



# A SENSE OF THE SACRED

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson**

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

CES Fireside for Young Adults • November 7, 2004 • Brigham Young University

I have titled these remarks “A Sense of the Sacred,” by which I mean an appreciation and reverence for sacred things. Speaking of society in general, I am afraid that many of my generation have been remiss in transmitting to your generation a feeling for sacred things and an understanding of how to respect them.

To the extent possible, I hope to counteract some of the bad examples that are much in evidence around you. I hope to help you refine your ability to discern what is sacred and to respond with reverence for all that is holy.

The importance of having a sense of the sacred is simply this—if one does not appreciate holy things, he will lose them. Absent a feeling of reverence, he will grow increasingly casual in attitude and lax in conduct. He will drift from the moorings that his covenants with God could provide. His feeling of accountability to God will diminish and then be forgotten. Thereafter, he will care only about his own comfort and satisfying his uncontrolled appetites. Finally, he will come to despise sacred things, even God, and then he will despise himself.

On the other hand, with a sense of the sacred, one grows in understanding and truth. The Holy Spirit becomes his frequent and then constant companion. More and more he will stand in holy places and be entrusted with holy things. Just the opposite of cynicism and despair, his end is eternal life.

Paradoxically, much of what I want to convey cannot really be passed from one person to another. It must grow from within. But if I can help you think about some things in a contemplative way, then the Spirit may work in you so that you will not need me or anyone else to tell you what is sacred or how to respond—you will feel it for yourself. It will be part of your nature; indeed, much of it already is.

Sometimes in seeking to understand a concept, it helps to consider its opposite. The contrast makes it clear. So as we try to better understand what it means to have an appreciation of and reverence for sacred things, consider with me some examples of both a sense of the sacred and its absence.

## 1. Prophets and Scripture

Consider first the matter of prophets and scripture. One thing we see around us, and sometimes even in ourselves, is a tendency to treat lightly the messengers of God and their messages. This is not new. Since Adam’s time many have ignored and even attacked those the Lord has sent in His name. Jesus described this in a parable:

“There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about . . . , and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.”

You understand the analogy: the Lord created for us a vineyard—this earth—and we are His lessees or stewards in a mortal sphere removed from His presence.

“And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.”

In other words, God sends His prophets and other messengers to teach us and to receive an accounting of our stewardship.

“And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

“Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

“But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (Matthew 21:33–38).

It was the ultimate sacrilege that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, was rejected and even put to death. And it continues. In many parts of the world today we see a growing rejection of the Son of God. His divinity is questioned. His gospel is deemed irrelevant. In day-to-day life, His teachings are ignored. Those who legitimately speak in His name find little respect in secular society.

If we ignore the Lord and His servants, we may just as well be atheists—the end result is practically the same. It is what Mormon described as typical after extended periods of peace and prosperity: “Then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One” (Helaman 12:2). And so we should ask ourselves, do *we* reverence the Holy One and those He has sent?

Some years before he was called as an Apostle himself, Elder Robert D. Hales recounted an experience that demonstrated his father’s sense of that holy calling. Elder Hales said:

“Some years ago Father, then over eighty years of age, was expecting a visit from a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on a snowy winter day. Father, an artist, had painted a picture of the home of the Apostle. Rather than have the painting delivered to him, this sweet Apostle wanted to go personally to pick the painting up and thank my father for it. Knowing that Father would be concerned that everything was in readiness for the forthcoming visit, I dropped by his home. Because of the depth of the snow, snowplows had caused a snowbank in front of the walkway to the front door. Father had shoveled the walks and then labored to remove the snowbank. He returned to the house exhausted and in pain. When I arrived, he was experiencing heart pain from overexertion and stressful anxiety. My first concern was to warn him of his unwise physical efforts. Didn’t he know what the result of his labor would be?

“‘Robert,’ he said through interrupted short breaths, ‘do you realize an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to my home? The walks must be clean. He should not have to come through a snowdrift.’ He raised his hand, saying, ‘Oh, Robert, don’t ever forget or take for granted the privilege it is to know and to serve with Apostles of the Lord’ ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 64).

I think it is more than coincidence that such a father would be blessed to have a son serve as an Apostle.

You might ask yourself, “Do I see the calling of the prophets and apostles as sacred? Do I treat their counsel seriously, or is it a light thing with me?” President Gordon B. Hinckley, for instance, has counseled us to pursue education and vocational training; to avoid pornography as a plague; to respect women; to eliminate consumer debt; to be grateful, smart, clean, true, humble, and prayerful; and to do our best, our very best.

Do your actions show that you want to know and do what he teaches? Do you actively study his words and the statements of the Brethren? Is this something you hunger and thirst for? If so, you have a sense of the sacredness of the calling of prophets as the witnesses and messengers of the Son of God.

A significant aspect of the prophetic office through the generations has been to record history and the word of God. The scriptures are sacred. When Alma turned the plates of Nephi and other records over to Helaman, he cautioned: “Remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things, *which are sacred, which he has kept sacred*. . . .

“. . . See that ye *take care of these sacred things*, yea, see that ye look to God and live” (Alma 37:14, 47; emphasis added).

We hold in our hands a considerable volume of scripture. The records stretch back to the early patriarchs and forward to our own lifetimes. I suppose this is more scripture than has ever been had by a people in history, and certainly it is more widely available than ever scripture was in the past. I am sure that if you or I held in our hands the original scrolls that Moses wrote upon or the very metal plates that Mormon had inscribed, we would feel a deep sense of reverence and awe and would treat those objects with great care. And so we should, because they are sacred objects, made so in part by the labor and sacrifice of the holy prophets who so painstakingly prepared them.

But the greatest value of such scrolls or plates is not in the objects themselves but in the words they contain. They are sacred because they are the words of God, and while we may not hold the original documents, we do hold the words. Therefore, what we have is holy—holy writ.

Having been granted possession of the recorded words of God, we should ask ourselves if we are respecting the sacred nature of this record. Some have violated the sacredness of the scriptures by ridiculing or denying their validity. That, of course, is a very serious matter.

But for most of us, who readily acknowledge the truthfulness of the standard works, if we are ever guilty of disrespecting the sacred nature of scriptures, it is by neglect. The risk we must guard against day to day is the tendency to treat lightly, or even ignore, the sacred word. Speaking to the elders in 1832, the Lord said, reprovingly:

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because *you have treated lightly the things you have received*—

“Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. . . .

“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written” (D&C 84:54–55, 57; emphasis added).

A sense of the sacred includes an appreciation—even a love—of the scriptures. A sense of the sacred leads one to feast upon the words of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:20; 32:3), which in turn deepens one’s reverence for His words.

## 2. The Body—a Temple of God

I now turn to another example of our theme—the sacred nature of our physical bodies. As God and Christ are deserving of our reverence, so Their works are deserving of our respect and reverence. That of course includes the marvelous creation that is this earth. And yet as wonderful as this earth is, it is not the greatest of God’s creations. Greater still is this marvelous physical body. It is in the very likeness of the person of God. It is essential to our earthly experience and key to our everlasting glory.

It has been my blessing to be present at the moment of the birth of each of our five children. In each instance I felt that it was a sacred experience. Clearly something divine and miraculous was taking place. I can hear my wife saying, “Easy for you to say. You weren’t the one in pain.” Certainly there is plenty of what we might call “real-world experience” associated with birth. To all mothers everywhere I readily admit that I didn’t share your pain, and I don’t pretend to understand.

But, speaking seriously, does not a woman’s suffering in the creation of a physical body add to the holiness of that creation and of the woman herself? Her sacrifice further sanctifies something already holy.

Some have mistakenly supposed that, with respect to their body, they answer to no one. We are specifically told, however, that we remain accountable to God. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:17). “I beseech you therefore . . . , by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

How are we to preserve the sanctity of this most important and sacred of God’s creations? At a minimum, we would not in any way defile our bodies. To be specific, if we possess a sense of the sacred, we would not deface our body as with tattoos and piercings. Some wonder at the fact that the President of the Church has taken notice of this matter. They are puzzled at the directness and specificity of his counsel on this subject. He has stated:

“A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body.

“Likewise the piercing of the body for multiple rings in the ears, in the nose, even in the tongue. Can they possibly think that is beautiful? It is a passing fancy, but its effects can be permanent. . . . The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also ‘the piercing of the body for other than medical purposes.’ We do not, however, take any position ‘on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings’—one pair” (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 52).

Why would the prophet of God talk about things so seemingly insignificant? Because they are not insignificant. Defiling or defacing God’s creation, His temple, makes a mock of that which is sacred. This can be perceived as insignificant only to one who has lost a sense of the sacred. Don’t do it.

Immodest dress also tarnishes the sacredness of the human body. Many rationalizations have been put forth to justify immodest fashion and pornography. Some vigorously assert that no law can be adopted to prevent such expression and then argue that it can’t be wrong because there is no law against it.

Another tired rationalization was recently dusted off and used to justify Olympic athletes posing nude for pornographic magazines. One editor stated, “These women . . . have phenomenal bodies and this is an opportunity to show these bodies off” (in Steve McKee, “An Olympic Pose Isn’t What It Used to Be,” *Wall Street*

*Journal*, Aug. 18, 2004, A8). What he was really saying, of course, was, “I think I deserve to make some money off these phenomenal bodies.”

Whatever the rationalizations, you will often find that the real motivation underlying immodesty is someone’s desire to profit from titillation, someone’s lust for money. The body is a temple of God, and pornography and revealing clothes are evidence that moneychangers are again desecrating the temple.

We could speak of the Word of Wisdom and a number of other things, but of all that could be cited as defiling the body, the most harmful, the most destructive, the most distressing act of irreverence is sexual immorality—and its cousin, sexual abuse.

One cannot imagine a more fundamental defiling of God’s creation than to profane its most sacred use. You simply must not do anything of the kind. Don’t even skirt around the edges. “Flee fornication. . . . He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). “Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Keep your body holy as a living offering to God (see Romans 12:1).

### 3. Sacred Places and Occasions

Let’s now consider for a moment the matter of sacred places and events. Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord criticized Israel’s priests for failing to teach respect for the sacred nature of certain activities and places:

“Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them” (Ezekiel 22:26).

Much of what the Lord was talking about had to do with the temple. There is also reference to the Sabbath. We are used to thinking of our temples and meetinghouses, as dedicated to the Lord, as sacred space. On each temple building are found, as a sober reminder, the words *Holiness to the Lord—the House of the Lord*. A sense of the sacred should lead us to act and speak with reverence in and around these buildings. It would lead us to dress a certain way when we are there.

We spoke of immodest dress as dishonoring the body, God’s most sacred creation. I speak now of immodest, casual, or slovenly dress and grooming that in particular times and places mocks the sacredness of what is taking place or of the place itself.

Let me give you an example. A while back a young woman from another state came to live with some of her relatives in the Salt Lake City area for a few weeks. On her first Sunday she came to church dressed in a simple, nice blouse and knee-length skirt set off with a light, button-up sweater. She wore hose and dress shoes, and her hair was combed simply but with care. Her overall appearance created an impression of youthful grace.

Unfortunately, she immediately felt out of place. It seemed like all the other young women her age or near her age were dressed in casual skirts, some rather distant from the knee; tight T-shirt-like tops that barely met the top of their skirts at the waist (some bare instead of barely); no socks or stockings; and clunky sneakers or flip-flops.

One would have hoped that seeing the new girl, the other girls would have realized how inappropriate their manner of dress was for a chapel and for the Sabbath day and immediately changed for the better. Sad to say, however, they did not, and it was the visitor who, in order to fit in, adopted the fashion (if you can call it that) of her host ward.

It is troubling to see this growing trend that is not limited to young women but extends to older women, to men, and to young men as well. Years ago my ward in Tennessee used a high school for church services on Sundays while our chapel, which had been damaged by a tornado, was being repaired. A congregation of another faith used the same high school for their worship services while their new chapel was being constructed.

I was shocked to see what the people of this other congregation wore to church. There was not a suit or tie among the men. They appeared to have come from or to be on their way to the golf course. It was hard to spot a woman wearing a dress or anything other than very casual pants or even shorts. Had I not known that they were coming to the school for church meetings, I would have assumed that there was some kind of sporting event taking place.

The dress of our ward members compared very favorably to this bad example, but I am beginning to

think that we are no longer quite so different as more and more we seem to slide toward that lower standard. We used to use the phrase “Sunday best.” People understood that to mean the nicest clothes they had. The specific clothing would vary according to different cultures and economic circumstances, but it would be their best.

It is an affront to God to come into His house, especially on His holy day, not groomed and dressed in the most careful and modest manner that our circumstances permit. Where a poor member from the hills of Peru must ford a river to get to church, the Lord surely will not be offended by the stain of muddy water on his white shirt.

But how can God not be pained at the sight of one who, with all the clothes he needs and more and with easy access to the chapel, nevertheless appears in church in rumpled cargo pants and a T-shirt? Ironically, it has been my experience as I travel around the world that members of the Church with the least means somehow find a way to arrive at Sabbath meetings neatly dressed in clean, nice clothes, the best they have, while those who have more than enough are the ones who may appear in casual, even slovenly clothing.

Some say dress and hair don’t matter—it’s what’s inside that counts. I believe that truly it is what’s inside a person that counts, but that’s what worries me. Casual dress at holy places and events is a message about what is inside a person. It may be pride or rebellion or something else, but at a minimum it says, “I don’t get it. I don’t understand the difference between the sacred and the profane.” In that condition they are easily drawn away from the Lord. They do not appreciate the value of what they have. I worry about them. Unless they can gain some understanding and capture some feeling for sacred things, they are at risk of eventually losing all that matters most. You are Saints of the great latter-day dispensation—look the part.

These principles apply as well to activities and events that are themselves sacred or are related to things that deserve reverence—priesthood ordinances, for example: baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, blessings of the sick, and so forth. The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that in the ordinances of the priesthood “the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:20).

Alma says that “these ordinances were given . . . that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord” (Alma 13:16).

I appreciate both those who perform these ordinances and those who witness or receive them when they show respect for the priesthood and the sacred nature of what is occurring.

I appreciate priests, teachers, and deacons who wear dress shirts and ties to officiate in the administration of the sacrament.

I appreciate men who put on a shirt and tie, when the circumstances permit, to bless the sick. I appreciate those who attend the ordination of a man to a priesthood office who dress in their Sunday best no matter what day or where the ordination takes place. They are all demonstrating an appreciation and respect for God and for the event. They are demonstrating a sense of the sacred.

Just as it is sacred when a life comes into being, so it is a sacred time when mortal life comes to an end. And I believe the same is true with respect to the most important act that can occur in life—marriage, especially eternal marriage. For this reason it is disconcerting to see how people are becoming careless, even irreverent and disrespectful, in speech, dress, and conduct when they participate in events related to death and marriage.

Some funeral services become occasions for lightmindedness and inappropriate humor. Personal remembrances, quite appropriate in moderation, can occupy an hour or two while the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord and His plan of salvation receive only a passing mention, if any.

Occasionally at weddings and often at wedding receptions, people arrive in very casual clothing. It is as if they cannot be bothered to clean up from their work or recreation of that day. By their dress they are saying that the marriage they have been invited to honor is of little significance.

Recently I read a note from a man who was urging his companions to wear a coat and tie when they appeared together at a public event honoring their organization and what it had accomplished. Their service was civic, not religious in nature, and we would not term it sacred, but he understood the principle that some things

deserve respect and that our manner of dress is a part of that expression. He said he was going to dress more formally “not because I’m important, but because this occasion is so important.” His comment states an important truth. It is really not about us. Acting and dressing in a way to honor sacred events and places is about God.

#### 4. Speech

Turning to another issue, there are matters of speech that have to do with a sense of the sacred. That we are responsible for what we say is clear from the Lord’s statement “That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). King Benjamin warns us to watch our thoughts and our words (see Mosiah 4:30), and Alma declares that without repentance, when we are judged, “our words will condemn us, yea . . . ; we shall not be found spotless” (Alma 12:14).

You know by your own experience that the world is growing more profane, more coarse in speech, but we cannot suffer ourselves to fall into that pattern. Cursing and coarse language mock God and Christ and Their creations. We must never be guilty of mocking the Savior, as happened at His Crucifixion.

“And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

“Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

“Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

“Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him” (Mark 15:29–32).

The condemnation of the sons of perdition is that they have “crucified [Christ] unto themselves and put him to an open shame” (D&C 76:35). We cannot risk anything of the kind in our speech. We cannot afford to speak His name or in His name lightly or carelessly.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read this instruction and warning:

“Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ.

“Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—

“For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority. . . .

“Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; . . . and ye receive the Spirit through prayer; wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation” (D&C 63:60–62, 64).

Although we have authority to use the name of Jesus Christ, we must do it carefully. His name and “that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit.” We should remember this when we are called upon to speak in church or when we bear testimony.

We know that in these situations we are expected to close “in the name of Jesus Christ,” meaning that what we have said, we say in His name. Therefore, we must take special care what we say and how we say it. There is no room for silliness or foolish speech. Above all, we must seek the Spirit through prayer so that we speak by constraint of the Spirit and avoid condemnation.

I have noted that President Gordon B. Hinckley often ends his talks “in the *sacred* name of Jesus Christ.” I am not suggesting that you should do the same; I don’t believe that is what he intends or that it would be appropriate for us routinely to do so. Rather, I am calling your attention to the fact that the prophet senses deeply the responsibility of speaking in the name of the Lord, and it is sacred to him. He uses and speaks in that name reverently, and that is the example we should follow.

#### 5. Godly Fear

My final example could go under the heading “godly fear.” There are many places in the scriptures that counsel mankind to fear God. In our day we generally interpret the word *fear* as “respect” or “reverence” or “love”; that is, the fear of God means the love of God or respect for Him and His law. That may often be a correct reading, but I wonder if sometimes *fear* doesn’t really mean *fear*, as when the prophets speak of fearing to offend God by breaking His commandments.

Consider, for example, this proverb: “And by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6). Job was described as a perfect and upright man, “one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). A good example of this attitude would be Joseph in Egypt.

When Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him, Joseph responded, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). He was afraid to sin against God. Many today would regard Joseph's reaction as naïve. They would laugh at his lack of sophistication, being themselves unafraid to sin against God.

Joseph Smith was once corrected for not showing sufficient concern for God's desires. The Lord said to him: "You should not have feared man more than God. Although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words—Yet you should have been faithful" (D&C 3:7–8).

I submit that fear of the Lord, or what Paul calls "godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28), should be part of our reverence for Him. We should so love and reverence Him that we fear doing anything wrong in His sight, whatever may be the opinions of or pressure from others. Moroni urges us, "Begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him" (Mormon 9:27).

Because the world around us generally ignores God, it is easy for us at times to forget that our responsibility to know and do His will is constant. Most do not realize, or do not believe, that in a future day each of us must account to the Lord for his or her life: thoughts, words, and actions. Working out our own salvation with fear and trembling means striving in the decisions and activities of life day by day to prepare what will be a good accounting.

Having been blessed to receive what we have received, we can advance spiritually as no other people, but we are also at greater risk than any others. We cannot commit the sins they do without coming under a greater condemnation, for if we sin, we sin against a greater light. We cannot trifle with the sacred things committed to our care and be considered innocent as those who know not God.

God is feeling after us to see if we will prove faithful, and if we have the integrity and sensitivity to honor sacred things, we will receive even more. But if not, our blessings will turn to our condemnation. The right attitude or pattern is that stated by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

"He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.

"And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you" (D&C 52:15–17).

Accept the fatherly plea of Alma to Corianton: "O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more [by supposing that there is not or should not be any punishment of the sinner]. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do . . . let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility" (Alma 42:30).

### A Caution

I end with a word of caution to you. With a deepening reverence for sacred things, your understanding grows. The scriptures speak of it as a light that grows "brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24). That process is also described as progressing from grace to grace. The Savior Himself progressed in that way until He received a fulness, and you may follow in His footsteps (see D&C 93:12–20).

That is where a sense of the sacred will lead you. Always remember, however, as holiness grows within and you are entrusted with greater knowledge and understanding that you must treat these things with care. We read earlier the scripture affirming that that which comes from above is sacred and must be spoken with care and by constraint of the Spirit. The Lord also commanded, rather bluntly, that we must not cast pearls before swine or give that which is holy to dogs (see 3 Nephi 14:6; D&C 41:6), meaning sacred things should not be disclosed or discussed with those who are not prepared to appreciate their value and who may even attack rather than appreciate them.

Be wise with what the Lord gives you. It is a trust. You would not, for example, indiscriminately share the content of your patriarchal blessing.

President Boyd K. Packer once counseled:

"I have come to believe also that it is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts us to use them to the blessing of others.

"I am ever mindful of Alma's words:

"It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.' (Alma 12:9.)

"I heard President [Marion G.] Romney once counsel mission presidents and their wives in Geneva. 'I do not tell all I know. I have never told my wife all I know, for I found out that if I talked too lightly of sacred things, thereafter the Lord would not trust me.'

"We are, I believe, to keep these things and ponder them in our hearts, as Luke said Mary did of the supernal events that surrounded the birth of Jesus. (See Luke 2:19.)" (*"That All May Be Edified"* [1982], 337).

All things sacred and holy are to be revealed and brought together in this last and most wonderful dispensation. With the Restoration of the gospel, the Church, and the

priesthood of Jesus Christ, we hold an almost incomprehensible store of sacred things in our hands. It is almost too great a blessing that we have been born now, at a time and in places where the monumental blessings that past prophets have dreamed of and longed for would come into our lives. We cannot neglect or let them slip away.

Rather than drifting into carelessness, may your life be one of increasing exactness in obedience. I hope you will think and feel and dress and act in ways that show reverence and respect for sacred things, sacred places, sacred occasions.

It is my prayer that a sense of the sacred will distill upon your soul as the dews from heaven. May it draw you close to Jesus Christ, who died, who was resurrected, who lives, who is your Redeemer. May He make you holy as He is holy, that you may sit down in His kingdom "to go no more out" (Alma 7:25). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.