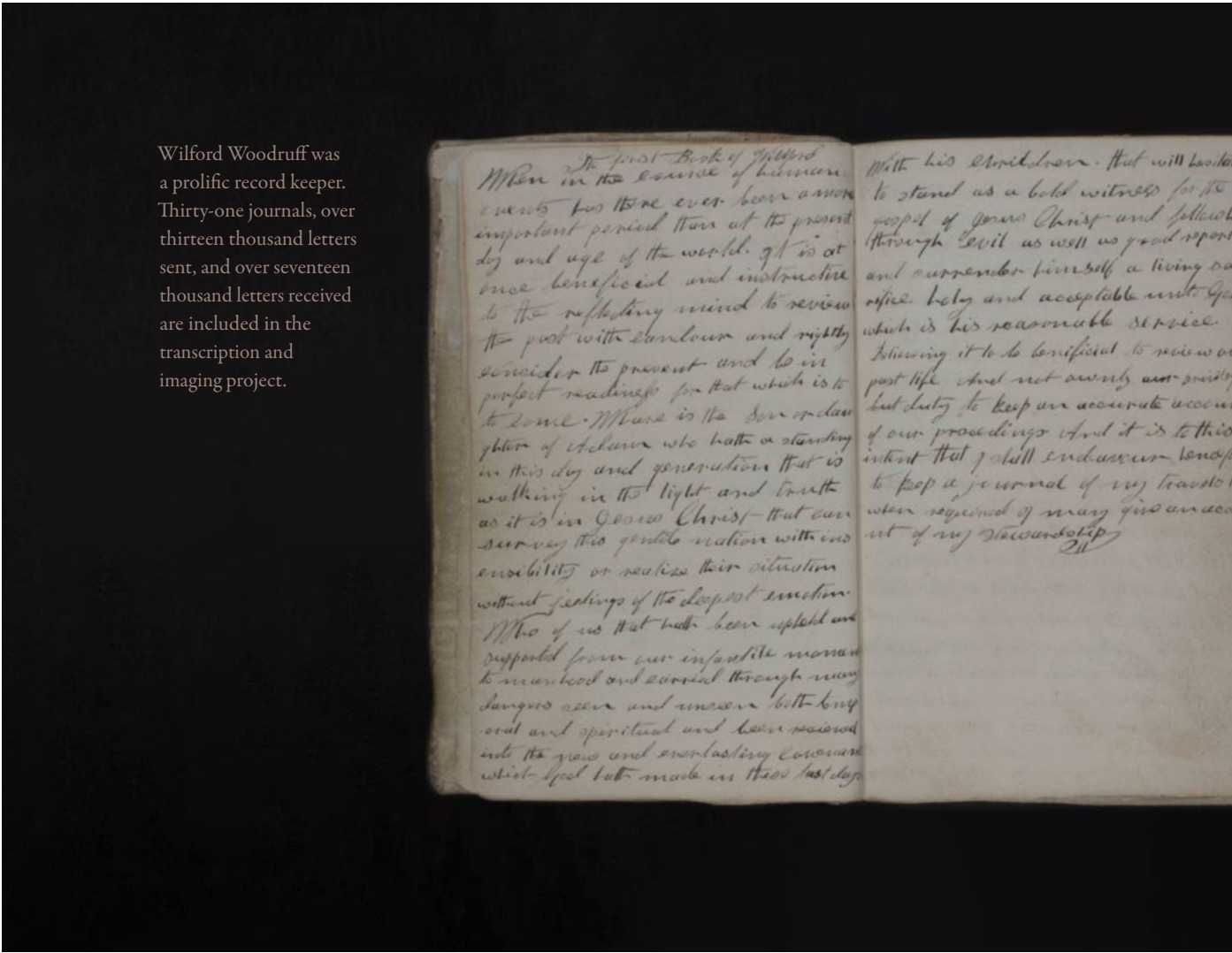
He sustained us through three more months of contractions and hospitalization, twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome, hemorrhaging capillaries in my eyes and kidneys, and a high-risk C-section after we lost one of the babies’ heartbeats on the monitor.

Our baby girl was born not breathing and did not respond to attempts to resuscitate her. The delivery room nurses told us they had signaled to each other that it was hopeless, but they said they then learned that “God lives and angels walk.” His angels were vigilant that day, and our baby girl did finally respond to external oxygen. Twenty-four days later, she joined her twin brother at home.

Our Power

God has granted each of us the power to choose. To choose the Atonement or to suffer for our own sins. To choose salvation through obedience. To choose to always remember our Savior so we can always have His Spirit with us.⁸

Our daughter has chosen obedience to God’s laws and accepted the saving ordinance of baptism and the exalting endowment of knowledge and power our Heavenly Father offers all of us. She depends on the Atonement of her Savior. She is willing to keep His commandments and to stand as His witness.



Wilford Woodruff was a prolific record keeper. Thirty-one journals, over thirteen thousand letters sent, and over seventeen thousand letters received are included in the transcription and imaging project.

"Journal (December 29, 1833 – January 3, 1838)," p. 7, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed September 10, 2021

Wilford Woodruff kept extensive records of his own testimonies and revelations, as well as those of other Apostles, in his papers. His central undertaking during his ministry was to make sure that all people, dead or alive, had access to the death-defying doctrines and ordinances of the Holy Temple.

Many teachers have positively influenced and nurtured her testimony. Her Primary teacher Denise helped her understand basic truths. Her Young Women leader Alyssa guided her with unconditional love. She was inspired by the stories her sweet Nana shared of her great-grandmother raising eight honorable children without the spiritual support of her dear husband. Her aunts walked by her side to the temple. She learned to find joy in studying the scriptures in the pattern they taught her.

Such is the influence of women.

12th Sunday I met with the Saints in the morning Mrs Woodruff & Br & Sister Clark accompanied me to meeting. I addressed the Saints in the fore part of the day I dined with Elder George Allen, and attended meeting in the afternoon. I spoke to the Saints upon the importance of paying their tithing & the sisters to keep up their penny subscription for the building of the Temple, several followed me I received a letter from Elder John B Taylor which was interesting I spoke of its contents to the people. I took tea with Elder James Wadsden. Again met with the Saints in the evening & had a full house a number of strangers. I addressed them upon the first principle of the Gospel. I had the spirit of the Lord and a good time & administered to a sick & blessed 2 children

"Journal (January 1, 1845 – December 31, 1846)," p. 18, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, accessed September 10, 2021

She shared her joy and truth with those she served on her mission. She learned the blessings of obedience to God's laws and the significance of covenants. She knows the power He puts into our hands to accomplish His work. She chose to believe and to act according to those beliefs.

Such is the moral power of the rising generation.

Our Work

Wilford Woodruff believed "our position before this generation is of vast importance to us and them... There never was a generation like this... There has never been a work like this since God made the world... In the fulness of times the Lord has set his hand to establish his kingdom. This is the last dispensation. He has raised up men and women to carry on his work."⁹

Our work is His work. As a mother to my three children, my voice is only one in a chorus of many. My children are and will be influenced by others. I pray they will choose truth and have faith in their Savior. I plead that they will understand their strength in God.

They were taught that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."¹⁰ They have experienced the "fiery darts of the wicked."¹¹

They have also witnessed miracles of healing by the power of the priesthood. Their prayers have been answered. And they have felt the peace of God that passes all understanding.¹²

They know the armor of God is available to them. That "the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves."¹³ They must choose to gird their loins with truth, to be protected by a breastplate of righteousness and a shield of faith, in order to withstand the temptations and darkness that surround them, and "having done all, to stand."¹⁴

Above all, they must choose to stand with God.

Because they, through the Atonement of Christ, "are redeemed from the fall, they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon."¹⁵

Christ's Atoning sacrifice makes salvation available to us all. Whether we accept His Atonement is a choice each of us must make.

As hard as that truth is to accept sometimes, we believe the ability to choose our place in the eternities is a blessing and a privilege. If we choose obedience to the laws and ordinances of His Gospel, we will be exalted.

¹ Journal of Discourses, 18:189-192	⁶ Luke 22:42	¹¹ Ephesians 6:16
² John 10:17-18	⁷ Ether 12:27	¹² Philippians 4:6
³ www.wilfordwoodruffpapers.org	⁸ Moroni 4:3	¹³ Doctrine & Covenants 58:27–28
⁴ Journal of Discourses, 15:11-12	⁹ Journal of Discourses, 21:281	¹⁴ Ephesians 6:13
⁵ Alma 7:11–12	¹⁰ Ephesians 6:12	¹⁵ 2 Nephi 2:26