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Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

A stronger personal faith in Jesus Christ will prepare [your children] for the challenges they will most surely face.

When you are assigned to speak at the end of the final session of general conference, you listen to every word, wondering which parts of your talk will be given before your turn comes. There are no assigned subjects, no collaboration of themes. The Lord's way, of course, is always the best way. He takes the individual prayerful efforts of each speaker and orchestrates a spiritual symphony full of revelation and power. Repeated themes, principle building upon principle, prophetic warnings, uplifting promises—the divine harmony is a miracle! I testify that in this conference we have heard and felt the mind and will of the Lord.

President Thomas S. Monson has described the rising generation as “the very best ever”¹ and has said to our youth: “You have come to this earth at a glorious time. The opportunities before you are nearly limitless.”² But he also warned, “We have been placed on earth in troubled times.”³ “It is a time of permissiveness, with society in general routinely disregarding and breaking the laws of God.”⁴ We are surrounded by so much that is designed to divert our attention. “The adversary is using every means possible to

ensnare us in his web of deceit.”⁵

We hold in our arms the rising generation. They come to this earth with important responsibilities and great spiritual capacities. We cannot be casual in how we prepare them. Our challenge as parents and teachers is not to create a spiritual core in their souls but rather to fan the flame of their spiritual core already aglow with the fire of their premortal faith.

This afternoon I wish to emphasize the plea of a child from a Primary song:

*Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,
Things I would ask him to tell me if he were here.*⁶

In our world today, each child, each young man and young woman needs his or her own conversion to the truth. Each needs his or her own light, his or her own “steadfast and immovable”⁷ faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, independent of parents, youth leaders, and supportive friends.

The stories of Jesus can be like a rushing wind across the embers of faith in the hearts of our children. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”⁸



The stories of Jesus shared over and over bring faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strength to the foundation of testimony. Can you think of a more valuable gift for our children?

Are the life and teachings of Jesus Christ embedded in the minds and souls of our children? Do they think about the Savior's life when they wonder what to do in their own lives? This will be more and more important in the years ahead.

Have our children visualized the premortal council,⁹ where Jesus—the greatest of all—declared, “Here am I, send me?”¹⁰ Do they see their own willingness to serve as following His example?

Do they think about His humble birth,¹¹ the Savior of the world lying in a manger?¹² Do His circumstances help them better understand the proper place of material possessions?

Do they know that Jesus often taught, “Ask, and ye shall receive?”¹³ Do His prayers of thankfulness¹⁴ and His pleadings to His Father¹⁵ flow through our children's minds as they kneel in prayer with their own concerns?

Have we told them of the love Jesus has for children, how He held them in His arms, prayed for them, and wept?¹⁶ Do our children know that Jesus stands ready “with open arms to receive [them]”?¹⁷

Do they take strength in the stories of Jesus fasting¹⁸—as we teach them the law of the fast?

In their own loneliness, do our children know the loneliness the Savior felt as His friends deserted Him and as He asked His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?”¹⁹

Have our children felt the power of the Savior's miracles? Jesus healed the leper,²⁰ gave sight to the blind.²¹ He fed the 5,000,²² calmed the sea,²³ and raised Lazarus from the dead.²⁴ Do our children believe that “it is by faith that miracles are wrought,”²⁵ and do they pray for miracles in their own lives?

Have our children taken courage from the Savior's words to the ruler of the synagogue: “Be not afraid, only believe?”²⁶

Do our children know about His perfect life,²⁷ His selfless ministry, His betrayal and cruel Crucifixion?²⁸ Have

we testified to them of the certainty of His Resurrection,²⁹ of His visit to the Nephites in the Americas,³⁰ of His appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove?³¹

Do they anticipate His majestic return, when all will be made right and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ?³²

Do our children say, “Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear”?³³

To the youth and children: Live up to your important responsibilities and great spiritual capacities. Seek to know more about Jesus; open the scriptures. One idea would be to read again the book of John and then discuss it with your parents, teachers, and each other.

To fathers and mothers, to grandfathers and grandmothers, and to those without children of their own who lovingly nurture children and youth, my counsel is to speak more frequently about Jesus Christ. In His holy name is great spiritual power. “There [is] no other name given nor any other way . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ.”³⁴

To mothers who are raising their children without a father in the home, I promise you that as you speak of Jesus Christ, you will feel the power of heaven blessing you.

After her husband passed away, Sister Stella Oaks raised her three young children (including Elder Dallin H. Oaks³⁵) as a single mother. She once said: “I was given to know that the Lord loved me and that I would be made equal to my mission. I felt an encircling love . . . [and knew] he [would sustain us] through the opposition that [would] arise.”³⁶

I make a special appeal to fathers: Please be an important part of talking to your children about the Savior. They need the confirming expressions of your faith, along with those of their mother.

Although there may be times when a child does not listen with a believing heart, your testimony of Jesus will remain in his or her mind and soul. Do you remember the story of Alma, who had chosen the wrong path? Returning, he said:

“I remembered . . . my father [speaking] . . . concerning the coming

of . . . Jesus Christ . . . to atone for the sins of the world.

“As my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.”³⁷

If a child is not listening, don’t despair. Time and truth are on your side. At the right moment, your words will return as if from heaven itself. Your testimony will never leave your children.

As you reverently speak about the Savior—in the car, on the bus, at the dinner table, as you kneel in prayer, during scripture study, or in late-night conversations—the Spirit of the Lord will accompany your words.³⁸

As you do your best, the testimony of Jesus will gently distill upon your children’s hearts. They will go to their Heavenly Father in humble prayer and feel His influence through the power of the Holy Ghost. A stronger personal faith in Jesus Christ will prepare them for the challenges they will most surely face.³⁹

I met Bill Forrest and Debbie Hutchings when we were students at Brigham Young University. Bill had returned from his mission. He and Debbie fell in love and were married in the Oakland California Temple. They established their home in Mesa, Arizona, and were blessed with five sons and two daughters. Bill and Debbie taught their children to love the Lord Jesus Christ as they loved Him. Their son, Elder Daniel Forrest, currently serving in the Mexico Oaxaca Mission, said, “Every morning without fail we were there at the table before school reading and discussing the scriptures.”

Their daughter Kara, now married with two children of her own, still vividly remembers her father driving





her to early morning activities in high school. She said, “My dad enjoyed committing quotes, scriptures, and poems to memory, [and during those early morning drives] we would practice reciting them.” One of his favorite scriptures was “Remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, . . . [he] shall have no power over you to drag you down . . . because of the rock upon which ye are built.”⁴⁰

On the Friday before Easter Sunday in the year 2000, exactly 10 years ago, Bill Forrest was serving as bishop of the Estate Groves Ward in Arizona. On his drive to work, only a mile (1.6 km) from home, his car was struck by a large gravel truck. Debbie and the children left home shortly after Bill and unexpectedly came upon the tragic scene. Bill had not survived the accident. The immortal spirit of this beloved husband and father had suddenly been taken home to Him who overcame death, the Son of God, whose glorious Resurrection they were to have celebrated together that Easter Sunday.

How did Debbie and her seven children (the youngest only 5) find the strength they needed? Kara, 15 at the time of her father’s accident, recently told me: “I am grateful to my [mother and father] for the ways that they taught me [about the Savior]. They opened the scriptures with me, prayed with me, and were examples of [the Savior’s] charity, love, and patience. . . . Easter [is] a tender time in my life each year as I reflect on the life, mission, and Resurrection of our Savior and am reminded of the life of my earthly father.”

Elder Daniel Forrest said: “I was 10 years old when my father passed away. It was a tough time. . . . My mother has always been an example of the Savior’s teachings. I carry with me my father’s name badge from his mission to Spain. [Two] of my favorite quotes from my father [are]: ‘Two men can do anything as long as one of them is the Lord’ and ‘The Savior must be our foundation. Without that we flounder.’”

Faith in Jesus Christ has filled the hearts of the Forrest children. On this Easter weekend, 10 years since their father’s passing, they miss him deeply, but the sting of his death is “swallowed up in Christ.”⁴¹ They know, because of

the incalculable gift of the Savior, they can be with their earthly father and their Heavenly Father again.

Tell me the stories of Jesus.

In a moment we will hear from the prophet of God. In speaking of His prophet, the Lord said, “His word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth.”⁴² I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s mouthpiece upon the earth.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of all mankind. His life, His Atonement, His Resurrection, His awaited return are as sure and certain as the rising sun. His name be praised forever and ever.⁴³ In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Constant Truths for Changing Times,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2005, 19.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “May You Have Courage,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2009, 123.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Examples of Righteousness,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2008, 65.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Closing Remarks,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 109.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2009, 113.
6. “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 57.
7. Alma 1:25.
8. John 14:6.
9. See Abraham 3:2–28.

10. Abraham 3:27.
11. See Luke 2.
12. See Luke 2:7.
13. 3 Nephi 27:29.
14. See Luke 10:21.
15. See Luke 11:2–4.
16. See 3 Nephi 17:11–24.
17. Mormon 6:17.
18. See Luke 4:1–13.
19. John 6:67. Speaking to the youth last year, President Monson said: “You will . . . be called upon to defend that which you believe. Unless the roots of your testimony are firmly planted, it will be difficult for you to withstand the ridicule of those who challenge your faith” (*Liabona and Ensign*, May 2009, 126).
20. See Mark 1:40–42.
21. See Luke 18:35–43.
22. See Mark 6:34–44.
23. See Mark 4:35–41.
24. See John 11:8–53.
25. Moroni 7:37.
26. Mark 5:36.
27. See 1 Peter 2:21–25.
28. See Luke 22:47–48; 23:32–46.
29. See John 20:11–23.
30. See 3 Nephi 11–26.
31. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
32. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:104.
33. “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus.”
34. Mosiah 3:17.
35. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once commented: “When I was a boy, I spent most of my evenings reading books. One of my favorites was *Hurlbut’s Story of the Bible* . . . , [a] book [of] 168 stories from the Bible. I loved these stories and read them many times” (“Bible Stories and Personal Protection,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 37).
36. Stella Oaks, “Thy Will Be Done,” in Leon R. Hartshorn, comp., *Remarkable Stories from the Lives of Latter-day Saint Women*, 2 vols. (1973–75), 2:184.
37. Alma 36:17–18.
38. In our world today we need more than ever Enos’s words about his father to be our children’s words about us: “The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life . . . sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered; and I [knelt] down before my Maker” (Enos 1:3–4).
39. President Monson promised the youth: “When firmly planted, your testimony of the gospel, of the Savior, and of our Heavenly Father will influence all that you do throughout your life. . . . Your testimony, when constantly nourished, will keep you safe” (*Liabona and Ensign*, May 2009, 126).
40. Helaman 5:12.
41. Mosiah 16:8.
42. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5.
43. See Alma 26:12.