



## PUSH BACK AGAINST THE WORLD

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with Sister Kristen M. Oaks

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Sister Oaks and I are thrilled to be here in Pocatello and to be in this Pocatello, Idaho, institute for a broadcast this evening that goes to many places in the world. For the benefit of the audiences out there, I want to say what a large group of young adults we have in the Pocatello area. They number approximately 10,000, and about 7,000 of these are in the student body of Idaho State University, whose president, Arthur Vailas, is here with us this evening with his wife. The total enrollment of Idaho State is about 14,000, so our Latter-day Saint student representation is about 50 percent. This is a remarkable community of Latter-day Saints in southeastern Idaho, and we feel especially blessed to be here on this occasion to originate this CES broadcast.

### Dating versus Hanging Out Revisited

When I spoke to this audience at a CES fireside in May 2005, I spoke about dating and hanging out. That stimulated so many reactions that I believe I should revisit that subject before proceeding to the main subject of my talk tonight.

For the benefit of those who have not heard about this, and to refresh the recollection of those who have, I give this brief summary of my earlier message.

*First*, I joined other observers in expressing concern at the tendency of many young people in their twenties to postpone the responsibilities of marriage and family life.

*Second*, I shared the opinion of knowledgeable observers that dating has nearly disappeared from college campuses and among young adults generally. It has been replaced by something called “hanging out.” I defined hanging out and dating for the benefit of those who do not understand one or the other. One of the letters sent to me after my talk—by the way, I think it came from a woman here in Idaho—provided a new and better definition. Hanging out, she said, is “being idle in groups.”

*Third*, I discussed why dating has become difficult and unpopular.

I then gave this advice, which I quote from that fireside talk:

“Men, if you have returned from your mission and you are still following the boy-girl patterns you were counseled to follow [before you were 16], it is time for you to grow up. Gather your courage and look for someone to pair off with. Start with a variety of dates with a variety of young women, and when that phase yields a good prospect, proceed to courtship. It’s marriage time. That is what the Lord intends for His young adult sons and daughters. Men have the initiative, and you men should get on with it. If you don’t know what a date is, perhaps this definition will help. I heard it from my 18-year-old granddaughter. A ‘date’ must pass the test of three *p*’s: (1) planned ahead, (2) paid for, and (3) paired off.

“Young women, resist too much hanging out, and encourage dates that are simple, inexpensive, and frequent. Don’t make it easy for young men to hang out in a setting where you women provide the food. Don’t subsidize freeloaders. An occasional group activity is okay, but when you see men who make hanging out their primary interaction with the opposite sex, I think you should lock the pantry and bolt the front door.

“If you do this, you should also hang out a sign, ‘Will open for individual dates,’ or something like that. And, young women, . . . [i]f we are to persuade young men to ask for dates more frequently, we must establish a mutual expectation that to go on a date is not to imply a continuing commitment. . . .

“My single young friends, we counsel you to channel your associations with the opposite sex into dating patterns that have the potential to mature into marriage, not hanging-out patterns that only have the prospect to mature into team sports like touch football. Marriage is not a group activity—at least not until the children come along in goodly numbers” (*The Dedication of a Lifetime* [CES fireside for young adults, May 1, 2005], 5–6).

Now, that's the end of my quotes from my talk of two and a half years ago.

What happened next? I received some letters of thanks, mostly from women. "You got it right," many said. Some affirmed what one referred to as "the lamentable dating situation . . . in the single scene in general." A few men complained that women turned them down when they asked for dates or that it was women who weren't willing to move toward family commitments.

One letter said that "many young single adults in the Church are frustrated with the 'hanging out' culture . . . but feel powerless to reform the entire system on their own." This woman thanked me for placing on each of us what she called "the personal responsibility to act," and added that she had identified ways that she could "discourage hanging out and encourage, instead, a culture of dating." As an example of that, another letter (one of my favorites) had a picture of the sign on the door to her apartment. It said: "Will Open for Individual Dates!!!!"

Another woman reported that her sister had married a man she met in hanging out. They had not done much dating, so neither of them had learned to pair off in a social setting. Now their marriage is in trouble because each of them continues to hang out—he with the guys and she with the girls.

Time forbids reviewing many more of these letters, but I offer one more because it probably represents experiences that are typical. This letter arrived about a year after my talk. It was signed by a couple who thanked me for their happy marriage. They reported that they had both been students in graduate school and friends in a singles ward. He asked her if she wanted to date just for fun and to get better acquainted. After considering this for a few days, she informed him that she was not interested.

A few months went by, and then my fireside address provided some needed impetus. They wrote: "During the fireside, you noted that 'part of making [dating] easier is to avoid implying that a date is something very serious. If we are to persuade young men to ask for dates more frequently, we must establish a mutual expectation that to go on a date is not to imply a continuing commitment.'

"Immediately following the fireside," their letter continues, "[she] approached [him] and asked if

[she] could talk to [him]." She told him she had reconsidered the idea of dating and that if he was still interested, she could give it a try. "We still had much to learn about each other," they wrote, "and many changes to undergo. We were married the following May in the Washington D.C. Temple. Your direct and clear counsel helped us realize that dating was an opportunity to get to know one another better and not an immediate commitment to a long-term relationship or marriage." Right!

As I said in my talk: "Simple and more frequent dates allow both men and women to 'shop around' in a way that allows extensive evaluation of the prospects. The old-fashioned date was a wonderful way to get acquainted with a member of the opposite sex. It encouraged conversation. It allowed you to see how you treat others and how you are treated in a one-on-one situation. It gave opportunities to learn how to initiate and sustain a mature relationship. None of that happens in hanging out" (*The Dedication of a Lifetime*, 5).

Now I want to introduce my date for this occasion, my wife, Kristen.

### Sister Kristen M. Oaks

Good evening. I'm so happy that Elder Oaks still considers me his date. Girls, hope springs eternal. And men, that goes for you too. We love you and are so honored to be with the noble and great rising generation of the Church. You are the future, and you are magnificent. There is so much joy and beauty ahead for you.

We also know that being single poses unique challenges—decisions about education, marriage, and dedication to your family and your religion. I wish to address four things tonight that are on my heart: (1) your ability to strengthen your home and family, (2) your ability to build and uplift one another, (3) your time in a singles ward or as a single in a home ward, and (4) deciding whom to date.

*One:* The Lord is depending on you to assist in the exaltation of your eternal family. Sister Mary N. Cook addressed this subject in the October 2007 general conference. She said: "All families need strengthening, from the ideal to the most troubled. That strengthening can come from *you*" ("Strengthen Home and Family," *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 11).

I want to testify that what she said is true. Your energy, your enthusiasm, and your example have such an affect on your family—even if it comes in the form of letters or telephone calls. The young singles in my family are a delight, and their devotion, dedication, sense of humor, and faith provide a glue that literally holds our family together. To quote Sister Cook, “The example of your righteous life will strengthen your family” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 11). You matter, and you make a difference.

*Two:* Be good to one another. We desperately need kind words of encouragement. Those words can come from *your* lips. Start now to use them and they will be an eternal blessing.

Brethren, I speak to you. Never be afraid to build those around you. What you say will be remembered a very long time. Elder Oaks wrote in his high school yearbook lines of praise to a young woman who would, as an adult, become the president of a general auxiliary in the Church. Over 50 years after he had written them, she used those words in her biography.

All of us need to be uplifted. Sisters, you are surrounded by so many handsome, good, and righteous young men. (I was reminded of this as I went through the bank drive-through last week and saw two noble priesthood holders in the camera.) Sisters, your words of encouragement and your vision to see the potential and goodness in others, especially the men around you, will bring great dividends. We grow and flourish when we are praised and valued. Kind, true words are a gift you give yourself and others, and they will continue to do so into your marriage.

*Three:* Many of you are in singles wards. There is no separate Church for singles. There may be wards or branches or classes for singles, but we are all part of the same Church. There can be much joy in attending a singles ward—activities and parties and service projects and spiritual guidance. There are opportunities to bond with others with similar interests and age and to meet new friends. However, in this environment of possible future mates and with only a short window of time, some singles focus almost all their energy in a frenetic search for a husband or wife. Instead of enjoying this unique time to meet with others in a similar single situation, they become preoccupied by a nagging fear that marriage is escaping them. They become more frustrated and concerned with their single condition.

You’re in the prime of your lives—no wrinkles, free discretionary time, and a world burgeoning with options and opportunity. You want to make decisions that count. But sometimes, making these decisions seems very difficult. Why is it so difficult?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland addressed that problem while talking to missionaries about their struggles in the mission field. He spoke about the price we must pay to return to Heavenly Father. His advice applies to anyone who is struggling to know and serve God. Many of the missionaries he addressed were frustrated, seeing little success, and wondering if their missions were of worth. They asked, “Why is this so hard? Why doesn’t it go better? Why can’t our success be more rapid? Why aren’t there more people joining the Church? It is the truth. . . . We trust in miracles. Why don’t people just flock to the [Church]? . . . Why isn’t it easier?”

Elder Holland replied: “I have thought about this a great deal. I offer this as my personal feeling. It is not Church doctrine. . . . I am convinced that missionary work is not easy because salvation is not a cheap experience.” (And I would add that a university experience or this life experience is not easy because it is not a cheap experience.) “Salvation never was easy. We are the Church of Jesus Christ, this is the truth, He is our Great Eternal Head. Why would we believe . . . that it would be easy for us when it was never, ever easy for Him? . . . How could we possibly bear any moving, lasting testimony of the Atonement if we have never known or felt anything of such an experience? As [members and] missionaries we are proud to say we are disciples of Christ—and we are. But mark my word. That means [we] must be prepared to walk something of the path He walked, to feel something of the pain He felt, to at least occasionally . . . shed one of the tears of sorrow that He shed” (*The Atonement* [address at seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2007], 8).

Salvation is not a cheap experience, and we should remember that. Never let any trials stand between you and your allegiance to your Heavenly Father. Never let any insult or challenge separate you from partaking of the sacrament and lead you to spiritual weakness and possibly to a spiritual death. Hold fast, and remember what you know to be true.

*Four:* Deciding whom to date. Elder Oaks and I both know very well what it is like to be a single member of this Church. He was a widower for 2 years, and I

was single for more than 50 years. (It seemed like a world record!) We know what loneliness is and what it feels like to weep at night until your pillow is wet.

We have been asked the same question many times recently. It goes something like this: “There is no one for me to date—what should I do? What do you suggest?” One single sister shared with a close friend that she was tired of waiting to be married. She was tired of being alone, tired of supporting herself, tired of making all the decisions herself, and tired of waiting for her dreams. The wait was getting her nowhere. She wanted all the right things. She wanted to be a wife, to be a mother, to have a family, but in her desperation she went about it in all the wrong ways. She decided to pursue a man who did not share her values—and this could be any man, sisters. She discovered too late that her compromise had brought her only profound sorrow, self-hate, and despair. She discovered too late that her wait upon the Lord would have been well worth it for her personal peace and happiness.

Again, the question: “There seems to be no one for me to date—what should I do?” I ask you tonight to answer that question yourself.

What do you wish for yourself and your future mate and family? We live in the greatest of dispensations, and we should know for ourselves why it is so wonderful and what we hope to accomplish. I’m going to ask you tonight to write yourself a letter that only you will read—a letter to your future self and to the family and children that you wish to have, a letter that answers questions and shares the desires of your heart. When you know who you are and what you want and what you are looking for, you will find it.

Do you want your future family to know they have a Heavenly Father who loves them, who is intimately involved in their lives, and who will watch over them? A Heavenly Father who will answer their prayers? A Heavenly Father who cares about every breath they take and even about the number of hairs on their heads? A Heavenly Father who watches over them as they leave in the morning and return at night and make decisions about right and wrong?

Do you want a mate who makes eternal covenants with our Heavenly Father—covenants to stay loyal and true and at your side when life is difficult? I was once given a blessing that said, “If you cannot

endure the struggles of being single, you will not be able to endure the pressures of married life.” I testify that this is true. The Lord will strengthen you and lift you.

Do you want your future husband or wife and children to know their Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses [and the depression and the sadness] of his people”? (Alma 7:11). Do you want this, or do you want to stand alone?

Do you wish your family to be united in their testimony of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and to feel the great power that this testimony can bring your family? Do you firmly know that you belong to Christ’s true Church on earth and that you have full access to the blessings of eternal life and happiness? And do you love and support President Gordon B. Hinckley as a prophet of God on earth?

Tonight, or when it is convenient, you write a letter to yourself. You write your future loved ones and let them know what you want in your marriage, the standards you set for yourself, the way you dress and date, and the loving goodness you want for them. Do this and all your questions will answer themselves. The power is within you. You know the answers, and you want to be happy eternally and peaceful and secure. The answers are within you.

I love you so much. I’m so thankful to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I want you to know that I know that this Church is true and it is a beacon of safety in a very dark world. And I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Push Back against the World**

Thank you, Kristen. Before I go to my prepared remarks, I would just like to say how blessed I feel to be married to a world-record holder. Now to my main subject.

This is a challenging time for young people. Every day we are assaulted with big worries: global warming, wars and rumors of wars, drought, a possible pandemic of some infectious disease, and a possible recession. Seacoast cities are worrying about the rising level of the ocean, which will bring ocean tides to their doorsteps or over the thresholds. But as

serious as all this is, I worry more about the rising tide of evil in the world around us.

I see all of these challenges as a fulfillment of Father Lehi's prophetic teaching: There must needs be "an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). In the midst of all of these challenges, we should trust in the great promises of the Lord. He has taught us that He does not ask anything of us except he prepares the way for us to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7). He has shown us that while He may not immediately answer our prayers for relief from hardships, He will strengthen us to bear the burdens placed upon us (see Mosiah 24:14–15). And He has also taught us, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

We are surrounded with evil in literature, music, entertainment, movies, and videos; on the Internet; in our schools; and in the marketplace. We cannot change the evil influences that inevitably press upon us and our families, but we can increase our power to deal with them. We must try to carve out our own islands of serenity and strengthen our barriers against the forces that besiege us in our protected spaces. In short, we should *push back against the world*.

This idea of pushing back against the world does not suggest that we support a revolution or make ourselves distant from our neighbors or obnoxious to those with whom we must deal. It only suggests that within the limits of our own resources of time and influence we should take a position, make it known, and attempt to persuade others of its merit, at least for us.

As an example of what I mean by pushing back, I share a personal experience I have not previously shared publicly. It happened over 50 years ago. I was a sergeant in the Utah National Guard and had attained the age of 21 and completed all of the educational requirements necessary to qualify as a commissioned officer, a lieutenant of artillery—all the requirements except one. I needed to pass the physical examination.

I reported to a military medical facility. It was staffed by reserve personnel just like I was, which perhaps explains what I encountered. A corporal gave me a color blindness test. He showed me about a dozen pages covered with different colored dots and asked what number I saw in the dots on each page. After I finished the test, he closed the book with some finality and said, "Sergeant, you can never be an officer because you are color-blind."

I was astonished. If I was color-blind, this was my first knowledge of that fact.

Disappointed and a little insulted, I determined that if I, as a sergeant, was not going to pass the physical to be an officer, I would not be turned down by a corporal, whom I out-ranked. I demanded to see the captain, a medical doctor I could see at his desk across the room. I pushed back against the system, and I did so with such insistence that the corporal reluctantly took me to the captain.

"What seems to be the problem?" this doctor asked. I explained, and he took the book of colored dots from the corporal's hands and, to my relief, administered the test to me himself. After I had told him all the numbers I could see in those colored dots, he spoke directly to both of us. "Sergeant, you pass. Corporal, *you* are color-blind."

That is how I qualified to be a lieutenant in the Utah National Guard, which opened other doors for me and led to some important experiences in my life. There are times when you need to push back.

We surely live in perilous times, and there is much cause for concern. Nevertheless, in these days—as in the many stressful times of the past—young people should go forward with optimism and prepare for a long and productive life. Marry. Have children. Get an education. Have faith.

In his recent book, *Finding Peace, Happiness, and Joy*, Elder Richard G. Scott has a chapter titled "To Live Well amid Increasing Evil." I quote from that chapter:

"You have a choice. You can wring your hands and be consumed with concern for the future, or you can choose to use the counsel the Lord has given to live with peace and happiness in a world awash with evil. If you choose to concentrate on the dark side, that is what you will see. . . .

"Now look at the brighter side. Despite pockets of evil, the world overall is majestically beautiful, filled with many good and sincere people. God has provided a way to live in this world and not be contaminated by the degrading pressures spread throughout it" ([2007], 172–73).

All of these things are possible if we have faith, which is trust in the Lord. Trust in His plan. Trust in His promised blessings. And trust in His leaders, who will not lead you astray.

## What We *Should* Do on the Sabbath

One of the most effective ways we can go forward with faith and push back against the world is to observe the Sabbath day in an appropriate, positive way. This day of worship and rest from worldly labors is the divinely appointed anchor in the storms of life. Properly observed, it will help us and our families develop the spiritual strength we need to stand firm against temptation and to stay unspotted from the world (see D&C 59:9). Proper use of the Sabbath will brighten our light of faith and hope in an ever-darkening storm of wickedness.

I am conscious that most sermons on the Sabbath concentrate on what we should *not* do on the Sabbath day. That is not my message. I will devote most of this talk to what we *should* do on the Sabbath.

We are commanded to “observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (D&C 68:29). The Sabbath is set apart as a sacred time for spiritual and physical rejuvenation: partaking of the sacrament, preparing for and performing ordinances, learning and teaching gospel doctrine and principles, fostering family unity, giving service, and enjoying righteous sociality.

In our concern for the Sabbath we are very different from most people of the world. We live in a time when most people attach no sacred significance to the Sabbath. It has become a day to pursue wealth, pleasure, and personal convenience. It is the biggest shopping day of the week. It is a day for beaches, boats, and other recreation. It is the favored day for sports, ball games, rodeos, and whatever.

We all know the origin of the Sabbath. In six days the Lord created the earth and all that is in it, but on the seventh He rested. He blessed the Sabbath day and “hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11). He commanded: “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work,” but on the seventh day we should “not do any work,” nor should our family members or employees (vv. 9–10). We should “remember” that day “to keep it holy” (v. 8).

The Sabbath was a sign of God’s covenant with Israel. Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord said that He had given Israel His statutes (commandments; see Ezekiel 20:11) and also “I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that

sanctify them” (v. 12). “Hallow my sabbaths,” the Lord said, “and they shall be a sign between me and you” (v. 20).

There was a purpose to this sign and commandment, and there were blessings attached to keeping them. Through the prophet Moses, the Lord declared that if Israel would keep His Sabbaths and His commandments, He would make their land fruitful and safe (see Leviticus 26:2–6). “I will give peace in the land,” He promised (v. 6).

Again in modern times the Lord has commanded that on the Sabbath we “rest from [our] labors” and “pay [our] devotions unto the Most High,” and that on this day we “do none other thing” (D&C 59:10, 13).

When we keep our Creator’s commandments, we qualify for His promised blessings. He who created us knows what patterns of behavior will allow us to achieve our maximum physical and spiritual performance, and He has given us commandments designed to guide us into that behavior.

Some years ago I got a new car. It was a marvel of engineering—serviceable and complex—and, of course, it required regular infusions of fuel and some periodic maintenance to keep it operating at its peak efficiency. To instruct the user on these essentials, the manufacturer provided an operating manual. Our Creator has done the same for our spiritual and physical bodies. The Word of Wisdom is such a direction. So is the Sabbath day.

Our Creator has told us that our physical vitality and spiritual growth will be best if we work six days and rest on the seventh. The Mormon pioneer wagon trains followed this commandment. From many sources we know that they traveled for six days and rested on the seventh. For the Mormon pioneers, Sunday was not only a time of rest but a time of spiritual rejuvenation. That practice served them well. Tradition has it that the six-day-per-week travelers across the plains got to their destinations as soon as the seven-day-per-week travelers, and with a lot less wear, tear, breakdowns, and losses of life and livestock along the way.

Similarly, our physical bodies cannot thrive without the nutrients our Creator intended we have. For example, if we forgo calcium, the results are not immediately visible, but in time the miraculous machinery of our bodies breaks down without that essential nutrient. The same is true of the spiritual

vitality we need to sustain us in our journey toward eternal life. If we do not arrange our lives to get the spiritual nourishment we need, our spirits will be stunted and we will be stalled in our journey toward our eternal destination.

How we clothe our bodies is also important to our worship and our claiming the blessings of honoring the Sabbath day. In recent years we have sensed a significant deterioration in the dignity and appropriateness of the way our members—especially youth—are dressed when they come to worship in our dedicated buildings. We should take care to dress appropriately when we come to worship and partake of the sacrament.

In order to “pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:10), we should attend our own ward on the Sabbath. Attend the ward that has your membership record, the ward where you pay your tithing and go for your temple recommend. Attending any other ward should be an infrequent exception. Young adults—especially young men—don’t drift from ward to ward without a Church calling. Many do this, perhaps seeking to justify it in terms of their search for an eternal companion. Of course there are appropriate social gatherings for young Church members, and we do all that we can to encourage them. But your paramount motivation in Sunday meetings should not be to attend a social gathering. The Sabbath is a time to partake of the sacrament, to give service, and to maintain a relationship with your bishop—the Lord’s common judge—whom you will need to see for a temple recommend.

Don’t be in the position of a young man who recently asked for an urgent appointment with his bishop because he wanted to be married in the temple the following week. The bishop said: “Who are you? I have your membership record, and I know your parents, but I haven’t seen you since you came off your mission. I have no record of your paying tithing. I know that you have not been serving the Lord in a calling. I cannot give you a recommend. Come back to your ward. Serve here and pay your tithing here and let your bishop feel your spirit here. Then, in a few months, we can talk about a recommend.”

When the temple wedding did not occur on schedule, it was hard for everyone, especially the bishop. But the bishop was right.

While I am on this subject, I want to make a request of each young adult in this audience. The most overworked persons in the Church are our bishops. Please, please, don’t do anything that adds special tasks to their heavy burdens. See them for a recommend, of course, but don’t postpone getting a recommend or an ecclesiastical endorsement until you move into a new ward and then go to your new bishop at the last minute. If you do this, he has to track down your prior bishop to verify your worthiness—and that may take days and a lot of his time. Don’t make your procrastination or your failure to plan ahead an extra burden for a busy bishop.

### **The Sabbath Day Is Different**

I said at the outset that I was not going to talk about what we should *not do* on the Sabbath day. I wish to focus on the positive things we *should do* to qualify for the blessings promised to those who keep the Sabbath day holy. Our efforts begin with seeing the Sabbath day as fundamentally different.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: “[The Sabbath day] is a day in which to worship and to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Lord. It is a day on which to surrender every worldly interest and to praise the Lord humbly, for humility is the beginning of exaltation” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 170).

Years later, after Elder Kimball had become President Kimball, the First Presidency instituted the three-hour consolidated meeting schedule we still follow. That schedule, they said, placed upon individual members and families the responsibility for proper observance of the Sabbath day. The First Presidency observed that there would be more time available “for personal study of the scriptures and family-centered gospel study. Other appropriate Sabbath activities, such as strengthening family ties, visiting the sick and homebound, giving service to others, writing personal and family histories, genealogical work, and missionary work should be carefully planned and carried out” (First Presidency letter, Feb. 1, 1980).

This year the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies of the Church have been studying the teachings of President Spencer W. Kimball. In the chapter titled “The Sabbath—A Delight” we read these words: “The Sabbath is a holy day in which

to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important, but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it" (*Teachings*, 170; see also *Ensign*, Jan. 1978, 4).

The commandment calls for constructive action on the Sabbath. It also has a command for the other six days: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work" (Exodus 20:9). Idlers take note!

Partaking of the sacrament is probably the most important part of observing the Sabbath day. The sacrament is an ordinance of the Church, one in which we are commanded to participate each Sabbath day (see D&C 59:9–10). When we make and keep the covenants in this ordinance, we are promised that we may "always have his Spirit to be with [us]" (D&C 20:77).

Why is it important to always have His Spirit to be with us? The mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of the Father and the Son and to lead us into truth. This testifying is absolutely vital to our personal testimonies. We cannot have a testimony of the Father, who is the author of the plan of salvation, and of the Son, who is our Savior, unless we have a witness from the Holy Ghost. All members have the *gift* of the Holy Ghost, but partaking of the sacrament worthily and appropriately each Sabbath day is still essential to maintaining a strong testimony. Only by this renewing of our baptismal covenants can we always have His Spirit with us.

The Holy Ghost also has the mission of bringing things to our remembrance and of leading us into truth. That personal revelation is essential for us to be warned away from danger and guided to live our daily lives in harmony with the Lord and in furtherance of what He would have us become.

For all of these reasons, weekly attendance at sacrament meeting and worthily and appropriately partaking of the sacrament are fundamental to our daily religious lives.

Here I feel to share a personal experience that has influenced my thinking about the Sabbath. While I was a student in law school, more than 50 years ago, I was in a small study group with a fellow student who was an Orthodox Jew. On a Friday afternoon he said he had to leave to catch the train so he could

arrive at his home on the north side of Chicago before the Sabbath began at sunset. I walked to the train with him, continuing our study discussions along the way.

As we drew near the station, our conversation turned to the Sabbath. I told him I admired his faithful observance of the Sabbath, sharing the fact that I also never studied on the Sabbath. He responded, "Oh, I study on the Sabbath, but my study is not as effective as it is on the other days because I cannot use my pencil to underline." He explained that the pencil was a tool, and he could not use a tool on the Sabbath.

I have often reflected on the contrast between our Sabbath observances. He had a set of rules on what he could and could not do. I was trying to follow a set of principles. I believed that I should labor hard for six days at my work, which was studying law, and that I should, therefore, refrain from student-like labor on the Sabbath.

Lest you think I am critical of my friend and his approach to the Sabbath, I must add that as I have learned more about the Orthodox Jews' observances of the Sabbath day, I have concluded that their practices are in many respects superior to my own and to those of many other Latter-day Saints. For them the Sabbath is a time to devote exclusively to remembering the Lord, to worshiping Him, and to rejoicing in His blessings to His people. The Sabbath is very sacred. The family gathers. They may attend synagogue, but "otherwise, the Sabbath day is given over completely to family time together, to visit, to dine together, to study scripture." Parents invoke blessings on their children. In addition, "any activities that might divide the family, or otherwise detract from the peace of the day, . . . are not undertaken on the Sabbath" (Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "The Jewish Sabbath" [unpublished essay, 2007], 2–3).

### **"Call the Sabbath a Delight"**

We certainly have fewer rules than the Orthodox Jews, but I wonder whether we match their excellence in faithfully carrying out the positive purposes of the Sabbath day. As I have reflected on my own Sabbath practices, I believe I have been far more effective in observing the Sabbath in what I *did not do* than in what I *did do*. Along with many others, I have not been so effective in applying the



teachings of the scriptures to do things that would make the Sabbath what the prophet Isaiah called “a delight, the holy of the Lord” (Isaiah 58:13).

We read this in the 58th chapter of Isaiah:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

“Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13–14).

What can individuals and families do to make the Sabbath day a “delight”? What can we do to increase our faith in Jesus Christ and strengthen our families through Sabbath day observance?

Fourteen years ago the First Presidency published a statement urging all Latter-day Saints “to set this holy day apart from activities of the world and consecrate themselves by entering into a spirit of worship, thanksgiving, service, and family-centered activities appropriate to the Sabbath” (“First Presidency Statement on the Sabbath,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1993, 80).

We should spend the Sabbath day in spiritual renewal. We should, as President Kimball taught, “measure each Sabbath activity by the yardstick of worshipfulness” (*Teachings*, 176). He explained: “In Hebrew, the term *Sabbath* means ‘rest.’ It contemplates quiet tranquility, peace of mind and spirit. It is a day to get rid of selfish interests and absorbing activities” (*Teachings*, 170).

He also endorsed one Sabbath activity of particular interest to this group. “It is,” he said, “. . . a day for proper courting” (*Teachings*, 171). I emphasize the word *proper*.

The Sabbath is also intended as a time for family togetherness, to strengthen the family ties that are at the heart of the gospel. President Kimball said: “Take time [on the Sabbath] to be together as families to converse with one another, to study the scriptures, to

visit friends, relatives, and the sick and lonely. This is also an excellent time to work on your journals and genealogy” (*Teachings*, 170).

President Joseph F. Smith taught an important principle about family and the Sabbath. In addition to attending Church meetings, he said: “I would love to have the privilege of sitting down in my home with my family and conversing with them, and visiting with them, and becoming better acquainted with them. I would like to have the privilege of occupying as much time as I could conveniently on the Sabbath day for this purpose; to get acquainted with my children, keep in touch with them, and to keep them in touch with the scriptures, and to think of something besides fun and jokes and laughter and merriment, and such things as these” (in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. [1965–75], 5:17–18).

I appeal to you young adults, married and single, to make the Sabbath a day for family togetherness. Do not scatter abroad on pleasure errands that separate the family. Worship, study, converse, and rejoice together. Make the Sabbath “a delight, the holy of the Lord . . . : Then,” as Isaiah promised, “shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13–14).

My dear brothers and sisters, this is the Church of Jesus Christ. We are children of heavenly parents. We are put here on earth for a purpose, and that purpose leads us toward those eternal family relationships of which we have spoken. In time or throughout eternity, every one of our Heavenly Father’s choicest blessings will be yours if you keep His commandments, and one of His commandments is to honor the Sabbath day. When we do that, we operate better—physically and spiritually—and we proceed more swiftly on that pathway that leads to eternal life, which God, our Eternal Father, has told us “is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). I testify of the truthfulness of these things and invoke His blessings upon you, my noble young friends, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.