In Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life there was a mist of darkness that arose and clouded the peoples' vision. Nephi says this mist was the “temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men (1Ne 12:17)”. In the world in which we live we may not see the swarming mist that surrounds us, but it is there nonetheless. These temptations always appeal to the selfish, carnal parts of our nature, and the scary thing is that the mist it creates inside of us can blind us and harden our hearts so subtly that we can’t even see it for what it is. We let the mist seep into our hearts in simple ways, with self pity, discouragement, criticism of others, pessimism, hypocrisy, doubt, feeling overwhelmed because we need to maintain a facade for others to see, worrying more what people think of us than what God thinks, trying to manipulate circumstances to go the way we want, always seeking to place blame, or are easily offended. All of these negative things that happen inside of us and are the fruits of Satan’s ultimate goal to make us “miserable like unto himself.” When we are self absorbed we cannot see clearly, or as President Benson put it, “When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment.” We create a mist of darkness that obscurrs our view of what is real-- we tend to see the world around us through a haze of negativity and people as objects that act upon us. The dark mist of selfishness can be so blinding and it so thoroughly distracts us, that we aren’t even aware we are surrounded by it. We are so blessed to have the scriptures to help us see the deception for what it is. In Moroni chapter 7 he teaches,

15 For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

So, we can be sure that when we are mired in negative emotions such as envy, hate, pessimism, cynicism, criticism, offense, and blame we are deep in the mist and are blind to something. We may not know what that something is-- but at least we can know that we are not seeing clearly. We can tell when we are amid a mist of darkness because we don't feel at peace inside. We don't feel good, but full of negativity.
Then Moroni asks, “How is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?” And then he teaches us how to dispell the mists of darkness, he gives us the lens through which we need to look to see things clearly, the lens of Faith, Hope, and most important, Charity.

**Faith**
Faith is belief, it is holding to the iron rod, it is taking a step in the dark to do the right thing, even if we don’t understand why or how it is the right thing. Faith is a creative power. Joseph Smith teaches in the Lectures on Faith that it is the foundational power by which God created the worlds. Faith, our true inner beliefs, is also the foundational creative power in our own lives. It is the substance of our sincerest prayer and our constant thoughts. King Benjamin taught his people that to continue in faith meant to “watch [them]selves, and [their] thoughts and [their] words (Mosiah 4:30).” Our thoughts, the constant inner dialogue we have with ourselves that narrates our days, and our lives, is such an easy way for Satan to slip his mist into our lives, blur our vision, and convince us to believe things that aren’t true. That is why Jesus told the Nephites several times while he was among them to “pray ALWAYS lest ye be tempted by the devil, for Satan desireth to have you (3 Ne. 18: 15, 18-19, 21).” We can recognize the negativity that so easily seeps in for the blinding mist that it is, dispell it with prayer, and open ourselves up to the Holy Ghost who “speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore it speaketh of things as they REALLY are and of things as they REALLY will be.” Then we can see “things which are not seen, which are true (Alma 32:21)” through the lens of faith.

**Hope**
Hope is optimism, gratitude, expectation, and cheerfulness. It is looking forward with joy and certainty to the things that our faith teach us are true. It is looking forward to the reality of repentance, of forgiveness, of the resurrection, of seeing the Savior again.

**Charity**
I think of Jesus, when the little children were brought to him. His disciples saw them as, at best, an inconvenience, at worst, people too small and insignificant to merit the attention of the promised Messiah. Jesus corrected them. He saw them as the pure, undefiled divine beings that they were. “Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God (Luke 18:16).” Jesus was able to show such perfect love because he could see the true nature of every human being. Imagine the publicans-- the tax collectors working for a foreign, occupying government who were universally considered greedy traitors. Imagine the blind beggars near the pool of Bethesda-- what they must of looked like in their filth and rags, what they smelled like. Imagine the lepers-- their skin and even limbs rotting off, covered perhaps with maggot ridden wounds, shunned by everyone. Jesus loved them all because he knew them, he knew their divinity, he saw their eternal potential.
Moroni teaches that charity is the pure love of Christ, and that if we don’t have charity we are nothing. He says,

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (Moroni 7:45)

Charity is complete selflessness. It is the surest way to dispell the mist and tunnel vision that being self-absorbed create. But how do we get it? Jesus teaches that when we lose ourselves we are found, but how do we do that? How do we see the ordinary human beings around us as the eternally divine people they really are?

There was a place in Lehi’s dream that he stood and could see everything clearly-- he stood at the tree of life, partaking of its fruit. The fruit of the tree is the love of God, or the pure love of Christ, which is charity. This is something we have to taste. We have to hold it in our hands and admire it, then take a bite, savor it, internalize it, and feel it nourish every fiber of our being. When we feel and taste and internalize the love that God has for us our eyes are opened to the love he has for every single one of his children.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

The pure love of Christ is a gift that is bestowed on us, and we need to pray with hope and faith that we can be filled with this love. It is a fruit that is sweet beyond all that is sweet and our Heavenly Father wants us to taste it. We need to pray to first, be filled with the sweetness for his love for us, and then we will be able to begin to feel for others the way he does. We need to “feast upon the words of Christ (2Ne. 32:3),” we need to spend time in fasting and prayer, or in other words “rejoicing and prayer” as D&C 59:14 calls it. It is through these things-- studying the scriptures and hearing the word of God at church, fasting, and sincere prayer-- that we are filled with God’s love for us.

It is through charity that we can cut through Satan’s mist of darkness and see the Savior as he really is, and when we can see the Father of our redemption and Creator of the world as he is, we can see all things as they really are. It is more important than anything else that we love God and that we love other people-- that we see them as they really are, as divine beings with infinite potential. I love how C.S. Lewis put it in The Weight of Glory:

"It is a serious thing, to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship... It is in the light of
these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no 'ordinary' people. You have never talked to a mere mortal."

Brothers and Sisters, it is so important that we treat each other with charity. It is so important that we are kind, that we are quick to forgive and always give each other the benefit of the doubt. It is so important that we pray with all the energy of our hearts to taste the pure love of Christ for us, and it is so important that we reach out to show that love to others. I remember when I was Relief Society President the times when I was focused on just loving my sisters. Those were the times that serving was a joy, the times that I was able to see that no matter what our circumstances we all had struggles and that the light of the Gospel that we share was such a blessing to live and share. Those were the times that I felt capable of doing all the little things, like make phone calls, write letters, go on visits, that normally would be hard and scary for me. I remember trying to “be” love and really understanding why the scriptures say that “perfect love casteth out all fear.” I also remember the times when I was completely overwhelmed, trying to figure out how to fit the demands of the calling into MY life. Looking back on it now I realize that feeling overwhelmed is a selfish feeling, a fear of not doing everything perfectly and living up to my perceived expectations that everyone else has of me. Oh, I wish I understood then that I was letting the mists of darkness seep into me and fill me with anxiety. I am so thankful for the chance to look back on those experiences and to learn from them. It is so important that we always take the time to check in on ourselves, to ask ourselves questions like “What are my motives in this situation or in this relationship? Am I being selfish? Am I totally and completely living what I know to be true? Can I really see things from another person’s point of view? Am I being honest?” And we need to ask Heavenly Father those questions too. He’ll answer them. He’ll help us open our hearts, He’ll open our eyes and help us see things as they really are.

I want to bear my testimony that it is our internal experiences that determine our reality. We get to choose. We have all the control over our happiness. There are happy people in every kind of circumstance, and there are miserable ones. We get to choose which we will be. We can be deceived by the mist of selfishness that Satan casts or we can be full of belief, optimism, gratitude, and selfless love and see things as they really are and as they really will be.

Christ is our living Saviour. He is real. We can feel his infinite love and see him, and all things as they really are.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.