

1:400,000,000,000,000! The probability of being born. With those odds - there has to be a higher power. I, as a Christian, believe in God. My daily purpose, mere existence, and spiritual awareness are a few reasons why.

Often times the thought pops into my head about six degrees of separation. We are all closer than we realize. With that, take away our religious beliefs and strongly consider what you do, daily, in order to draw nearer to others. Bridging the six degrees!

Our purpose is to love each other. Ignoring a person because they're "annoying", "weird", or "talk too much" isn't love! Avoiding supporting someone else's passion and pursuits is not love. Maintaining contention by keeping distance - concocting excuses to not visit family and friends...is not love. I, as a Christian, believe in Christ, because forgiving myself allows Him to bestow upon me remission of my sin(s). Albeit, forgive others.

Inversely, my purpose to love is a beautiful way of bringing belief into lives of non-believers. Merely existing isn't enough. Staying true to your authentic self, genuine heart, and passion is love. Self-love. John 15:12-13 exclaims:

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Lay down your life for someone. Irregardless of who they are to you, what you *think* they'll amount to, no matter the stark contrast in socioeconomic status. Far too often we focus on differences. Complain about the "squeaky clean" image that proceeds the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but do nothing to better showcase acceptance nor transparency.

Clearly, one issue is a commonality of lived experiences - misaligning our definition of friendship. Aside from this, love is a pretty consistent constant. Within the Word, love is mentioned nearly 400 times.

I, as a Christian, believe in Christ, because love is the priority. Putting love first will allow passions to shine through - happiness to be inevitable.

When speaking with current members, missionaries, and recent converts we all agree that there is a hyperfocus on marriage and being with someone. I wholeheartedly wish we emphasized learning ourselves through others. Finding our passion over pursuing a career simply for financial stability.

As a youth the external pressures of who to be are extremely difficult to navigate! Our devotion, diligence, and covenants with Heavenly Father do not correlate to the expectations of others. Being yourself matters most! Having freedom to explore your interests, expression, likes, and dislikes is critical as a Christian. Your foundation with the Gospel Principles will keep you enfolded in grace. Fear not the practices of the enemy. Fear any conduct unbecoming of

personal happiness. Effortlessly, the love of yourself and those pursuits will translate into your relationships. That energy will evolve into your testimony. In turn, consider all the love you can pour into others. So many people must realize how a small decision can impact connectivity.

Recall 1 Corinthians 13:13:

“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love”

I, as a christian, believe in Christ because there is no greater motivation. No physical being can support me - Him being: omnipotent, omnipresent, and an all-knowing deity giving us specific purpose! Christ pulled me from my lowest depths. He has amplified my voice like a bull horn at Woodstock. The testimony I yield spans countrywide. Includes pain, suffering, triumph, joy, introspection, grace, forgiveness, and a uniqueness that personifies the 1:400,000,000,000,000 chance you have of being brought into the world.

The hardest obstacle to overcome is stepping out on faith. Human beings are very much creatures of habit. Making decisions to alter that peace becomes uncomfortable. Can cause decision paralysis. It's a part of free will that isn't discussed enough - essentially BEGGING for a sign from God...then as confirmation is received - we cower to safety. Not me! Not me. Not me! I refuse to deny my faith in such a manner.

Sir Richard Branson has a quote:

“Many people have more modest goals. But whatever your dream is, go for it. Always beware if the risks are too random or too hard to predict, but remember, if you opt for a safe life, you will never know what it's like to win.”

I, as a christian, believe in Christ as a reminder to be present in life. Knowing there is someone there at all times guiding these paces like the world's friendliest drill sergeant. Accept the belief that you can do all things through Christ. Watch the miracles pour into your life once you let fear go, because the opposite of fear is faith. Being afraid is not a feeling the courageous never encounter. It's a feeling the courageous conquer. Notice more how your courage reveals itself in daily interactions. Inviting someone into a conversation. Living independently. Nurturing others. Remaining prayerful during uncertain times. Accepting others you do not know. Receiving blessings by following spiritual promptings. Being there for a loved one that holds contention near and dear to their heart. Forgiving ourselves. Loving thy neighbor. Holding in reactions to reckless drivers on the way to school and work. Biting your tongue when feeling offended.

Courage doesn't have to be some David versus Goliath sized feat. Peter stepping out on faith. Courage is listening to someone when you don't want to be bothered. Courage is supporting an artist that pours their heart onto a blank canvas. Courage is an apology when you let someone down. Courage is communication! Courage is experiencing an excruciating break up or divorce and courage is learning from that experience how to move forward. Courage is a son living in

the shadows of a great father who has to trailblaze his own path via trial and error. Courage is love despite the hate, despite preconceived notions, despite prejudice, despite contention, despite our differences.

Love is our Lord. Love is everything. Love is trust. Love, ...is trust. Love is the assertion that we exchange proper boundaries, respect those boundaries, and move forward in divine unison. Love is a conquered soul finally returning to the Lord - repenting of their sin(s). Love is holding yourself accountable. Love is the diversity and adversity you face that evolves your person; that develops your character. Love is withstanding 'Baby Shark' on repeat during road trips. Love is ...unconditional.

Luke 12:21 reads:

"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God"

What are you collecting here on Earth? Does hoarding play a role in your mental health being reflected in a tangible state? Are you storing up things to flex the latest asset, gadget, or cool craze? What are you never willing to part with? Because it's the intangibles that make you rich.

I, as a christian, believe in Christ to hoard the intangibles. I believe to achieve true Christlike attributes means pursuing your passion. Bearing your cross with intent. Purpose. Rejoicing in hardships. Feeling joyous and exalting as life tests your boundaries of growth.

Receive Mosiah 28:4:

"And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners. And the Lord saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them; nevertheless they suffered much anguish of soul because of their iniquities, suffering much and fearing that they should be cast off forever,"

Again, what values do you possess towards being rich internally in order to be rich eternally? Be rich with the intangibles. Aim not to build financial wealth when your passions have concurrently become non-existent. You have no clue what you love. The mirror reflects so many masks that you no longer stand for anything. Nobody speaks of the fruit your past bore. Presently, the only morals you yield are habits. Going through the motions. Eat. Sleep. Pursue nothing. Repeat. Honor yourself with love. Understand that you possess power to influence others, but it starts with the inside. Self-love.

As my fellow Hoosier once sang:

*"I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways
And no message could've been any clearer
If they wanna' make the world a better place
Take a look at yourself and then make a change*

*I've been a victim of a selfish kind of love
It's time that I realize
That there are some with no home
Not a nickel to loan
Could it be really me pretending that they're not alone?"*

Written by: Glen Ballard, Siedah Garrett

Produced by: Quincy Jones & Michael Jackson

Lyrics © BMG Rights Management, Universal Music Publishing Group, Songtrust Ave, Warner Chappell Music, Inc.

I, as a christian, believe in Christ to keep my love in check. To keep healthy boundaries with love. To not become so self-absorbed that the only person that matters is myself. I'm prayerful that love doesn't trap me, but allows me to be open with who I am and vulnerable about how trials and tribulations - peaks and valleys - continue to impact my life. Every moment is a learning experience. These precious segments of time are ones to treasure.

I am a young man. My hair is wooly and black. With an athletic build, dark brown eyes, enormous appetite, and gargantuan laugh. I'm simply human. These are physical attributes we all may or may not share at some capacity. Yet, our internal commonalities allow us...as Christians...to believe in Christ. You have your reasons. I have my reasons. We all have varying reasons to believe in Christ.

My hopes moving forward, for you and myself, are erasing imaginary boundaries we partition amongst one another that have absolutely nothing to do with love or following Christ. Money, image, social acumen, mental prowess, physical dexterity, or the choices of our parents.

Control what you can control. Accept others where they are in their walk with Christ. Allow the Lord to check your love. Use the tool of love to open your heart, forgive, and conquer feats of various magnitudes.

Love who you are. Learn who you are. Mold future you using today's opportunities...I love you!

I love you! I love you. The enemy has done such a great job that telling others you sincerely love them is discomforting. Gives you the "icks", if you will, but that's coming from a deep dark place. Ask the Lord to start with the human in the mirror. Invite love into your heart. Invite love into your daily interactions with others.

Love yourself and love others the way your Heavenly Father intended. He loves you!

In conclusion, I love believing in Christ as a christian, because...why not?!

So, I wholeheartedly say these things with blessings and courage under the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

With love. Amen.