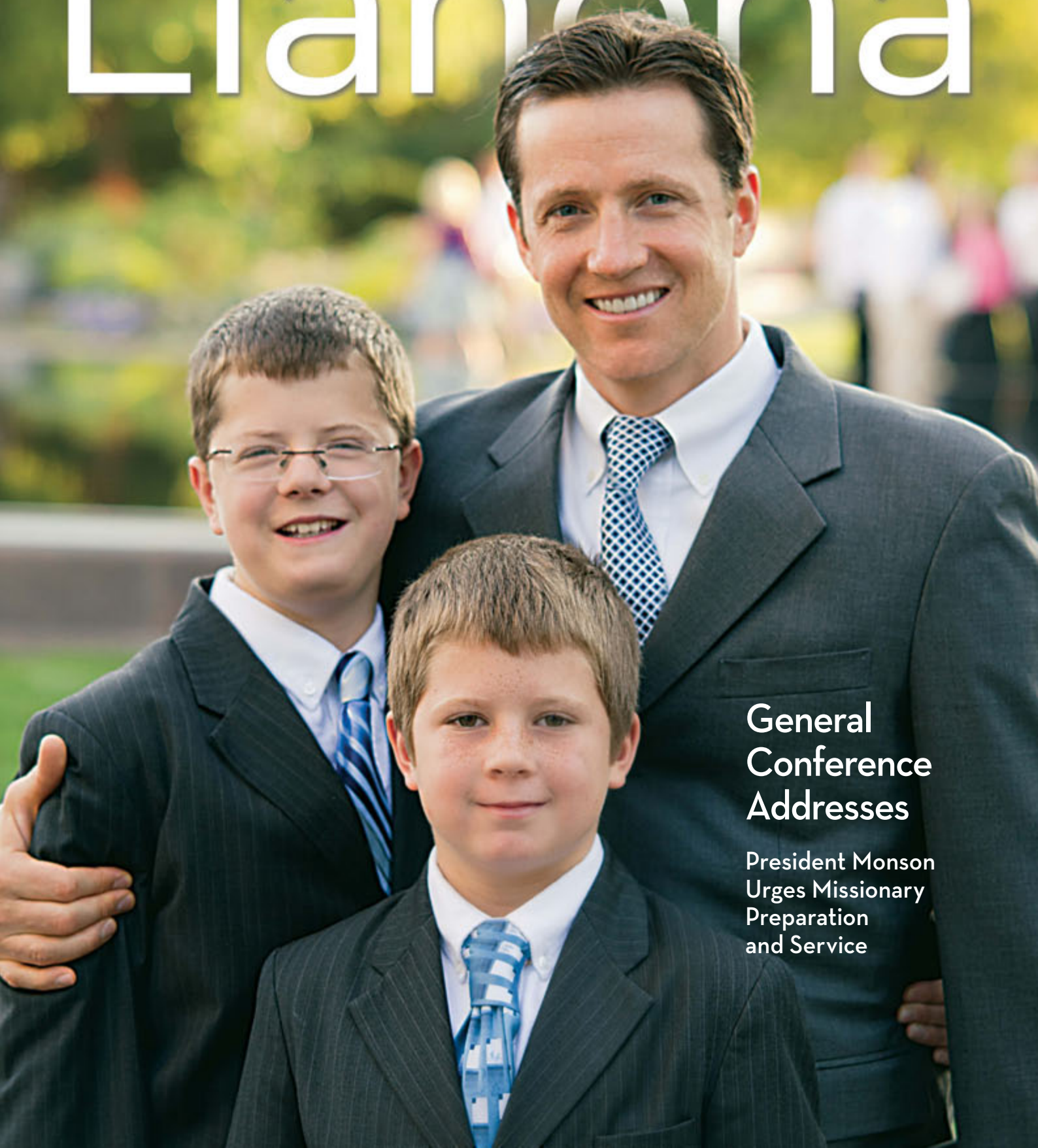


THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • NOVEMBER 2010

# Liahona



## General Conference Addresses

President Monson  
Urges Missionary  
Preparation  
and Service



*He Anointed the Eyes  
of the Blind Man,  
by Walter Rane*

*Having compassion for  
a man who was blind  
since birth, the Savior  
“spat on the ground, and  
made clay of the spittle,  
and he anointed the eyes  
of the blind man with  
the clay, and said unto  
him, Go, wash in the pool  
of Siloam. . . . He went  
his way therefore, and  
washed, and came seeing”  
(John 9:6–7).*

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# Summary for the 180th Semiannual General Conference

## **SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2, 2010, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Octaviano Tenorio.  
Benediction: Elder Eduardo Gavarret. Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,” *Hymns*, no. 83; “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” *Hymns*, no. 41; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252; “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 57, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 2, 2010, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Claudio D. Zivic.  
Benediction: Elder Jorge F. Zeballos. Music by a family choir from Sandy and Draper, Utah; Timothy Workman, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “Come, Ye Children of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 58, arr. Lyon, pub. Jackman; “Beautiful Zion, Built Above,” *Hymns*, no. 44; “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220; “Home,” *Children’s Songbook*, 192, arr. Dayley, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 2010, PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis.  
Benediction: Elder James J. Hamula. Music by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center; Douglas Brenchley and Ryan Eggett, directors; Richard Elliott, organist: “Hark, All Ye Nations!” *Hymns*, no. 264, arr. Ipson, unpublished; “Go, Ye Messengers of Heaven,” *Hymns*, no. 327; “High on the Mountain Top,” *Hymns*, no. 5; “Called to Serve,” *Hymns*, no. 249, arr. Boothe, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 2010, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Gérald Caussé.  
Benediction: Elder Carlos A. Godoy. Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: “Truth Eternal,” *Hymns*, no. 4; “Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth,” *Hymns*, no. 269; “Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd,” *Hymns*, no. 221, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; “Love One Another,” *Hymns*, no. 308, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 3, 2010, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge.  
Benediction: Bishop H. David Burton. Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: “Come, Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 9, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Lead, Kindly Light,” *Hymns*, no. 97, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301; “Sing We Now at Parting,” *Hymns*, no. 156, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 25, 2010, GENERAL RELIEF SOCIETY MEETING**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: Julie B. Beck. Invocation: Sharon L. Eubank. Benediction: Marsha G. Beck. Music by a Relief Society choir from stakes in Kearns, Utah; Cathy Jolley, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241, arr. Kasen, pub.

Jackman; “Carry On,” *Hymns*, no. 255, arr. Nielsen and Boothe, unpublished (French horns: Kristina Orcutt Tollefson, Mary Lampros, and Claire Grover); “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Beebe, pub. Larice; “The Spirit of God,” *Hymns*, no. 2, arr. DeFord, unpublished (flutes: Tia Jaynes and Natalie Hall; vocal soloists: Katherine Dowse, Olivia Dowse, Megan Dowse Broughton, Jayni Dowse, Sally Dowse Duffin, and Sofia Lee Dowse).

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By President Thomas S. Monson

# As We Meet Together Again

*Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much.*

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to general conference, which is being heard and seen by various means throughout the world. We express thanks to all who have to do with the complicated logistics of this great undertaking.

Since April when we last met, the work of the Church has moved forward unhindered. It has been my privilege to dedicate four new temples. Accompanied by my counselors and other General Authorities, I have traveled to Gila Valley, Arizona; to Vancouver, British Columbia; to Cebu

## **Stockholm, Sweden**



City in the Philippines; and to Kyiv, Ukraine. The temple in each of these locations is magnificently beautiful. Each one is blessing the lives of our members and is an influence for good upon those not of our faith.

The evening prior to each temple dedication, we were privileged to view a cultural celebration, participated in by our young people and some of our not-so-young people. These events were generally held in large stadiums, although in Kyiv we met in a beautiful



palace. The dancing, singing, musical performances, and displays were excellent. I express my commendation and love to all who were involved.

Each temple dedication was a spiritual feast. We felt the Spirit of the Lord at all of them.

Next month we will rededicate the Laie Hawaii Temple, one of our oldest temples, which has undergone extensive renovations during many months. We look forward to that sacred occasion.

We continue to build temples. This morning I am pleased to announce five additional temples for which sites are being acquired and which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Lisbon, Portugal; Indianapolis, Indiana; Urdaneta, Philippines; Hartford, Connecticut; and Tijuana, Mexico.

The ordinances performed in our temples are vital to our salvation and to the salvation of our deceased loved ones. May we continue faithful

in attending the temples, which are being built closer and closer to our members.

Now, before we hear from our speakers this morning, may I mention a matter close to my heart and which deserves our serious attention. I speak of missionary work.

First, to young men of the Aaronic Priesthood and to you young men who are becoming elders: I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man

should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much. Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. Keep yourselves clean and pure and worthy to represent the Lord. Maintain your health and strength. Study the scriptures. Where such is available, participate in seminary or institute. Familiarize yourself with the missionary handbook *Preach My Gospel*.

A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service.

And now to you mature brothers and sisters: we need many, many more senior couples. To the faithful couples now serving or who have served in the past, we thank you for your faith and devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You serve willingly and well and accomplish great good.

To those of you who are not yet to the season of life when you might serve a couples mission, I urge you to prepare now for the day when you and your spouse might do so. As your circumstances allow, as you are eligible for retirement, and as your health permits, make yourselves available to leave home and give full-time missionary service. There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from giving full-time service together in the work of the Master.

Now, my brothers and sisters, may you be attuned to the Spirit of the Lord as we hear from His servants during the next two days. That this may be the blessing of each, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Because of Your Faith

*My thanks to all you wonderful members of the Church . . . for proving every day of your life that the pure love of Christ “never faileth.”*

President Monson, the entire worldwide membership of this church joins in that great anthem with this wonderful choir, and we say, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet.” Thank you for your life, for your example, and for that welcoming message to another general conference of the Church. We love you, we admire you, and we sustain you. Indeed, in this afternoon’s session we will have a more formal opportunity to raise our hands in a sustaining vote, not only for President Monson but also for all the other general officers of the Church as well. Because my name will be included on that list, may I be so bold as to speak for all in thanking you in advance for those uplifted hands. Not one of us could serve without your prayers and without your support. Your loyalty and your love mean more to us than we can ever possibly say.

In that spirit my message today is to say that *we* sustain *you*, that we return to *you* those same heartfelt prayers and that same expression of love. We all know there are special keys, covenants, and responsibilities given to the presiding officers of the Church, but we also know that the Church draws incomparable strength, a truly unique vitality, from the faith and devotion of

*every* member of this church, whoever you may be. In whatever country you live, however young or inadequate you feel, or however aged or limited you see yourself as being, I testify you are individually loved of God, you are central to the meaning of His work, and you are cherished and prayed for by the presiding officers of His Church. The personal value, the sacred splendor of every *one* of you, is the very reason there is a plan for salvation and exaltation. Contrary to the parlance of the day, this *is* about *you*. No, don’t turn and look at your neighbor. I am talking to you!

I have struggled to find an adequate way to tell you how loved of God you are and how grateful we on this stand are for you. I am trying to be voice for the very angels of heaven in thanking you for every good thing you have ever done, for every kind word you have ever said, for every sacrifice you have ever made in extending to someone—to anyone—the beauty and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for Young Women leaders who go to girls camp and, without shampoo, showers, or mascara, turn smoky, campfire testimony meetings into some of the most





riveting spiritual experiences those girls—or those leaders—will experience in their lifetime. I am grateful for *all* the women of the Church who in my life have been as strong as Mount Sinai and as compassionate as the Mount of Beatitudes. We smile sometimes about our sisters' stories—you know, green Jell-O, quilts, and funeral potatoes. But my family has been the grateful recipient of each of those items at one time or another—and in one case, the quilt and the funeral potatoes on the same day. It was just a small quilt—tiny, really—to make my deceased baby brother's journey back to his heavenly home as warm and comfortable as our Relief Society sisters wanted him to be. The food provided for our family after the service, voluntarily given without a single word from us, was gratefully received. Smile, if you will, about our traditions, but somehow the too-often unheralded women in this church are *always* there when hands hang down and knees are feeble.<sup>1</sup> They seem to grasp instinctively the divinity in Christ's declaration: "Inasmuch as ye

have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me."<sup>2</sup>

And no less the brethren of the priesthood. I think, for example, of the leaders of our young men who, depending on the climate and continent, either take bone-rattling 50-mile (80 km) hikes or dig—and actually try to sleep in—ice caves for what have to be the longest nights of human experience. I am grateful for memories of my own high priests group, which a few years ago took turns for weeks sleeping on a small recliner in the bedroom of a dying quorum member so that his aged and equally fragile wife could get some sleep through those final weeks of her sweetheart's life. I am grateful for the Church's army of teachers, officers, advisers, and clerks, to say nothing of people who are forever setting up tables and taking down chairs. I am grateful for ordained patriarchs, musicians, family historians, and osteoporotic couples who trundle off to the temple at 5:00 in the morning with little suitcases now almost bigger than they are. I am grateful for selfless parents who—perhaps for a lifetime—

care for a challenged child, sometimes with more than one challenge and sometimes with more than one child. I am grateful for children who close ranks later in life to give back to ill or aging parents.

And to the near-perfect elderly sister who almost apologetically whispered recently, "I have never been a leader of anything in the Church. I guess I've only been a helper," I say, "Dear sister, God bless you and all the 'helpers' in the kingdom." Some of us who *are* leaders hope someday to have the standing before God that you have already attained.

Too often I have failed to express gratitude for the faith and goodness of such people in my life. President James E. Faust stood at this pulpit 13 years ago and said, "As a small boy . . . , I remember my grandmother . . . cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently . . . go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house. I was

so insensitive . . . [that] I sat there and let my beloved grandmother refill [that] box.” Then, his voice choking with emotion, he said, “I feel ashamed of myself and have regretted my omission for all of my life. I hope someday to ask for her forgiveness.”<sup>3</sup>

If a man as perfect as I felt President Faust was can acknowledge his youthful oversight, I can do no less than make a similar admission and pay a long-overdue tribute of my own today.

When I was called to serve a mission back before the dawn of time, there was no equalization of missionary costs. Each had to bear the full expense of the mission to which he or she was sent. Some missions were very expensive, and as it turned out, mine was one of those.

As we encourage missionaries to do, I had saved money and sold personal belongings to pay my own way as best I could. I *thought* I had enough money, but I wasn’t sure how it would be in the final months of my mission. With that question on my mind, I nevertheless blissfully left my family for the greatest experience anyone could hope to have. I loved my mission as I am sure no young man

has ever loved one before or since.

Then I returned home just as my parents were called to serve a mission of their own. What would I do now? How in the world could I pay for a college education? How could I possibly pay for board and room? And how could I realize the great dream of my heart, to marry the breathtakingly perfect Patricia Terry? I don’t mind admitting that I was discouraged and frightened.

Hesitantly I went to the local bank and asked the manager, a family friend, how much was in my account. He looked surprised and said, “Why, Jeff, it’s *all* in your account. Didn’t they tell you? Your parents wanted to do what little they could to help you get started when you got home. They didn’t withdraw a cent during your mission. I supposed that you knew.”

Well, I didn’t know. What I do know is that my dad, a self-educated accountant, a “bookkeeper” as they were called in our little town, with very few clients, probably never wore a new suit or a new shirt or a new pair of shoes for two years so his son could have all of those for his mission. Furthermore, what I did not know but then came to know was that my mother, who had never worked out of the home in her married life, took a job at a local department store so that my mission expenses could be met. And not one word of that was ever conveyed to me on my mission. Not a single word was said regarding any of it. How many fathers in this Church have done exactly what my father did? And how many mothers, in these difficult economic times, are still doing what my mother did?

My father has been gone for 34 years, so like President Faust, I will have to wait to fully thank him on the other side. But my sweet mother, who turns 95 next week, is happily watching this broadcast today at her

home in St. George, so it’s not too late to thank her. To you, Mom and Dad, and to all the moms and dads and families and faithful people everywhere, I thank you for sacrificing for your children (and for other people’s children!), for wanting so much to give them advantages you never had, for wanting so much to give them the happiest life you could provide.

My thanks to all you wonderful members of the Church—and legions of good people not of our faith—for proving every day of your life that the pure love of Christ “never faileth.”<sup>4</sup> No one of you is insignificant, in part because you make the gospel of Jesus Christ what it is—a living reminder of His grace and mercy, a private but powerful manifestation in small villages and large cities of the good He did and the life He gave bringing peace and salvation to other people. We are honored beyond expression to be counted one with you in such a sacred cause.

As Jesus said to the Nephites, so say I today:

“Because of your faith . . . , my joy is full.

“And when he had said these words, he wept.”<sup>5</sup>

Brothers and sisters, seeing your example, I pledge anew *my* determination to be better, to be more faithful—more kind and devoted, more charitable and true as our Father in Heaven is and as so many of you already are. This I pray in the name of our Great Exemplar in all things—even the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Hebrews 12:12; Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
2. Matthew 25:40.
3. James E. Faust, “The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 59.
4. 1 Corinthians 13:8; see also Moroni 7:46–47.
5. 3 Nephi 17:20–21.





**By Rosemary M. Wixom**  
Primary General President

## Stay on the Path

*As we hold on to our children and follow the Savior's lead, we will all return to our heavenly home and be safe in our Heavenly Father's arms.*

I recently observed the birth of tiny Kate Elizabeth. After she entered this world and was placed into her mother's arms, Kate reached out and caught hold of her mother's finger. It was as if little Kate were saying, "If I hold on, will you help me stay on the path back to my Heavenly Father?"

At age seven, Joseph Smith contracted typhoid fever, and an infection settled in his leg. Dr. Nathan Smith was pioneering a procedure by which the infected leg could be saved. Without anesthesia, Dr. Smith would need to cut Joseph's leg and actually remove portions of the infected bone. Joseph declined brandy to endure the pain and refused to be tied down but said, "I will have my father sit on the bed and hold me in his arms, and then I will do whatever is necessary."<sup>1</sup>

For children all over the world, we say: "Take my hand. Hold on tight. We will stay on the path together back to our Heavenly Father."

Parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, Primary leaders—each of us can reach out to hold on to the children. We can stop, kneel down, and look into their eyes and feel of their innate desire to follow the Savior. Take hold of their hands. Walk with them. It is our chance to anchor them on the path of faith.

No child needs to walk the path alone so long as we speak freely to our children of the plan of salvation. Understanding the plan will help them hold to the truths that they are children of God and He has a plan for them, that they lived with Him in the premortal existence, that they shouted for joy to come to this earth, and that through the Savior's help, we all can return to our Heavenly Father's presence. If they understand the plan and who they are, they will not fear.

In Alma 24 we read, "He loveth our souls [and] he loveth our children; therefore, . . . the plan of salvation might be made known unto us as well as unto future generations."<sup>2</sup>

We begin to make the plan known to our children when we hold tight to the iron rod ourselves.

When we are holding tight to the iron rod, we are in a position to place our hands over theirs and walk the strait and narrow path together. Our example is magnified in their eyes. They will follow our cadence when they feel secure in our actions. We do not need to be perfect—just honest and sincere. Children want to feel as one with us. When a parent says, "We can do it! We can read the scriptures daily as a family," the children will follow!

One such family with four young children writes: "We decided to start small because of our children's short attention spans. Our oldest child was not yet reading, but she could repeat our words, so we began reading the Book of Mormon, just three verses each night. My husband and I would read one verse each, and then Sydney would repeat a verse. We progressed to four verses and then five verses as the boys began to repeat their own verses. Yes, it was tedious, but we kept going. We tried to focus on consistency instead of speed. It took us three-and-a-half years to finish the Book of Mormon. It was a great feeling of accomplishment!"

The mother continues: "Daily family scripture reading is a habit in our family now. Our children are comfortable with scriptural language, and my husband and I take opportunity to bear testimony of truths. Most important, the Spirit has increased in our home."

Do you take from this family's experience what I do? When our intent is to hold tight to the word of God, our reading of the scriptures can be just one verse at a time. It's never too late to begin. You can start now.

The world will teach our children if we do not, and children are capable of learning all the world will teach them at a very young age. What we want them to know five years from now needs to be part of our conversation with them today. Teach them in every circumstance; let every dilemma, every consequence, every trial that they may face provide an opportunity to teach them how to hold on to gospel truths.

Shannon, a young mother, did not expect that she would teach her children the power of prayer when they piled into their van to drive to their home just 40 minutes away. There was



no storm when they left their grandmother's home, but as they began to drive through the canyon, the light snow turned into a blizzard. The van began sliding on the surface of the road. Soon visibility was near zero. The two youngest children could sense the stress of the situation and began to cry. Shannon said to the older children, Heidi and Thomas, ages 8 and 6, "You need to pray. We need Heavenly Father's help to get home safely. Pray that we will not get stuck and that we will not slide off the road." Her hands shook as she steered the car, yet she could hear the whisper of little prayers repeatedly coming from the backseat: "Heavenly Father, please help us get home safely; please help us so we will not slide off the road."

In time the prayers calmed the two little ones, and they stopped their crying just as they learned that a road closure prevented them from driving any farther. Cautiously, they turned around and found a motel for the night. Once in the motel, they knelt down and thanked Heavenly Father for their safety. That night a mother taught her children the power of holding true to prayer.

What trials will our children face? Like Joseph Smith, our children can find the courage to "do whatever is necessary." When we are intentional about holding them and teaching them of Heavenly Father's plan through prayer and scriptures, they will come to know *where* they came from, *why* they are here, and *where* they are going.

Last spring my husband and I attended a soccer game of our four-year-old grandson. You could feel the excitement on the field as the players ran in every direction chasing the soccer ball. When the final whistle blew, the players were unaware of who won or who lost. They had simply played the game. The coaches directed the players to shake hands with the opposing team members. Then I observed something quite remarkable. The coach called for a victory tunnel. All the parents, grandparents, and any spectators who had come to observe the game stood up and formed two lines facing each other, and by raising their arms they formed an arch. The children squealed as they ran through the cheering adults and down the

path formed by the spectators. Soon the children from the opposing team joined the fun as all the players—the winners and the losers—were cheered on by the adults as they ran the path of the victory tunnel.

In my mind's eye, I had another picture. I had the feeling I was seeing children living the plan, the plan Heavenly Father has created for each individual child. They were running the strait and narrow path through the arms of the spectators who love them, each one feeling the joy of being on the path.

Jacob said, "O how great the plan of our God!"<sup>3</sup> The Savior has "marked the path and led the way."<sup>4</sup> I testify that as we hold on to our children and follow the Savior's lead, we will all return to our heavenly home and be safe in our Heavenly Father's arms. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Preston Nibley (1958), 56–57.
2. Alma 24:14.
3. 2 Nephi 9:13.
4. "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195.



By **Elder Claudio R. M. Costa**  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Obedience to the Prophets

*What a great blessing it is to have prophets in our day!*

I am a convert to the Church. I am so grateful that God answered my prayer and gave me a knowledge and a strong testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

Before I made the decision to be baptized in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I studied extracts from the history of Joseph Smith. I prayed after carefully reading each paragraph. If you would like to do this yourself, it may take you 14 hours.

After I read, pondered, and prayed, the Lord gave me the assurance that Joseph Smith was His prophet. I testify to you that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and because I have received this answer from the Lord, I know that all of his successors are prophets too. What a great blessing it is to have prophets in our day!

Why is it important to have living prophets to guide the true Church of Jesus Christ and its members?

In the Guide to the Scriptures, we find the definition of the word *prophet*: “A person who has been called by and speaks for God. As a messenger of God, a prophet receives commandments, prophecies, and revelations from God” (“Prophet,” scriptures.lds.org; see also Bible Dictionary, “Prophet”).

It is a great blessing to receive the word, commandments, and guidance of the Lord in these difficult days of the earth. The prophet can be inspired to see the future in benefit of mankind.

We are told that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). We learn from this scripture that the Lord will reveal to His prophets absolutely anything that He feels is necessary to communicate to us. He will reveal His will to us, and He will instruct us through His prophets.

The Lord promised us that if we believe in the holy prophets, we should have eternal life (see D&C 20:26). In the sixth article of faith, we declare that we believe in prophets. To believe means to have faith and confidence in them and to follow and do what the prophets ask us to do.

In 1980, when President Ezra Taft Benson was serving as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he gave a powerful message about obedience to the prophets at a BYU devotional in the Marriott Center. His great talk, titled “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” touched my heart. It made

me feel good that I had made the decision to follow the prophets for the rest of my life when I accepted baptism in the Lord’s true Church.

I would like to share with you some of the principles that President Benson taught:

“First: *The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything*” (1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year [1981], 26).

In our day the prophet of God has told us to keep the commandments, to love our fellowman, to serve, to take care of the rising generation, to rescue the inactive or less active—to do many things that we call prophetic priorities. We need to understand that these priorities are God’s priorities and the prophet is His voice in communicating them to all of the Church and the world.

We are counseled to “give heed unto all his words and commandments” (D&C 21:4). We also learn:

“For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

“For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory” (D&C 21:5–6).

Second fundamental: “*The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 26).

The living prophet is receiving specific revelations for us. I can remember many times when I have been present to hear one of the servants of the Lord speak about a specific thing for a city or country. I remember at least three of the living prophets, seers, and revelators who have spoken about my country, Brazil. One of these servants said that Brazil would become a great



economy in the world and be free of inflation. At the time, we had two-digit inflation every month. It was difficult for many people to believe what the prophet said, but I believed. Brazil has had about 5 percent inflation each year for many consecutive years now. Brazil has become eighth in the world economy, and the country is doing great!

Third fundamental: *“The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet”* (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

We learn a great lesson about this from the scriptures. In the times of Noah it was easier for the people to believe in the dead prophets, but it

was difficult for them to believe in Noah. We know that because of their incredulity they did not survive the Flood (see Genesis 6–7).

Fourth fundamental: *“The prophet will never lead the Church astray”* (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

Again we learn from the living prophets. President Wilford Woodruff said: “The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead

the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty” (Official Declaration 1).

Fifth fundamental: *“The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time”* (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27).

The Lord called a young man, Joseph Smith, to restore His Church. Do you think that the young Joseph Smith was a doctor in theology or science? We know that he was a humble and not academically educated young man. But he was chosen by the Lord, and he received from the Lord all that was necessary to honor and magnify the calling of a prophet of the Restoration.

President Benson continued:

“Sixth: *The prophet does not have to say ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to give us scripture. . . .*

“Seventh: *The prophet tells us what we need to know, not always what we want to know*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 27, 28).

And then President Benson quoted from 1 Nephi 16:1, 3:

“And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of speaking to my brethren, behold they said unto me: Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear. . . .

“And now my brethren, if ye were righteous and were willing to hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say: Thou speakest hard things against us.”

Eighth fundamental: *“The prophet is not limited by men’s reasoning. . . .*

“. . . Does it seem reasonable to cure leprosy by telling a man to wash seven times in a particular river? Yet this is precisely what the prophet Elisha told a leper to do, and he was

healed. (See 2 Kings 5.)” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 28).

And President Benson continued giving other principles about obedience to the prophet. I will read the last six and invite you in your next family home evening to find these principles in the words and teachings of our living prophets, seers, and revelators during this general conference.

“Ninth: *The prophet can receive revelation on any matter—temporal or spiritual.* . . .

“Tenth: *The prophet may be involved in civic matters.* . . .

“Eleventh: *The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich.* . . .

“Twelfth: *The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly.* . . .

“Thirteenth: *The prophet and his counselors make up the First Presidency—the highest quorum in the Church.* . . .

“Fourteenth: *The prophet and the presidency—the living prophet and the first presidency—follow them and be blessed; reject them and suffer*” (“Fourteen Fundamentals,” 29).

We are privileged to have the words of our living prophets, seers, and revelators during this wonderful general conference. They will speak the will of the Lord for us, His people. They will transmit the word of God and His counsel to us. Pay attention and follow their instruction and suggestions, and I testify to you that your life will be completely blessed.

Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Thomas S. Monson is the living prophet of God, and the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By David M. McConkie**

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

# Gospel Learning and Teaching

*What matters most is the attitude or spirit by which the teacher teaches.*

**A**s a member of the Sunday School general presidency, I feel I should begin my remarks this morning by saying, “Good morning, class.”

My message today is to all those who have been called to teach, in whatever organization you are serving and whether you are a recent convert to the Church or a teacher with years of experience.

I am not going to talk about the “how” of teaching but rather about the “how” of learning. There can be a significant difference between what a teacher says and what those in the class hear or learn.

Think for a moment of a teacher who really made a difference in your life. What was it about him or her that caused you to remember what was taught, to want to discover the truth for yourself, to exercise your agency and act and not just to be acted upon—in other words, to learn? What was it about this teacher that set him or her apart from the rest?

A successful teacher and author said: “What matters most in learning is attitude. The attitude of the teacher.”<sup>1</sup>

Note that what matters most in learning is not the number of years a teacher has been a member of the Church or how much teaching





can teach the gospel, we must know the gospel.

President Thomas S. Monson still treasures the memory of his boyhood Sunday School teacher. He said: “It was my experience as a small boy to come under the influence of a most effective and inspired teacher who listened to us and who loved us. Her name was Lucy Gertsch. In our Sunday School class, she taught us concerning the Creation of the world, the Fall of Adam, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. She brought to her classroom as honored guests Moses, Joshua, Peter, Thomas, Paul, and, of course, Christ. Though we did not see them, we learned to love, honor, and emulate them.”<sup>4</sup>

Lucy Gertsch was able to invite these honored guests into her classroom because she knew them. They were her cherished friends. Because of that, her class also learned to “love, honor, and emulate them.”

The Lord said to Hyrum Smith, “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word.”<sup>5</sup> This admonition applies to each of us.

The Lord has commanded us to search the scriptures,<sup>6</sup> to feast upon them,<sup>7</sup> and to treasure them up.<sup>8</sup> As we earnestly search and ponder the word of the Lord, we will have His Spirit with us. We will become acquainted with His voice.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after I was called to be a stake president, our stake presidency received training from an Area Seventy. During the training, I asked a question to which he responded, “That is a good question. Let’s turn to the *Church Handbook of Instructions* for the answer.” We then went to the handbook, and there was the answer to my question. A little later in our training, I asked another question. Once again he responded, “Good question. Let’s turn to the handbook.” I did not venture to

experience a person has or even the teacher’s knowledge of the gospel or teaching techniques. What matters most is the attitude or spirit by which the teacher teaches.

In a worldwide leadership training meeting, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland told this story: “For many years, I have loved the story that President Packer has told about William E. Berrett’s boyhood Sunday School teacher. An elderly Danish brother was called to teach a class of rowdy boys. . . . He didn’t speak the language very well; he still had a heavy Danish brogue; he was much older, with big farm hands. Yet he was to teach these young, rambunctious 15-year-olds. For all intents and purposes, it would not have seemed like a very good match. But Brother Berrett used to say—and this is the part President Packer quotes—that this man somehow taught them; that across all those barriers, across

all those limitations, this man reached into the hearts of those rowdy 15-year-old kids and changed their lives. And Brother Berrett’s testimony was ‘We could have warmed our hands by the fire of his faith.’”<sup>2</sup>

Successful gospel teachers love the gospel. They are excited about it. And because they love their students, they want them to feel as they feel and to experience what they have experienced. To teach the gospel is to share your love of the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, a teacher’s attitude is not taught; it’s caught.<sup>3</sup>

How, then, do we develop the attitude necessary to be a successful teacher? I would like to discuss four basic principles of gospel teaching.

First, immerse yourself in the scriptures. We cannot love what we do not know. Develop a habit of daily scripture study, separate and apart from your lesson preparation. Before we



ask any more questions. I thought it best to read the handbook.

I have thought since that the Lord could give a similar response to each of us as we go to Him with concerns or questions. He could say, “That’s a good question. If you will review Alma chapter 5 or Doctrine and Covenants section 76, you’ll remember that I have already spoken to you about this.”

Brothers and sisters, it is contrary to the economy of heaven for the Lord to repeat to each of us individually what He has already revealed to us collectively. The scriptures contain the words of Christ. They are the voice of the Lord. Studying the scriptures trains us to hear the Lord’s voice.

Second, apply in your life the things that you learn. When Hyrum Smith desired to be a part of this great latter-day work, the Lord said to him, “Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength.”<sup>10</sup> Our work, first and foremost as teachers, is to keep the commandments with all of our might, mind, and strength.

Third, seek heaven’s help. Appeal unto the Lord for His Spirit with all of the energy of your heart. The scriptures state, “If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.”<sup>11</sup> This means that even if you use all the right teaching techniques and what you are teaching is true, without the Spirit real learning is not going to take place.

The role of the teacher is “to help individuals take responsibility for learning the gospel—to awaken in them the desire to study, understand, and live the gospel.”<sup>12</sup> This means that as teachers we should not focus so much on our performance as on how we help others learn and live the gospel.<sup>13</sup>

When was the last time you knelt in prayer and asked the Lord to help you not just with your lesson but also

to help you to know and to meet the needs of each student in your class? No class is so large that we cannot pray for inspiration regarding how to reach each student.

It is natural for teachers to have feelings of inadequacy. You must understand that “age and maturity and intellectual training are not in any way or to any degree necessary to communion with the Lord and His Spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

The promises of the Lord are certain. If you earnestly search the scriptures and treasure up in your minds the words of life, if you keep the commandments with all of your heart and pray for each student, you will enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost and you will receive revelation.<sup>15</sup>

Fourth, brothers and sisters, it is of utmost importance that we exercise our agency and act, without delay, in accordance with the spiritual promptings we receive.

President Thomas S. Monson taught: “We watch. We wait. We listen for that still, small voice. When it speaks, wise men and women obey. Promptings of the Spirit are not to be postponed.”<sup>16</sup>

You must not be afraid to exercise your agency and act upon the

### São Paulo, Brazil



thoughts and impressions that the Spirit of the Lord puts into your heart. You may feel awkward at first, but I promise you that the sweetest and most gratifying experiences you will have as a teacher will be when you submit to the will of the Lord and follow the promptings you receive from the Holy Ghost. Your experiences will strengthen your faith and give you greater courage to act in the future.

Dear teachers, you are one of the great miracles of this Church. You have a sacred trust. We love you and have confidence in you. I know that if we will search the scriptures and live so that we are worthy to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, the Lord will magnify us in our callings and responsibilities so that we may accomplish our errand from the Lord. That we may all do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. David McCullough, “Teach Them What You Love” (address given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 9, 2009).
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching and Learning in the Church,” *Liahona*, June 2007, 72; *Ensign*, June 2007, 104.
3. See McCullough, “Teach Them What You Love.”
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Examples of Great Teachers,” *Liahona*, June 2007, 76; *Ensign*, June 2007, 108.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21.
6. See John 5:39.
7. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
8. See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:36; 84:52.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 11:20.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 42:14.
12. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 61.
13. See *Teaching, No Greater Call*, 60–62.
14. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *The Charted Course of the Church in Education* (address given to seminary and institute leaders at Aspen Grove, Utah, Aug. 8, 1938), 6.
15. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132.
16. Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, June 1997, 4.



By **Elder D. Todd Christofferson**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Reflections on a Consecrated Life

*True success in this life comes in consecrating our lives—  
that is, our time and choices—to God’s purposes.*

As a youth I visited the 1964 World’s Fair in New York City. One of my favorite stops was the LDS Church pavilion with its impressive replica of the Salt Lake Temple spires. There for the first time I saw the film *Man’s Search for Happiness*. The movie’s depiction of the plan of salvation, narrated by Elder Richard L. Evans, had a significant impact on many visitors, including me. Among other things, Elder Evans said:

“Life offers you two precious gifts—one is time, the other freedom of choice, the freedom to buy with your time what you will. You are free to exchange your allotment of time for thrills. You may trade it for base desires. You may invest it in greed. . . .

“Yours is the freedom to choose. But these are no bargains, for in them you find no lasting satisfaction.

“Every day, every hour, every minute of your span of mortal years must sometime be accounted for. And it is in *this* life that you walk by faith and prove yourself able to choose good over evil, right over wrong, enduring happiness over mere amusement. And your eternal reward will be according to your choosing.

“A prophet of God has said: ‘Men are that they might have joy’—a joy that includes a fullness of life, a life dedicated to service, to love and harmony in the home, and the fruits of honest toil—an acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—of its requirements and commandments.

“Only in these will you find true happiness, the happiness which doesn’t fade with the lights and the music and the crowds.”<sup>1</sup>

These statements express the reality that our life on earth is a stewardship of time and choices granted by our Creator. The word *stewardship* calls to mind the Lord’s law of consecration (see, for example, D&C 42:32, 53), which has an economic role but, more than that, is an application of celestial law to life here and now (see D&C 105:5). To consecrate is to set apart or dedicate something as sacred, devoted to holy purposes. True success in this life comes in consecrating our lives—that is, our time and choices—to God’s purposes (see John 17:1, 4; D&C 19:19). In so doing, we permit Him to raise us to our highest destiny.

I would like to consider with you five of the elements of a consecrated

life: purity, work, respect for one’s physical body, service, and integrity.

As the Savior demonstrated, the consecrated life is a pure life. While Jesus is the only one to have led a sinless life, those who come unto Him and take His yoke upon them have claim on His grace, which will make them as He is, guiltless and spotless. With deep love the Lord encourages us in these words: “Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20).

Consecration therefore means repentance. Stubbornness, rebellion, and rationalization must be abandoned, and in their place submission, a desire for correction, and acceptance of all that the Lord may require. This is what King Benjamin called putting off the natural man, yielding to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and becoming “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19). Such a one is promised the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit, a promise remembered and renewed each time a repentant soul partakes of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (see D&C 20:77, 79).

Elder B. H. Roberts once expressed the process in these words: “The man who so walks in the light and wisdom and power of God, will at the last, by the very force of association, make the light and wisdom and power of God his own—weaving those bright rays into a chain divine, linking himself forever to God and God to him. This [is] the sum of Messiah’s mystic words, ‘Thou, Father, in me, and I in thee’—beyond this human greatness cannot achieve.”<sup>2</sup>

A consecrated life is a life of labor. Beginning early in His life, Jesus was about His Father’s business (see Luke



2:48–49). God Himself is glorified by His work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39). We naturally desire to participate with Him in His work, and in so doing, we ought to recognize that all honest work is the work of God. In the words of Thomas Carlyle: “All true Work is sacred; in all true Work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness. Labour, wide as the Earth, has its summit in Heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

God has designed this mortal existence to require nearly constant exertion. I recall the Prophet Joseph Smith’s simple statement: “By continuous labor [we] were enabled to get a comfortable maintenance” (Joseph Smith—History 1:55). By work we sustain and enrich life. It enables us to survive the disappointments and tragedies of the mortal experience. Hard-earned achievement brings a sense of self-worth. Work builds and refines character, creates beauty, and is the instrument of our service to one another and to God. A consecrated life is filled with work, sometimes repetitive, sometimes menial, sometimes unappreciated but always work that improves, orders, sustains, lifts, ministers, aspires.

Having spoken in praise of labor, I must also add a kind word for leisure. Just as honest toil gives rest its sweetness, wholesome recreation is

the friend and steadying companion of work. Music, literature, art, dance, drama, athletics—all can provide entertainment to enrich one’s life and further consecrate it. At the same time, it hardly needs to be said that much of what passes for entertainment today is coarse, degrading, violent, mind-numbing, and time wasting. Ironically, it sometimes takes hard work to find wholesome leisure. When entertainment turns from virtue to vice, it becomes a destroyer of the consecrated life. “Wherefore, take heed . . . that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God” (Moroni 7:14).

A consecrated life respects the incomparable gift of one’s physical body, a divine creation in the very image of God. A central purpose of the mortal experience is that each spirit should receive such a body and learn to exercise moral agency in a tabernacle of flesh. A physical body is also essential for exaltation, which comes only in the perfect combination of the physical and the spiritual, as we see in our beloved, resurrected Lord. In this fallen world, some lives will be painfully brief; some bodies will be malformed, broken, or barely adequate to maintain life; yet life will be long enough for each spirit, and each body will qualify for resurrection.

Those who believe that our bodies are nothing more than the result

of evolutionary chance will feel no accountability to God or anyone else for what they do with or to their body. We who have a witness of the broader reality of premortal, mortal, and postmortal eternity, however, must acknowledge that we have a duty to God with respect to this crowning achievement of His physical creation. In Paul’s words:

“What? 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).

Acknowledging these truths and the direction of President Thomas S. Monson in last April’s general conference, we would certainly not deface our body, as with tattoos; or debilitate it, as with drugs; or defile it, as with fornication, adultery, or immodesty.<sup>4</sup> As our body is the instrument of our spirit, it is vital that we care for it as best we can. We should consecrate its powers to serve and further the work of Christ. Said Paul, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1).

Jesus demonstrated that a consecrated life is a life of service. Hours

before the agony of His Atonement began, the Lord humbly washed His disciples' feet, saying to them:

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:14–16).

Those who quietly and thoughtfully go about doing good offer a model of consecration. No one in our time more perfectly incorporates this trait into daily life than President Thomas S. Monson. He has cultivated a listening ear that can discern even the faintest whisper of the Spirit signaling the need of someone he can reach and help. Often it is in simple acts that confirm divine love and awareness, but always, always Thomas Monson responds.

I find in the life of my grandfather and grandmother Alexander DeWitt and Louise Vickery Christofferson an instance of such consecration. Grandpa was a strong man and was good at shearing sheep in the days before electric clippers. He got good enough, he said, that "in one day I sheared 287 sheep and could have sheared over 300, but we ran out of sheep." During 1919 he sheared over 12,000 sheep, earning some \$2,000. The money would have substantially expanded his farm and upgraded his home, but a call to serve in the Southern States Mission came from the Brethren, and with Louise's full support, he accepted. He left his wife (then pregnant with their first son, my father) and their three daughters with the sheep-shearing money. Upon his joyous return two years later, he observed, "Our savings had lasted us throughout the two years, and we had \$29 left."



A consecrated life is a life of integrity. We see it in the husband and wife "who honor marital vows with complete fidelity."<sup>5</sup> We see it in the father and mother whose demonstrated first priority is to nourish their marriage and ensure the physical and spiritual welfare of their children. We see it in those who are honest.

Years ago I became acquainted with two families in the process of dissolving a jointly owned commercial enterprise. The principals, two men who were friends and members of the same Christian congregation, had formed the company years earlier. They had a generally congenial relationship as business partners, but as they grew older and the next generation began to take part in the business, conflicts emerged. Finally, all parties decided it would be best to divide up the assets and go their separate

ways. One of the two original partners devised a stratagem with his lawyers to secure for himself a significant financial advantage in the dissolution at the expense of the other partner and his sons. In a meeting of the parties, one of the sons complained about this unfair treatment and appealed to the honor and Christian beliefs of the first partner. "You know this is not right," he said. "How could you take advantage of someone this way, especially a brother in the same church?" The first partner's lawyer retorted, "Oh, grow up! How can you be so naive?"

Integrity is not naiveté. What *is* naive is to suppose that we are not accountable to God. The Savior declared: "My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; . . . that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works,

whether they be good or whether they be evil” (3 Nephi 27:14). One who lives a consecrated life does not seek to take advantage of another but, if anything, will turn the other cheek and, if required to deliver a coat, will give the cloak also (see Matthew 5:39–40). The Savior’s sternest rebukes were to hypocrites. Hypocrisy is terribly destructive, not only to the hypocrite but also to those who observe or know of his or her conduct, especially children. It is faith destroying, whereas honor is the rich soil in which the seed of faith thrives.

A consecrated life is a beautiful thing. Its strength and serenity are “as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:9). Of particular significance is the influence of a consecrated man or woman upon others, especially those closest and dearest. The consecration of many who have gone before us and others who live among us has helped lay the foundation for our happiness. In like manner future generations will take courage from your consecrated life, acknowledging their debt to you for the possession of all that truly matters. May we consecrate ourselves as sons and daughters 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” (Moroni 7:48; see also 1 John 3:2), I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Man’s Search for Happiness* (pamphlet, 1969), 4–5.
2. B. H. Roberts, “Brigham Young: A Character Sketch,” *Improvement Era*, June 1903, 574.
3. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1843), 251.
4. See Thomas S. Monson, “Preparation Brings Blessings,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 64–67.
5. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.



**By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

## Of Things That Matter Most

*If life and its rushed pace and many stresses have made it difficult for you to feel like rejoicing, then perhaps now is a good time to refocus on what matters most.*

It’s remarkable how much we can learn about life by studying nature. For example, scientists can look at the rings of trees and make educated guesses about climate and growing conditions hundreds and even thousands of years ago. One of the things we learn from studying the growth of trees is that during seasons when conditions are ideal, trees grow at a normal rate. However, during seasons when growing conditions are not ideal, trees slow down their growth and devote their energy to the basic elements necessary for survival.

At this point some of you may be thinking, “That’s all very fine and good, but what does it have to do with flying an airplane?” Well, let me tell you.

Have you ever been in an airplane and experienced turbulence? The most common cause of turbulence is a sudden change in air movement causing the aircraft to pitch, yaw, and roll. While planes are built to withstand far greater turbulence than anything you would encounter on a regular flight, it still may be disconcerting to passengers.

What do you suppose pilots do when they encounter turbulence? A student pilot may think that increasing speed is a good strategy because it will get them through the turbulence faster. But that may be the wrong thing to do. Professional pilots understand that there is an optimum turbulence penetration speed that will minimize the negative effects of turbulence. And most of the time that would mean to reduce your speed. The same principle applies also to speed bumps on a road.

Therefore, it is good advice to slow down a little, steady the course, and focus on the essentials when experiencing adverse conditions.

#### The Pace of Modern Life

This is a simple but critical lesson to learn. It may seem logical when put in terms of trees or turbulence, but it’s surprising how easy it is to ignore this lesson when it comes to applying these principles in our own daily lives. When stress levels rise, when distress appears, when tragedy strikes, too often we attempt to keep up the same frantic



pace or even accelerate, thinking somehow that the more rushed our pace, the better off we will be.

One of the characteristics of modern life seems to be that we are moving at an ever-increasing rate, regardless of turbulence or obstacles.

Let's be honest; it's rather easy to be busy. We all can think up a list of tasks that will overwhelm our schedules. Some might even think that their self-worth depends on the length of their to-do list. They flood the open spaces in their time with lists of meetings and minutia—even during times of stress and fatigue. Because they unnecessarily complicate their lives, they often feel increased frustration, diminished joy, and too little sense of meaning in their lives.

It is said that any virtue when taken to an extreme can become a vice. Overscheduling our days would certainly qualify for this. There comes a point where milestones can become millstones and ambitions, albatrosses around our necks.

### What Is the Solution?

The wise understand and apply the lessons of tree rings and air turbulence. They resist the temptation to get caught up in the frantic rush of everyday life. They follow the advice "There is more to life than increasing its speed."<sup>1</sup> In short, they focus on the things that matter most.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, in a recent general conference, taught, "We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or

best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families."<sup>2</sup>

The search for the best things inevitably leads to the foundational principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the simple and beautiful truths revealed to us by a caring, eternal, and all-knowing Father in Heaven. These core doctrines and principles, though simple enough for a child to understand, provide the answers to the most complex questions of life.

There is a beauty and clarity that comes from simplicity that we sometimes do not appreciate in our thirst for intricate solutions.

For example, it wasn't long after astronauts and cosmonauts orbited the earth that they realized ballpoint pens would not work in space. And so some very smart people went to work solving the problem. It took thousands of hours and millions of dollars, but in the end, they developed a pen that could write anywhere, in any temperature, and on nearly any surface. But how did the astronauts and cosmonauts get along until the problem was solved? They simply used a pencil.

Leonardo da Vinci is quoted as saying that "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."<sup>3</sup> When we look at the foundational principles of the plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, we can recognize and appreciate in its plainness and simplicity the elegance and beauty of our Heavenly Father's wisdom. Then, turning our ways to His ways is the beginning of our wisdom.

### The Power of Basics

The story is told that the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi had a ritual he performed on the first day of training. He would hold up a football, show it to the athletes who had been playing the sport for many years, and say, "Gentlemen, . . . *this* is a football!" He talked about its size and shape, how it can be kicked, carried, or passed. He took the team out onto the empty field and said, "This is a football field." He walked them around, describing the dimensions, the shape, the rules, and how the game is played.<sup>4</sup>

This coach knew that even these experienced players, and indeed the team, could become great only by mastering the fundamentals. They could spend their time practicing intricate trick plays, but until they mastered the fundamentals of the game, they would never become a championship team.

I think most of us intuitively understand how important the fundamentals are. It is just that we sometimes get distracted by so many things that seem more enticing.

Printed material, wide-ranging media sources, electronic tools and gadgets—all helpful if used properly—can become hurtful diversions or heartless chambers of isolation.

Yet amidst the multitude of voices and choices, the humble Man of Galilee stands with hands outstretched, waiting. His is a simple message: "Come, follow me."<sup>5</sup> And He does not speak with a powerful megaphone but with a still, small voice.<sup>6</sup> It is so easy for the basic gospel message to get lost amidst the deluge of information that hits us from all sides.

The holy scriptures and the spoken word of the living prophets give emphasis to the fundamental principles and doctrines of the gospel. The reason we return to these foundational

principles, to the pure doctrines, is because they are the gateway to truths of profound meaning. They are the door to experiences of sublime importance that would otherwise be beyond our capacity to comprehend. These simple, basic principles are the key to living in harmony with God and man. They are the keys to opening the windows of heaven. They lead us to the peace, joy, and understanding that Heavenly Father has promised to His children who hear and obey Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, we would do well to slow down a little, proceed at the optimum speed for our circumstances, focus on the significant, lift up our eyes, and truly see the things that matter most. Let us be mindful of the foundational precepts our Heavenly Father has given to His children that will establish the basis of a rich and fruitful mortal life with promises of eternal happiness. They will teach us to do “all these things . . . in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that [we] should run faster than [we have] strength. [But] it is expedient that [we] should be diligent, [and] thereby . . . win the prize.”<sup>7</sup>

Brothers and sisters, diligently doing the things that matter most will lead us to the Savior of the world. That is why “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that [we] may know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins.”<sup>8</sup> In the complexity, confusion, and rush of modern living, this is the “more excellent way.”<sup>9</sup>

### **So What Are the Basics?**

As we turn to our Heavenly Father and seek His wisdom regarding the things that matter most, we learn over and over again the importance of four key relationships: with our God, with our families, with our

fellowman, and with ourselves. As we evaluate our own lives with a willing mind, we will see where we have drifted from the more excellent way. The eyes of our understanding will be opened, and we will recognize what needs to be done to purify our heart and refocus our life.

First, our relationship with God is most sacred and vital. We are His spirit children. He is our Father. He desires our happiness. As we seek Him, as we learn of His Son, Jesus Christ, as we open our hearts to the influence of the Holy Spirit, our lives become more stable and secure. We experience greater peace, joy, and fulfillment as we give our best to live according to God’s eternal plan and keep His commandments.

We improve our relationship with our Heavenly Father by learning of Him, by communing with Him, by

repenting of our sins, and by actively following Jesus Christ, for “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Christ].”<sup>10</sup> To strengthen our relationship with God, we need some meaningful time alone with Him. Quietly focusing on daily personal prayer and scripture study, always aiming to be worthy of a current temple recommend—these will be some wise investments of our time and efforts to draw closer to our Heavenly Father. Let us heed the invitation in Psalms: “Be still, and know that I am God.”<sup>11</sup>

Our second key relationship is with our families. Since “no other success can compensate for failure”<sup>12</sup> here, we must place high priority on our families. We build deep and loving family relationships by doing simple things together, like family dinner and family home evening and by just having fun



together. In family relationships *love* is really spelled *t-i-m-e*, time. Taking time for each other is the key for harmony at home. We talk with, rather than about, each other. We learn from each other, and we appreciate our differences as well as our commonalities. We establish a divine bond with each other as we approach God together through family prayer, gospel study, and Sunday worship.

The third key relationship we have is with our fellowman. We build this relationship one person at a time—by being sensitive to the needs of others, serving them, and giving of our time and talents. I was deeply impressed by one sister who was burdened with the challenges of age and illness but decided that although she couldn't do much, she could listen. And so each week she watched for people who looked troubled or discouraged, and she spent time with them, listening. What a blessing she was in the lives of so many people.

The fourth key relationship is with ourselves. It may seem odd to think of having a relationship with ourselves, but we do. Some people can't get along with themselves. They criticize and belittle themselves all day long until they begin to hate themselves. May I suggest that you reduce the rush and take a little extra time to get to know yourself better. Walk in nature, watch a sunrise, enjoy God's creations, ponder the truths of the restored gospel, and find out what they mean for you personally. Learn to see yourself as Heavenly Father sees you—as His precious daughter or son with divine potential.

### Rejoice in the Pure Gospel

Brothers and sisters, let us be wise. Let us turn to the pure doctrinal waters of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us joyfully partake of them in their simplicity and plainness. The



**Dublin, Ireland**

heavens are open again. The gospel of Jesus Christ is on earth once more, and its simple truths are a plentiful source of joy!

Brothers and sisters, indeed we have great reason to rejoice. If life and its rushed pace and many stresses have made it difficult for you to feel like rejoicing, then perhaps now is a good time to refocus on what matters most.

Strength comes not from frantic activity but from being settled on a firm foundation of truth and light. It comes from placing our attention and efforts on the basics of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes from paying attention to the divine things that matter most.

Let us simplify our lives a little. Let us make the changes necessary to refocus our lives on the sublime beauty of the simple, humble path of

Christian discipleship—the path that leads always toward a life of meaning, gladness, and peace. For this I pray, as I leave you my blessing, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. Mahatma Gandhi, in Larry Chang, *Wisdom for the Soul* (2006), 356.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 107.
3. Leonardo da Vinci, in John Cook, comp., *The Book of Positive Quotations*, 2nd ed. (1993), 262.
4. Vince Lombardi, in Donald T. Phillips, *Run to Win: Vince Lombardi on Coaching and Leadership* (2001), 92.
5. Luke 18:22.
6. See 1 Kings 19:12.
7. Mosiah 4:27.
8. 2 Nephi 25:26.
9. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.
10. John 14:6.
11. Psalm 46:10.
12. J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.





**Presented by President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen.



Those in favor, please manifest it.  
Any opposed may so indicate.  
It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

All in favor, please manifest it.  
Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Spencer J. Condie, Bruce C. Hafen, Kenneth Johnson, Glenn L. Pace, and Lance B. Wickman as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

It is also proposed that we release Elders Spencer V. Jones and Wolfgang H. Paul as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these Brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Fernando Maluenda and José L. Torres as Area Seventies.

Those who wish to join us in expressing our gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Wenceslao H. Svec as an Area Seventy.

All in favor, please signify.  
Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted.

Those in favor, please manifest it.  
Any opposed may manifest it.  
President Monson, insofar as I have been able to observe, the voting in the Conference Center has been unanimous.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and prayers. ■



**By Elder Robert D. Hales**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life

*Whenever we choose to come unto Christ, take His name upon us, and follow His servants, we progress along the path to eternal life.*

Recently I received a letter from a friend of over 50 years who is not a member of our church. I had sent him some gospel-related reading, to which he responded: “Initially it was hard for me to follow the meaning of typical Mormon jargon, such as *agency*. Possibly a short vocabulary page would be helpful.”

I was surprised he did not understand what we mean by the word *agency*. I went to an online dictionary. Of the 10 definitions and usages of the word *agency*, none expressed the idea of making choices to act. We teach that agency is the ability and privilege God gives us to choose and “to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon.”<sup>1</sup> Agency is to act with accountability and responsibility for our actions. Our agency is essential to the plan of salvation. With it we are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil.”<sup>2</sup>

The words of a familiar hymn teach us this principle very clearly:

*Know this, that ev'ry soul is free  
To choose his life and what he'll be;  
For this eternal truth is giv'n:  
That God will force no man to heav'n.*<sup>3</sup>

To answer my friend's question and the questions of good men and women everywhere, let me share with you more of what we know about this meaning of agency.

Before we came to this earth, Heavenly Father presented His plan of salvation—a plan to come to earth and receive a body, choose to act between good and evil, and progress to become like Him and live with Him forever.

Our agency—our ability to choose and act for ourselves—was an essential element of this plan. Without agency we would be unable to make right choices and progress. Yet with agency we could make wrong choices, commit sin, and lose the opportunity to be with Heavenly Father again. For this reason a Savior would be provided to suffer for our sins and redeem us if we would repent. By His infinite Atonement, He brought about

“the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice.”<sup>4</sup>

After Heavenly Father presented His plan, Lucifer stepped forward, saying, “Send me, . . . and I will redeem all mankind, that [not even] one soul shall . . . be lost . . . ; wherefore give me thine honor.”<sup>5</sup> This plan was rejected by our Father, for it would have denied us our agency. Indeed, it was a plan of rebellion.

Then Jesus Christ, Heavenly Father's “Beloved and Chosen [Son] from the beginning,” exercised His agency to say, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”<sup>6</sup> He would be our Savior—the Savior of the world.

Because of Lucifer's rebellion, a great spiritual conflict ensued. Each of Heavenly Father's children had the opportunity to exercise the agency Heavenly Father had given him or her. We chose to have faith in the Savior Jesus Christ—to come unto Him, follow Him, and accept the plan Heavenly Father presented for our sakes. But a third of Heavenly Father's children did not have faith to follow the Savior and chose to follow Lucifer, or Satan, instead.<sup>7</sup>

And God said, “Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, . . . I caused that he should be cast down.”<sup>8</sup> Those who followed Satan lost the opportunity to receive a mortal body, live on earth, and progress. Because of the way they used their agency, they lost their agency.

Today the only power Satan and his followers have is the power to tempt and try us. Their only joy is to make us “miserable like unto [themselves].”<sup>9</sup> Their only happiness comes when we are disobedient to the Lord's commandments.



But think of it: in our premortal state we chose to follow the Savior Jesus Christ! And because we did, we were allowed to come to earth. I testify that by making the same choice to follow the Savior now, while we are here on earth, we will obtain an even greater blessing in the eternities. But let it be known: we must continue to choose to follow the Savior. Eternity is at stake, and our wise use of agency and our actions are essential that we might have eternal life.

Throughout His life our Savior showed us how to use our agency. As a boy in Jerusalem, He deliberately chose to “be about [His] Father’s business.”<sup>10</sup> In His ministry, He obediently chose “to do the will of [His] Father.”<sup>11</sup> In Gethsemane, He chose to suffer all things, saying, “Not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”<sup>12</sup> On the cross, He chose to love His enemies, praying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>13</sup> And then, so that He could finally demonstrate that He was choosing for Himself, He

was left alone. “[Father,] why hast thou forsaken me?” He asked.<sup>14</sup> At last, He exercised His agency to act, enduring to the end, until He could say, “It is finished.”<sup>15</sup>

Though He “was in all points tempted like as we are,”<sup>16</sup> with every choice and every action He exercised the agency to be our Savior—to break the chains of sin and death for us. And by His perfect life, He taught us that when we choose to do the will of our Heavenly Father, our agency is preserved, our opportunities increase, and we progress.

Evidence of this truth is found throughout the scriptures. Job lost everything he had yet chose to remain faithful, and he gained the eternal blessings of God. Mary and Joseph chose to follow the warning of an angel to flee into Egypt, and the life of the Savior was preserved. Joseph Smith chose to follow the instructions of Moroni, and the Restoration unfolded as prophesied. Whenever we choose to come unto Christ, take His name upon us, and follow His servants, we progress along the path to eternal life.

In our mortal journey, it is helpful to remember that the opposite is also true: when we don’t keep the commandments or follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, our opportunities are reduced; our abilities to act and progress are diminished. When Cain took his brother’s life because he loved Satan more than God, his spiritual progress was stopped.

In my youth I learned an important lesson about how our actions may limit our freedom. One day my father assigned me to varnish a wooden floor. I made the choice to begin at the door and work my way *into* the room. When I was almost finished, I realized I had left myself no way to get out. There was no window or door on the other side. I had literally painted myself into a corner. I had no place to go. I was stuck.

Whenever we disobey, we spiritually paint ourselves into a corner and are captive to our choices. Though we are spiritually stuck, there is always a way back. Like repentance, turning around and walking across a newly varnished floor means more work—

a lot of resanding and refinishing! Returning to the Lord isn't easy, but it is worth it.

As we understand the challenge of repenting, we appreciate the blessings of the Holy Ghost to guide our agency and Heavenly Father, who gives us commandments and strengthens and sustains us in keeping them. We also understand how obedience to the commandments ultimately protects our agency.

For example, when we hearken to the Word of Wisdom, we escape the captivity of poor health and addiction to substances that literally rob us of our ability to act for ourselves.

As we obey the counsel to avoid and get out of debt now, we use our agency and obtain the liberty to use our disposable income for helping and blessing others.



When we follow the prophets' counsel to hold family home evening, family prayer, and family scripture study, our homes become an incubator for our children's spiritual growth. There we teach them the gospel, bear our testimonies, express our love, and listen as they share their feelings and experiences. By our righteous choices and actions, we liberate them from darkness by increasing their ability to walk in the light.

The world teaches many falsehoods about agency. Many think we should "eat, drink, and be merry; . . . and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved."<sup>17</sup> Others embrace secularism and deny God. They convince themselves that there is no "opposition in all things"<sup>18</sup> and, therefore, "whatsoever a man [does is] no crime."<sup>19</sup> This "destroy[s] the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes."<sup>20</sup>

Contrary to the world's secular teaching, the scriptures teach us that we do have agency, and our righteous exercise of agency always makes a difference in the opportunities we have and our ability to act upon them and progress eternally.

For example, through the prophet Samuel, the Lord gave a clear commandment to King Saul:

"The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king . . . : now therefore hearken thou unto the voice . . . of the Lord. . . .

". . . Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have."<sup>21</sup>

But Saul did not follow the Lord's commandment. He practiced what I call "selective obedience." Relying on his own wisdom, he spared the life of King Agag and brought back the best of the sheep, oxen, and other animals.

The Lord revealed this to the prophet Samuel and sent him to

remove Saul from being king. When the prophet arrived, Saul said, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord."<sup>22</sup> But the prophet knew otherwise, saying, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"<sup>23</sup>

Saul excused himself by blaming others, saying the people had kept the animals in order to make sacrifices to the Lord. The prophet's answer was clear: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken [to the commandments of the Lord] than the fat of rams."<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Saul confessed, saying, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."<sup>25</sup> Because Saul did not hearken with exactness—because he chose to be selectively obedient—he lost the opportunity and the agency to be king.

My brothers and sisters, are we hearkening with exactness to the voice of the Lord and His prophets? Or, like Saul, are we practicing selective obedience and fearing the judgments of men?

I acknowledge that all of us make mistakes. The scriptures teach us, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."<sup>26</sup> For those who find themselves captive to past unrighteous choices, stuck in a dark corner, without all the blessings available by the righteous exercise of agency, we love you. Come back! Come out of the dark corner and into the light. Even if you have to walk across a newly varnished floor, it is worth it. Trust that "through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind [including you and me] may be saved, by obedience to the laws

and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>27</sup>

As the hour of the Atonement was upon Him, the Savior offered His great Intercessory Prayer and spoke of each of us, saying: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.”<sup>28</sup> “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>29</sup>

I bear my special witness that They live. When we exercise our agency in righteousness, we come to know Them, become more like Them, and prepare ourselves for that day when “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” that Jesus is our Savior.<sup>30</sup> May we continue to follow Him and our Eternal Father, as we did in the beginning, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26.
2. 2 Nephi 2:27.
3. “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free,” *Hymns*, no. 240.
4. Alma 42:15.
5. Moses 4:1.
6. Moses 4:2.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
8. Moses 4:3.
9. 2 Nephi 2:27; see also 2 Nephi 9:9.
10. Luke 2:49.
11. 3 Nephi 27:13.
12. Luke 22:42–43.
13. Luke 23:34.
14. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
15. John 19:30.
16. Hebrews 4:15.
17. 2 Nephi 28:8.
18. 2 Nephi 2:11.
19. Alma 30:17.
20. 2 Nephi 2:12.
21. 1 Samuel 15:1, 3.
22. 1 Samuel 15:13.
23. 1 Samuel 15:14.
24. 1 Samuel 15:22.
25. 1 Samuel 15:24.
26. Romans 3:23.
27. Articles of Faith 1:3.
28. John 17:24.
29. John 17:3.
30. Mosiah 27:31.



**By Elder Quentin L. Cook**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Let There Be Light!

*In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be part of the public discourse.*

I celebrated a birthday last month. For my birthday present, my wife, Mary, gave me a CD containing songs of hope and faith performed by a famous British singer named Vera Lynn, who inspired her listeners during the dark days of the Second World War.

There is a little history as to why my wife would give me this gift. The bombing of London in September 1940 commenced the day before I was born.<sup>1</sup> My mother, listening to the account of the London Blitz on the radio in her hospital room, decided to name me after the radio announcer, whose first name was Quentin.

The vocalist Vera Lynn is now 93 years old. Last year some of her wartime songs were rereleased and immediately climbed to the top of the music charts in Britain. Those of you who are a little older will remember some of the songs like “The White Cliffs of Dover.”

One song, titled “When the Lights Go on Again (All over the World),” deeply touched me. The song brought two thoughts to my mind—first, the prophetic words by a British statesman: “The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our time”;<sup>2</sup> and second, the bombing raids conducted over British cities like London. To make it harder

for the attacking bombers to find a target, blackouts were instituted. Lights were turned out, and windows were draped.

The song reflected an optimistic hope that freedom and light would be restored. For those of us who understand the role of the Savior and the Light of Christ<sup>3</sup> in the ongoing conflict between good and evil, the analogy between that world war and the moral conflict today is clear. It is by the Light of Christ that all mankind “may know good from evil.”<sup>4</sup>

Freedom and light have never been easy to attain or maintain. Since the War in Heaven, the forces of evil have used every means possible to destroy agency and extinguish light. The assault on moral principles and religious freedom has never been stronger.

As Latter-day Saints, we need to do our best to preserve light and protect our families and communities from this assault on morality and religious freedom.

#### Protecting Family

An ever-present danger to the family is the onslaught of evil forces that seem to come from every direction. While our primary effort must be to seek light and truth, we



### Protecting Community

In addition to protecting our own families, we should be a source of light in protecting our communities. The Savior said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."<sup>7</sup>

Our day has been described as "a time of plenty and an age of doubt."<sup>8</sup> Basic belief in the power and authority of God is not only questioned but also denigrated. How under these circumstances can we promote values in a way that will resonate with the nonbelievers and the apathetic and help abate the spiraling descent into violence and evil?

This question is of monumental importance. Think of the prophet Mormon and his anguish when he declared, "How could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!"<sup>9</sup> Mormon's anguish was justified, and his son, Moroni, was left to describe "the sad tale of the destruction of [his] people."<sup>10</sup>

My personal experience of living and interacting with people all over the world has caused me to be optimistic. I believe that light and truth will be preserved in our time. In all nations there are large numbers who worship God and feel accountable to Him for their conduct. Some observers believe there is actually a global revival of faith.<sup>11</sup> As Church leaders, we have met with leaders of other faiths and have found that there is a common moral foundation that transcends theological differences and unites us in our aspirations for a better society.

We also find the majority of people are still respectful of basic moral values. But make no mistake: there are also people who are determined to both destroy faith and reject any religious influence in society. Other evil people

would be wise to black out from our homes the lethal bombs that destroy spiritual development and growth. Pornography, in particular, is a weapon of mass moral destruction. Its impact is at the forefront in eroding moral values. Some TV programs and Internet sites are equally lethal. These evil forces remove light and hope from the world. The level of decadence is accelerating.<sup>5</sup> If we do not black out evil from our homes and lives, do not be surprised if devastating moral explosions shatter the peace which is the reward for

righteous living. Our responsibility is to be in the world but not of the world.

In addition, we need to greatly increase religious observance in the home. Weekly family home evening and daily family prayer and scripture study are essential. We need to introduce into our homes content that is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy."<sup>6</sup> If we make of our homes holy places that shelter us from evil, we will be protected from the adverse consequences that the scriptures have foretold.

exploit, manipulate, and tear down society with drugs, pornography, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, robbery, and dishonest business practices. The power and influence of these people is very large even if they are relatively small in number.

There has always been an ongoing battle between people of faith and those who would purge religion and God from public life.<sup>12</sup> Many opinion leaders today reject a moral view of the world based on Judeo-Christian values. In their view there is no objective moral order.<sup>13</sup> They believe no preference should be given to moral goals.<sup>14</sup>

Still, the majority of people aspire to be good and honorable. The Light of Christ, which is distinct from the Holy Ghost, informs their conscience. We know from the scriptures that the Light of Christ is “the Spirit [which] giveth light to every man that cometh into the world.”<sup>15</sup> This light is given “for the sake of the whole world.”<sup>16</sup> President Boyd K. Packer has taught that this is a “source of inspiration, which each of us possesses in common with all other members of the human family.”<sup>17</sup> This is why many will accept moral values even when founded on religious convictions which they do not personally support. As we read in Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, “It is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right.” Mosiah then warns, “If the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come.”<sup>18</sup>

In our increasingly unrighteous world, it is essential that values based on religious belief be part of the public discourse. Moral positions informed by a religious conscience must be

accorded equal access to the public square. Under the constitutions of most countries, a religious conscience may not be given preference, but neither should it be disregarded.<sup>19</sup>

Religious faith is a store of light, knowledge, and wisdom and benefits society in a dramatic way when adherents engage in moral conduct because they feel accountable to God.<sup>20</sup>

Two religious principles will illustrate this point.

#### ***Honest Conduct Motivated by Accountability to God***

The thirteenth article of faith begins, “We believe in being honest.” Honesty is a principle founded in religious belief and is one of God’s basic laws.

Many years ago when I was practicing law in California, a friend and client who was not a member of our faith came in to see me and with great enthusiasm showed me a letter he had received from an LDS bishop of a nearby ward. The bishop wrote that a member of his congregation, a former employee of my client, had taken materials from my client’s work site and had rationalized that they were surplus. But after becoming a committed Latter-day Saint and attempting to follow Jesus Christ, this employee recognized that what he had done was dishonest. Enclosed in the letter was a sum of money from the man to cover not only the cost of the materials but also interest. My client was impressed that the Church through lay leadership would assist this man in his effort to be reconciled to God.

Think about the light and truth that the shared value of honesty has in the Judeo-Christian world. Think about the impact on society if youth didn’t cheat in school, if adults were honest in the workplace and were faithful to their marriage vows. For us the

concept of basic honesty is grounded in the life and teachings of the Savior. Honesty is also a valued attribute in many other faiths and in historic literature. The poet Robert Burns said, “An honest man’s the noblest work of God.”<sup>21</sup> In almost every instance, people of faith feel accountable to God for being honest. This was the reason the man in California was repenting from his earlier act of dishonesty.

In a commencement address last year, Clayton Christensen, a Harvard professor and Church leader, shared the true account of a professional colleague from another country who had studied democracy. This friend was surprised at how critically important religion is to democracy. He pointed out that in societies where the citizens are taught from a young age to feel accountable to God for honesty and integrity, they will abide by rules and practices that, while unenforceable, promote democratic ideals. In societies where this is not true, there cannot be enough policemen to enforce honest behavior.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, moral values with respect to honesty can play a significant role in establishing light and truth and improving society and should be valued by those who do not have faith.

#### ***Treating All of God’s Children as Brothers and Sisters***

A second example of how religious faith benefits society and contributes light to the world is the role of religion in treating all of God’s children as brothers and sisters.

Many faith-based institutions in the last two centuries have been at the forefront in reaching out and rescuing those subjected to cruel circumstances because their members believe that all men are made in the image and likeness of God.<sup>23</sup> William Wilberforce, the great British statesman



who was instrumental in outlawing the slave trade in Great Britain, is an excellent example.<sup>24</sup> “Amazing Grace,” the touching hymn, and the inspiring movie of the same name capture the feeling of the early 1800s and describe the account of his heroic effort. Wilberforce’s untiring efforts were among the first steps in eliminating this terrible, oppressive, cruel, and venal practice. As part of that effort he, together with other leaders, set out to reform public morality. He believed that education and government had to be morally based.<sup>25</sup> “His . . . vision of moral and spiritual enrichment was what he lived for, whether in defending the institution of marriage, attacking the practices of the slave trade or emphatically defending the Sabbath day.”<sup>26</sup> With great energy he helped mobilize the country’s moral and social leaders in a nationwide struggle against vice.<sup>27</sup>

In our early Church history, the vast majority of our members were opposed to slavery.<sup>28</sup> This was a significant reason, along with their religious beliefs, for the hostility and mob violence they experienced, culminating in the extermination order issued by Governor Boggs in Missouri.<sup>29</sup> In 1833 Joseph Smith received a revelation stating, “It is not right that

any man should be in bondage one to another.”<sup>30</sup> Our commitment to freedom of religion and treating all people as sons and daughters of God is central to our doctrine.

These are just two examples of how faith-based values undergird principles that greatly bless society. There are many more. We should both participate ourselves and support people of character and integrity to help reestablish moral values that will bless the entire community.

Let me be clear that all voices need to be heard in the public square. Neither religious nor secular voices should be silenced. Furthermore, we should not expect that because some of our views emanate from religious principles, they will automatically be accepted or given preferential status. But it is also clear such views and values are entitled to be reviewed on their merits.

The moral foundation of our doctrine can be a beacon light to the world and can be a unifying force for both morality and faith in Jesus Christ. We need to protect our families and be at the forefront together with all people of goodwill in doing everything we can to preserve light, hope, and morality

in our communities.

If we both live and proclaim these principles, we will be following Jesus Christ, who is the true Light of the World. We can be a force for righteousness in preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We look forward to that beautiful day when “free hearts will sing when the lights go on again all over the world.”<sup>31</sup> In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Richard Hough and Denis Richards, *The Battle of Britain: The Greatest Air Battle of World War II* (1989), 264.
2. Attributed to Sir Edward Grey. See “When the Lights Go On Again (All over the World),” wikipedia.org.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11–13. The Light of Christ is “the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (verse 13). For a comprehensive understanding of the Light of Christ and the difference between the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, see Boyd K. Packer, “The Light of Christ,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 8–14.
4. Moroni 7:19.
5. See Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (2000), 798.
6. Articles of Faith 1:13.
7. Matthew 5:16.
8. Roger B. Porter, “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God” (talk given at Cambridge University Ward, Cambridge Massachusetts Stake, Sept. 13, 2009).



9. Mormon 6:17.
10. Mormon 8:3.
11. See John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *God Is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith Is Changing the World* (2009).
12. See Diana Butler Bass, "Peace, Love and Understanding" (review of *God Is Back*, by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge), *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, Jul. 27–Aug. 2, 2009, 39.
13. See David D. Kirkpatrick, "The Right Hand of the Fathers," *New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 20, 2009, 27.
14. See Kirkpatrick, "The Right Hand of the Fathers," 27. Robert P. George teaches that either we have moral reason and free choice or we have amorality and determinism.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:48.
17. Boyd K. Packer, *Liahona and Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 8.
18. Mosiah 29:26–27.
19. See Margaret Somerville, "Should Religion Influence Policy?" [www.themarknews.com/articles/1535-should-religion-influence-policy](http://www.themarknews.com/articles/1535-should-religion-influence-policy).
20. See Zhao Xiao, "Market Economies with Churches and Market Economies without Churches," 2002, [www.danwei.org/business/churches\\_and\\_the\\_market\\_econom.php](http://www.danwei.org/business/churches_and_the_market_econom.php). This Chinese government economist argues that a moral underpinning is necessary to prevent people from lying and injuring others.
21. "The Cotter's Saturday Night," in *Poems by Robert Burns* (1811), 191.
22. See Clayton M. Christensen, "The Importance of Asking the Right Questions" (commencement speech, Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, N.H., May 16, 2009).
23. See Genesis 1:26.
24. See William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (2007), 352–56.
25. See Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 104–5.
26. Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 513.
27. See Hague, *William Wilberforce*, 107–8.
28. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (1992), 93, 120, 202.
29. See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (1992), 48–51; see also Clyde A. Milner and others, *The Oxford History of the American West* (1994), 362: "Proslavery settlers and politicians persecuted them mercilessly."
30. Doctrine and Covenants 101:79.
31. Final line in the song "When the Lights Go On Again (All over the World)."



**By Bishop Richard C. Edgley**

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

## Faith—the Choice Is Yours

*Choose faith over doubt, choose faith over fear, choose faith over the unknown and the unseen, and choose faith over pessimism.*

We live in one of the greatest dispensations of all times—a time former prophets looked forward to, prophesied of, and, I believe, yearned for. However, with all the heavenly blessings bestowed upon us, Satan, ever so real, is ever so active, and conflicting messages are continually bombarding all of us. The angel Moroni warned the young Prophet Joseph Smith that his name would be known for good and evil throughout the world (see Joseph Smith—History 1:33), and never has the fulfillment of a prophecy been more evident. The Prophet gave his life for his testimony, and the attacks continue today against the Church and even the Savior Himself. The reality of the Savior, His atoning sacrifice, and its universal application for all of us is challenged and often dismissed as a myth or the baseless hope of a weak and uneducated mind. Furthermore, the reality of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days continues to be challenged. The continual bombardment of such messages may cause confusion, doubt, and pessimism,

each attacking the fundamental truths we believe in, our faith in God, and our hope in the future.

This might be the reality of our world, but we can still choose how we react to it. When our sacred doctrine and beliefs are challenged, this is our opportunity to become acquainted with God in a most private and intimate manner. This is our opportunity to choose.

Because of the conflicts and challenges we face in today's world, I wish to suggest a single choice—a choice of peace and protection and a choice that is appropriate for all. That choice is faith. Be aware that faith is not a free gift given without thought, desire, or effort. It does not come as the dew falls from heaven. The Savior said, "Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28) and "Knock, and it shall be [given] you" (Matthew 7:7). These are action verbs—*come*, *knock*. They are choices. So I say, choose faith. Choose faith over doubt, choose faith over fear, choose faith over the unknown and the unseen, and choose faith over pessimism.

Alma's classic discussion on faith, as recorded in the 32nd chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon, is a series of choices to ensure the development and the preservation of our faith. Alma gave us a directive to choose. His were words of action initiated by choosing. He used the words *awake, arouse, experiment, exercise, desire, work, and plant*. Then Alma explained that if we make these choices and do not cast the seed out by unbelief, then "it will begin to swell within [our] breasts" (Alma 32:28).

Yes, faith is a choice, and it must be sought after and developed. Thus, we are responsible for our own faith. We are also responsible for our lack of faith. The choice is yours.

There is much that I do not know. I do not know the details of the organization of matter into the beautiful world we live in. I do not understand the intricacies of the Atonement, how the Savior's sacrifice can cleanse all repentant people, or how the Savior could suffer "the pain of all men" (D&C 18:11). I do not know where the city of Zarahemla was, as referred to in the Book of Mormon. I do not know why my beliefs sometimes conflict with assumed scientific or secular knowledge. Perhaps these are matters our Father in Heaven described as the "mysteries . . . of heaven" (D&C 107:19) that will be revealed at a later date.

But while I don't know everything, I know the important. I know the plain and simple gospel truths that lead to salvation and exaltation. I know that the Savior did suffer the pain of all men and that all repentant people can be cleansed from sin. And what I don't know or don't completely understand, with the powerful aid of my faith, I bridge the gap and move on, partaking of the promises and blessings of the gospel. And then, as

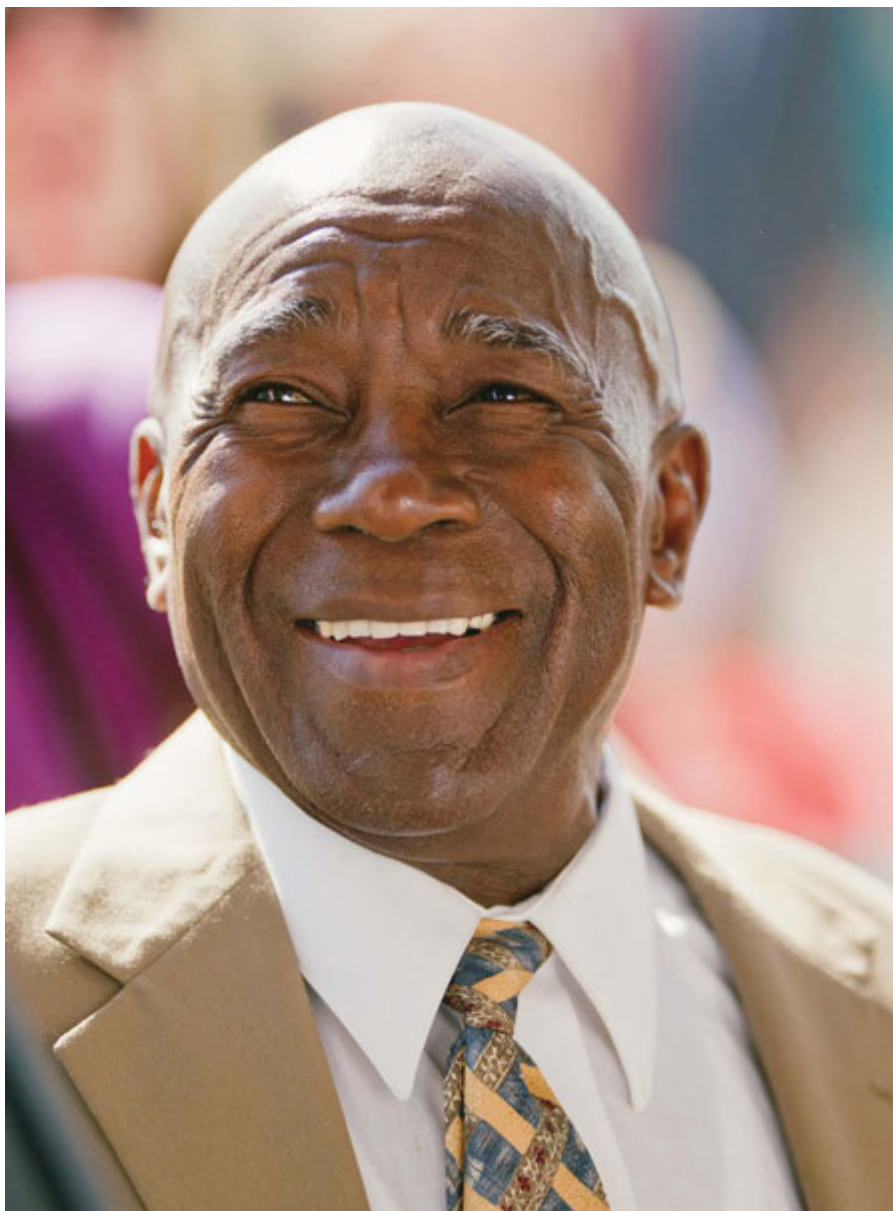
Alma teaches, our faith brings us to a perfect knowledge (see Alma 32:34). By moving forward into the unknown, armed only with hope and desire, we show evidence of our faith and our devotion to the Lord.

And so, following Alma's formula, let us choose. Let us choose faith.

- If confusion and hopelessness weigh on your mind, *choose* to "awake and arouse your faculties" (Alma 32:27). Humbly approaching the Lord with a broken heart and

contrite spirit is the pathway to truth and the Lord's way of light, knowledge, and peace.

- If your testimony is immature, untested, and insecure, *choose* to "exercise [even] a particle of faith"; choose to "experiment upon [His] words" (Alma 32:27). The Savior explained, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).
- When logic, reason, or personal intellect come into conflict with



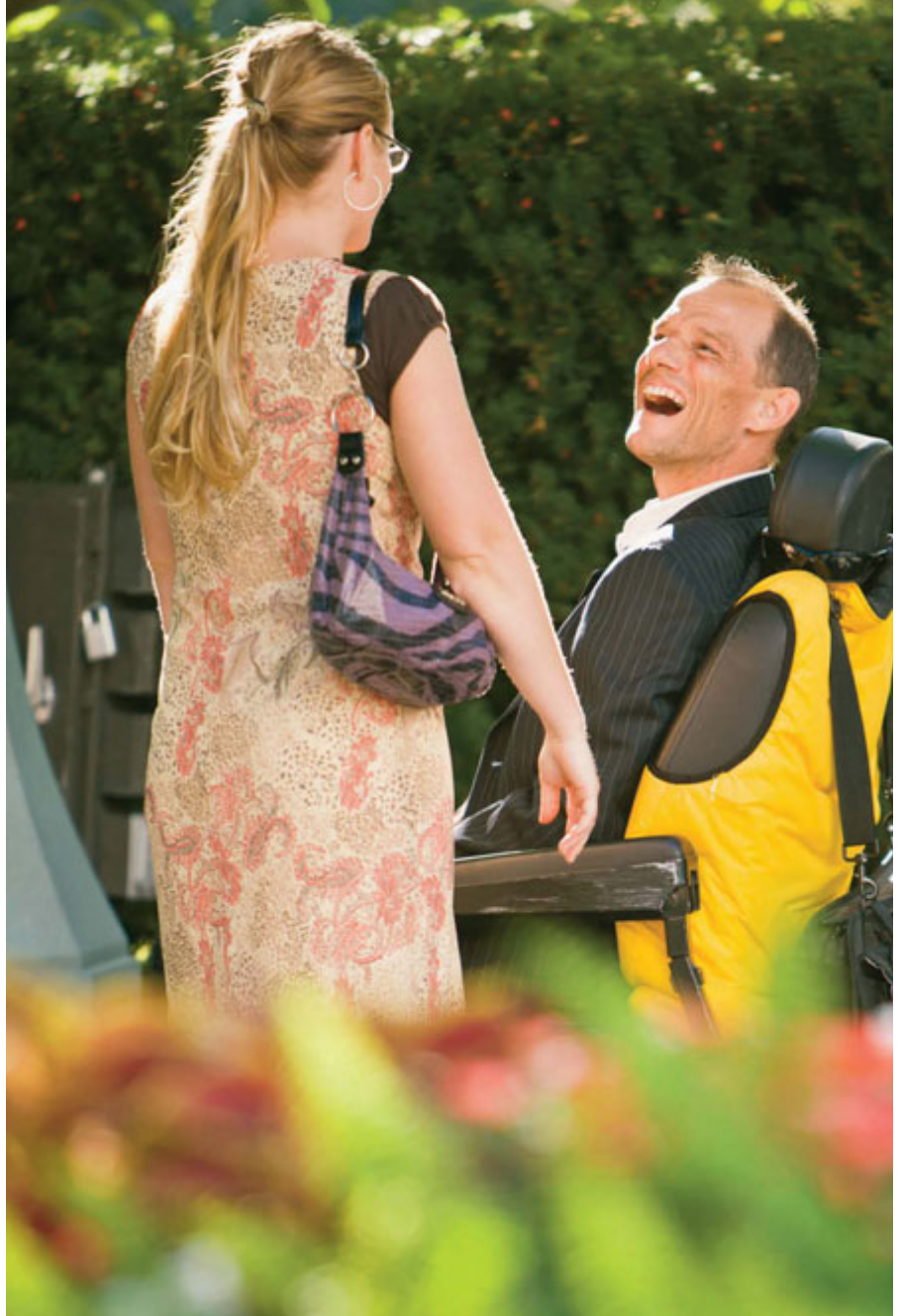
sacred teachings and doctrine, or conflicting messages assault your beliefs as the fiery darts described by the Apostle Paul (see Ephesians 6:16), *choose* to not cast the seed out of your heart by unbelief.

Remember, we receive not a witness until after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6).

- If your faith is proven and mature, *choose* to nurture it “with great care” (Alma 32:37). As strong as our faith is, with all the mixed messages attacking it, it can also become very fragile. It needs constant nourishment through continued scripture study, prayer, and the application of His word.

When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast a devil out as they had just witnessed the Savior do, Jesus answered, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove” (Matthew 17:20). I have never witnessed the removal of an actual mountain. But because of faith, I have seen a mountain of doubt and despair removed and replaced with hope and optimism. Because of faith, I have personally witnessed a mountain of sin replaced with repentance and forgiveness. And because of faith, I have personally witnessed a mountain of pain replaced with peace, hope, and gratitude. Yes, I have seen mountains removed.

- Because of my faith, I have activated the power of the priesthood that I hold and have been a partaker of the sweetness of the gospel and have embraced the saving ordinances.
- Because of my faith, I work through the struggles and difficulties in life with peace and assurance.



- Because of my faith, I have been able to turn questions and even doubts into assurances and understanding.
- Because of my faith, I approach the unknown, unseen, and unexplained with unquestioning assurance.
- And because of my faith—even in the seemingly worst of times—I recognize with peace and gratitude that in reality it is the best of times.

And when we choose faith and then nurture that faith to a perfect knowledge of the things of the Lord, then we use the words “I testify” or “I

know.” I have personally planted the seed in my own heart, and throughout my life I have attempted to nurture that seed to a perfect knowledge. And today, as I stand behind this pulpit, I testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world. I further testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and the living instrument the Lord used to bring back to the earth the complete and true gospel of Jesus Christ. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s prophet today. Likewise, the choice of faith is yours, it is mine. Let us choose faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By **Elder Kevin R. Duncan**  
Of the Seventy

# Our Very Survival

*May we have the wisdom to trust in and follow the counsel of the living prophets and apostles.*

The winter of 1848 was difficult and challenging for the pioneer settlers in the Salt Lake Valley. During the summer of 1847 Brigham Young had declared that the Saints had finally reached their destination. “This is the right place,”<sup>1</sup> said Brigham Young, who had been shown in a vision where the Saints were to be established. The early members of the Church had endured tremendous adversity as the Restoration of the gospel unfurled. They had been driven from their homes, persecuted, and hounded. They had suffered untold hardships as they crossed the plains. But now they were at last in “the right place.”

And yet the winter of 1848 had been extremely harsh. The winter had been so cold that some people’s feet had been badly frozen. A spirit of uneasiness began to descend upon the Saints. Some Church members declared that they would not build their homes in the valley. They wanted to remain in their wagons, for they were sure that Church leadership would herald them on to some better location. They had brought seeds and fruit plants, but they dared not waste them by planting in the barren desert wasteland. Jim Bridger, a well-known explorer of the time, told Brigham Young he would give a thousand

dollars for the first bushel of corn raised in the Salt Lake Valley because, he said, it could not be done.<sup>2</sup>

To complicate matters, gold had just been discovered in California. Some Church members envisioned that life would be simpler and more abundant if they were to move on to California in search of riches and a better climate.

Under this cloud of discontent, Brigham Young addressed the members of the Church. He declared:

“[This valley] is the place God has appointed for His people.

“We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here

we are and here we will stay. God has shown me that this is the spot to locate His people, and here is where they will prosper; He will temper the elements for the good of His Saints; He will rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful. Brethren, go, now, and plant . . . your . . . seeds.”

In addition to promising these blessings, President Young declared that the Salt Lake Valley would become known as a highway to the nations. Kings and emperors would visit the land. Best of all, a temple to the Lord would be erected.<sup>3</sup>

These were remarkable promises. Many Church members had faith in Brigham Young’s prophecies, while others remained skeptical and left for what they assumed would be a better life. Yet history has shown that every prophecy Brigham Young declared has come to pass. The valley did blossom and produce. The Saints prospered. The winter of 1848 was a great catalyst for the Lord to teach His people a valuable lesson. They learned—as we all must learn—that the only sure and secure road to protection in this life comes through trusting in and obeying the counsel from the prophets of God.



Surely one of the crowning blessings of membership in this Church is the blessing of being led by living prophets of God. The Lord declared, “There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.”<sup>4</sup> The prophet and President of the Church today, Thomas S. Monson, receives God’s word for the entire membership of the Church and for the world. In addition, we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators the counselors in the First Presidency and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

With frozen feet and a barren wasteland, those early Saints surely needed faith to trust their prophet. Their very survival and lives were at stake. Yet the Lord rewarded their obedience and blessed and prospered those who followed His mouthpiece.

And the Lord does the same today for you and me. This world is full of so many self-help books, so many self-proclaimed experts, so many theorists, educators, and philosophers who have advice and counsel to give on any and all subjects. With technology today, information on a myriad of subjects is available with the click of a keystroke. It is easy to get caught in the trap of looking to the “arm of flesh”<sup>5</sup> for advice on everything from how to raise children to how to find happiness. While some information has merit, as members of the Church we have access to the source of pure truth, even God Himself. We would do well to search out answers to our problems and questions by investigating what the Lord has revealed through His prophets. With that same technology today, we have at our fingertips access to the words of the prophets on nearly any subject. What has God taught us about marriage and the family through His



**Stockholm, Sweden**

prophets? What has He taught us about education and provident living through His prophets? What has He taught us about personal happiness and fulfillment through His prophets?

What the prophets teach may to some seem outdated, unpopular, or even impossible. But God is a God of order and has established a system whereby we may know His will. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”<sup>6</sup> At the opening of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord reaffirmed that He would communicate with us through His prophets. He stated, “My word . . . shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>7</sup>

Trusting in and following the prophets is more than a blessing and a privilege. President Ezra Taft Benson declared that “our [very] salvation hangs on” following the prophet. He described what he called “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet.” In the session this morning, Elder Claudio Costa

of the Presidency of the Seventy so eloquently instructed us on these 14 fundamentals. Because they are of such great importance to our very salvation, I will repeat them again.

“First: The prophet is the only man who speaks for the Lord in everything.

“Second: The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works.

“Third: The living prophet is more important to us than a dead prophet.

“Fourth: The prophet will never lead the Church astray.

“Fifth: The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time.

“Sixth: The prophet does not have to say ‘Thus saith the Lord’ to give us scripture.

“Seventh: The prophet tells us what we need to know, not always what we want to know.

“Eighth: The prophet is not limited by men’s reasoning.

“Ninth: The prophet can receive revelation on any matter, temporal or spiritual.

“Tenth: The prophet may be involved in civic matters.

“Eleventh: The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich.

“Twelfth: The prophet will not necessarily be popular with the world or the worldly.

“Thirteenth: The prophet and his counselors make up the First Presidency—the highest quorum in the Church.

“Fourteenth: [Follow] . . . the living prophet and the First Presidency . . . and be blessed; reject them and suffer.”<sup>8</sup>

Brothers and sisters, like the Saints of 1848, we can choose to follow the prophet, or we can look to the arm of flesh. May we have the wisdom to trust in and follow the counsel of the living prophets and apostles. I am a witness of their goodness. I testify that they are called of God. I also testify that there is no safer way to approach life, find answers to our problems, gain peace and happiness in this world, and protect our very salvation than by obeying their words. I bear this witness in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Brigham Young, as quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in *The Utah Pioneers* (1880), 23.
2. See Bryant S. Hinckley, *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers* (1956), 9–15; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Remarks at Pioneer Day Commemoration Concert,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 70–72.
3. See Hinckley, *The Faith of Our Pioneer Fathers*, 11–12; see also *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 71.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.
6. Amos 3:7.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (1981), 29–30.



By Elder Gerrit W. Gong  
Of the Seventy

# Temple Mirrors of Eternity: A Testimony of Family

*An eternal perspective of gospel conversion and temple covenants can help us see rich blessings in each generation of our forever families.*

Dear brothers and sisters, when our son was in the Provo Missionary Training Center, Sister Gong mailed fresh-baked bread to him and his missionary companions. Here are some of the missionary thank-you notes Sister Gong received: “Sister Gong, that bread was a taste of home.” “Sister Gong, all I can say is wow. That bread is the best thing to enter my mouth since my mother’s enchiladas.” But this is my favorite: “Sister Gong, the bread was wonderful.” He then jokingly continued, “Keep me in mind if things don’t work out between you and Mr. Gong.”

We love our missionaries—each elder, sister, and senior couple. We are eternally grateful to that special missionary who first brought the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to our family. I gratefully testify that an eternal perspective of gospel conversion and temple covenants can help us see rich blessings in each generation of our forever families.

The first convert in our Gong family to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is our mother, Jean Gong. As a teenager in Honolulu, Hawaii, she listened; she knew; she was baptized and confirmed; she is continuing in faith. Faithful Church members helped my mother so that she had gospel friends, Church callings, and continued nourishment by God’s good word. In today’s parlance each new convert, young single adult, those returning to Church activity, and others bless generations when they become fellow Saints in the household of God.<sup>1</sup>

One family who nurtured my mother was that of Gerrit de Jong Jr. A linguist who loved the language of the heart and Spirit, Grandpa de Jong tickled my little boy imagination by sayings like “Blackberries when red are green.” Today, speaking of electronic handheld devices, I tell young friends, “Blackberries read in Church make green bishops blue.”

My parents, Walter and Jean Gong,

were married three times: a Chinese ceremony for family, an American ceremony for friends, and a sacred ceremony in the house of the Lord for time and eternity.

Our Primary children sing: “I love to see the temple. I’m going there someday.”<sup>2</sup> Our youth pledge to “receive the ordinances of the temple.”<sup>3</sup>

I recently stood in a house of the Lord with a worthy couple there to receive blessings by covenant. I invited them to make their first honeymoon last 50 years, then after 50 years to begin their second honeymoon.

I found myself looking with this beautiful couple into the temple mirrors—one mirror on this side, one mirror on that side. Together the temple mirrors reflect back and forth images that stretch seemingly into eternity.

Temple mirrors of eternity remind us that each human being has “divine nature and destiny”; that “sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally”;<sup>4</sup> and that, growing together in love and faithfulness, we can give children roots and wings.

In temple mirrors of eternity, I reflected on First Dragon Gong, born A.D. 837 (late Tang dynasty) in southern China and the succeeding Gong family generations to my father, our family’s 32nd recorded generation. My brother, sister, and I are in our family’s 33rd generation; my sons and their cousins, the 34th generation; our grandson, the 35th recorded Gong family generation. In temple mirrors of eternity, I could not see a beginning or end of generations.

I then imagined not only a succession of generations but also a succession of family relationships. In one direction I saw myself as son,

grandson, great-grandson, back to First Dragon Gong. In the mirrors in the other direction, I saw myself as father, grandfather, great-grandfather. I could see my wife, Susan, as daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter and, in the other direction, as mother, grandmother, great-grandmother.

In temple mirrors of eternity, I

began to understand my wife and myself as children of our parents and parents to our children, as grandchildren of our grandparents and grandparents to our grandchildren. Mortality’s great lessons distill upon our souls as we learn and teach in eternal roles, including child and parent, parent and child.





Scripture describes our Savior as “the Father and the Son.”<sup>5</sup> Having dwelt in flesh and subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, our Savior knows how to succor us, His people, in our pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, even death.<sup>6</sup> Having “descended below all things,”<sup>7</sup> our Savior can bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. “He was wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities . . . ; [with our Savior’s] stripes we are healed.”<sup>8</sup>

From the councils in heaven, our Savior sought only to do His Father’s will. This pattern of Father and Son can help explain the paradox “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”<sup>9</sup> The world pursues enlightened self-interest. Yet the power is not in us to save ourselves. But it is in *Him*. Infinite and eternal,<sup>10</sup> only our Savior’s Atonement transcends time and space to swallow up death, anger, bitterness, unfairness, loneliness, and heartbreak.

Sometimes things go wrong even though we have done our very best. A Lamb innocent and pure, our Savior weeps with and for us. When we always remember Him,<sup>11</sup> He can stand with us “at all times and in all

things, and in all places that [we] may be in.”<sup>12</sup> His “faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.”<sup>13</sup> In drawing us to Him, our Savior also draws us to our Father in Heaven. While some things are imperfect on earth, we can trust our Heavenly Father to complete “redemption’s grand design, where justice, love, and mercy meet in harmony divine!”<sup>14</sup>

A miracle of the images we discern in temple mirrors of eternity is that they—we—can change. When Jean and Walter Gong entered the new and everlasting covenant, they opened the way for ancestors (such as First Dragon Gong) to be sealed and for posterity to be born in the covenant. Please remember: as we reach out to each sister or brother, we bless generations.

The world is in commotion,<sup>15</sup> but in His “only true and living Church,”<sup>16</sup> there is faith and no fear. In the words of the Apostle Paul, I also solemnly testify:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, . . .

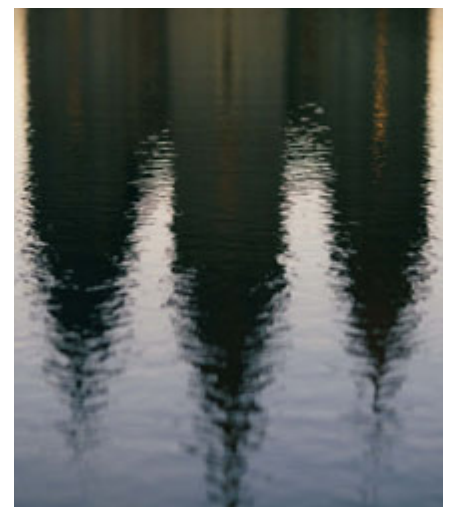
“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which

is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>17</sup>

I humbly witness: God lives. He “shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes”<sup>18</sup>—except the tears of joy when we see through temple mirrors of eternity and find ourselves home, pure and clean, our family generations sealed by priesthood authority in love, to shout, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Ephesians 2:19.
2. “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95.
3. “Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress: Standing as a Witness of God* (booklet, 2009), 3.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
5. See Mosiah 15:2.
6. See Alma 7:11–12.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 122:5–8.
8. Isaiah 53:5.
9. Matthew 10:39.
10. See Alma 34:14.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
12. Mosiah 18:9.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:44.
14. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
17. Romans 8:38–39.
18. Revelation 21:4.







By **Elder Neil L. Andersen**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Never Leave Him

*As you choose not to be offended or ashamed, you will feel His love and approval. You will know that you are becoming more like Him.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters across the world, I express my deep admiration for the faith and courage I see in your lives. We live in a most remarkable time—but a challenging time.

## **The Lord Alerts Us to Dangers Ahead**

The Lord has not left us alone in our quest to return to Him. Listen to His warning words alerting us to the dangers ahead: “Take . . . heed, watch and pray.”<sup>1</sup> “Beware lest ye . . . be deceived.”<sup>2</sup> “Be watchful and careful.”<sup>3</sup> “Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own stedfastness.”<sup>4</sup>

No one of us is immune from the influences of the world. The Lord’s counsel keeps us on guard.

You will remember Jesus’s experience in Capernaum as disciples who had followed the Savior would not accept that He was the Son of God. The scripture reads, “From that time many of his disciples . . . walked no more with him.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus then turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?”<sup>6</sup>

## **Will Ye Also Go Away?**

In my own mind I have answered that question many times: “Absolutely not! Not me! I will never leave Him!

I am here forever!” I know you have answered the same way.

But the question “Will ye also go away?” makes us think about our own vulnerability. Life is no spiritual picnic. The words of the Apostles from another setting come quietly into our mind: “Lord, is it I?”<sup>7</sup>

We enter the waters of baptism with joy and anticipation. The Savior beckons, “Come unto me,”<sup>8</sup> and we respond, taking His name upon us. Not one of us wants this journey to be a brief flirtation with spirituality or even a notable but finite chapter. The road of discipleship is not for the spiritually faint of heart. Jesus said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”<sup>9</sup> “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>10</sup>

As we follow the Savior, without question there will be challenges that confront us. Approached with faith, these refining experiences bring a deeper conversion of the Savior’s reality. Approached in a worldly way, these same experiences cloud our view and weaken our resolve. Some we love and admire slip from the strait and narrow path and “[walk] no more with him.”

## **How Do We Remain True?**

How do we remain true to the Savior, His gospel, and the ordinances of His priesthood? How do we develop the faith and strength to never leave Him?

Jesus said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>11</sup> We need the believing heart of a child.

Through the power of His Atonement, we are to become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father.”<sup>12</sup> This is the mighty change of heart.<sup>13</sup>

We soon see why a change of heart is necessary. Two words signal danger ahead: the words are *offended* and *ashamed*.

## **Choose Not to Be Offended**

To those troubled by the Savior’s divinity, Jesus asked, “Doth this offend you?”<sup>14</sup> In the parable of the sower, Jesus warned, “He . . . [endureth] for a while: [but] when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”<sup>15</sup>

Offense comes in many costumes and continually finds its way onstage. People we believe in disappoint us. We have unanticipated difficulties. Our life doesn’t turn out exactly the way we were expecting. We make mistakes, feel unworthy, and worry about being forgiven. We wonder about a doctrinal issue. We learn of something spoken from a Church pulpit 150 years ago that bothers us. Our children are treated unfairly. We are ignored or underappreciated. It could be a hundred things, each very real to us at the time.<sup>16</sup>

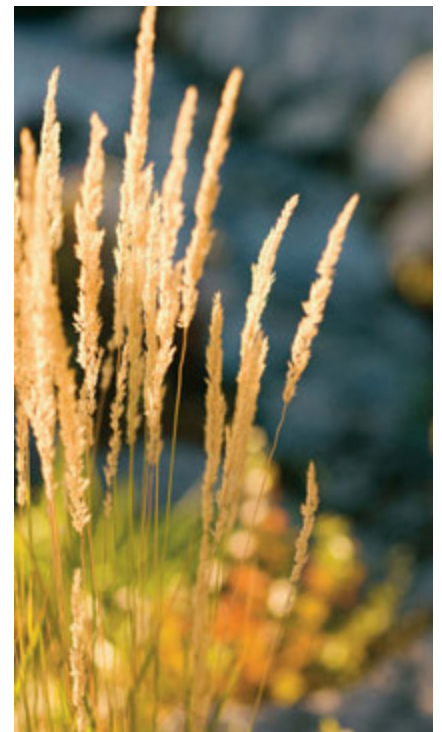
In our weakened moments, the adversary seeks to steal our spiritual



courage faltered. The scripture reads, “*After* they had tasted of the fruit they were *ashamed*, because of those [who] were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>26</sup>

As disciples of Christ, we stand apart from the world. There may be times we feel uncomfortable as the fingers of scorn mock and dismiss what is sacred to us.<sup>27</sup> President Thomas S. Monson warned, “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.”<sup>28</sup> Nephi said, “[Heed] them not.”<sup>29</sup> Paul admonished, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; . . . Be not . . . ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.”<sup>30</sup> We never leave Him.

While accompanying President Dieter F. Uchtdorf to Eastern Europe last year, I marveled at the faith and courage of the Saints. One priesthood leader in Ukraine told us of being called to the branch presidency in the spring of 1994, only six months after his baptism. This would require



promises. If we are not watchful, our injured, childlike spirit will retreat back into the cold, dark crust of our former bloated ego, leaving behind the warm, healing light of the Savior.

When Parley P. Pratt, in 1835, was judged unfairly, bringing embarrassment and shame to him and his family, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled, “Parley, . . . walk such things under your feet . . . [and] God Almighty shall be with you.”<sup>17</sup>

Another example: In 1830, Frederick G. Williams, a prominent medical doctor, was baptized. He immediately gave of his talents and prosperity to the Church. He became a leader in the Church. He donated property for the Kirtland Temple. In 1837, caught up in difficulties of the times, Frederick G. Williams made serious mistakes. The Lord declared in a revelation that “in consequence of [his] transgressions [his] former standing [in the leadership of the Church had] been taken away from [him].”<sup>18</sup>

The beautiful lesson we learn from Frederick G. Williams is that “whatever his personal weaknesses, he had the strength of character to [renew] his loyalty to the [Lord,] the Prophet and . . . to the Church, when it would have been so easy to have disintegrated in bitterness.”<sup>19</sup> In the spring of 1840, he presented himself at a general conference, humbly asking forgiveness for his past conduct and expressing his determination to do the will of God

in the future. His case was presented by Hyrum Smith, and he was freely forgiven. He died a faithful member of the Church.

I recently met the president of the Recife Brazil Temple, whose name is Frederick G. Williams. He recounted how his great-great-grandfather’s decision of character had blessed the family and hundreds of his posterity.

#### **Choose Not to Be Ashamed**

*Offended* has a corrosive companion called *ashamed*.

In the Book of Mormon, we learn of Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. The vision speaks of those noble souls who “[pressed] forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron,” arriving and “[partaking] of the fruit of the tree.”<sup>20</sup>

Nephi described the tree as “the love of God,”<sup>21</sup> bearing fruit that “filled [the] soul with exceedingly great joy.”<sup>22</sup>

After tasting of the fruit, Lehi saw “a great and spacious building . . . filled with people . . . old and young, . . . male and female; and their . . . dress was exceedingly fine; and they were . . . mocking and pointing their fingers [of scorn] towards those who . . . were partaking of the fruit.”<sup>23</sup> An angel explained that the mocking, the scoffing, the fingers of scorn represented the pride and wisdom of the world.<sup>24</sup>

Nephi declared plainly, “We heeded them not.”<sup>25</sup>

Sadly, there were others whose



becoming public with his faith and helping to register the Church in the city of Dnipropetrovsk. It was at a time of uncertainty in Ukraine, and openly showing faith in Christ and in the restored gospel could mean difficulty, including the possibility of losing his job as a pilot.

The priesthood leader told us, “I prayed and prayed. I had a testimony, and I had made a covenant. I knew what the Lord wanted me to do.”<sup>31</sup> Courageously, he and his wife went forward with faith, unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **Where Much Is Given, Much Is Required**

Some ask, “Do I have to be so different from others?” “Can’t I be a disciple of Christ without thinking so much about my behavior?” “Can’t I love Christ without keeping the law of chastity?” “Can’t I love Him and do what I want on Sunday?” Jesus gave a simple answer: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>32</sup>

Some ask, “Aren’t there many of other faiths who love Christ?” Of course there are! However, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, having a witness of His reality not only from the Bible but also from the Book of Mormon; knowing His priesthood has been restored to the earth; having made sacred covenants to follow Him and received the gift of the Holy Ghost; having been endowed with power in His holy temple; and being part of preparing for His glorious return to the earth, we cannot compare what we are to be with those who have not yet received these truths. “Unto whom much is given much is required.”<sup>33</sup>

The Lord said, “Thou mayest choose for thyself.”<sup>34</sup>

I promise you, as you choose not to be offended or ashamed, you will feel His love and approval. You will know that you are becoming more like Him.<sup>35</sup>

Will we understand everything? Of course not. We will put some issues on the shelf to be understood at a later time.

Will everything be fair? It will not. We will accept some things we cannot fix and forgive others when it hurts.

Will we feel separated on occasion from those around us? Absolutely.

Will we be astonished at times to see the anger a few feel toward the Lord’s Church and their efforts to steal the struggling faith of the weak?<sup>36</sup> Yes. But this will not deter the growth or destiny of the Church, nor need it impede the spiritual progress of each of us as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Never Leave Him**

I love these words from a favorite hymn:

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for  
repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should  
endeavor to shake,  
I’ll never, no never, I’ll never, no never,  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!*<sup>37</sup>

Perfection does not come in this life, but we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and keep our covenants. President Monson has promised, “Your testimony, when constantly nourished, will keep you safe.”<sup>38</sup> We push our spiritual roots deep, feasting daily on the words of Christ in the scriptures. We trust in the words of living

prophets, placed before us to show us the way. We pray and pray and listen to the quiet voice of the Holy Ghost that leads us along and speaks peace to our soul. Whatever challenges arise, we never, never leave Him.

The Savior asked His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?”<sup>39</sup>

Peter answered:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

“ . . . We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>40</sup>

I too have that witness. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mark 13:33.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:76.

4. 2 Peter 3:17.

5. John 6:66.

6. John 6:67.

7. Matthew 26:22.

8. 3 Nephi 9:14.

9. Matthew 22:37.

10. Mark 8:34.

11. Matthew 18:3; see also Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17; 3 Nephi 9:22; 11:37–38.

12. Mosiah 3:19.

13. See Alma 5:14.

14. John 6:61.

15. Matthew 13:21.

16. See David A. Bednar, “And Nothing Shall Offend Them,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 89–92.

17. Joseph Smith, in *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 118.

18. In *History of the Church*, 3:46, footnote.

19. Frederick G. Williams, “Frederick Granger Williams of the First Presidency of the Church,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1972): 261.

20. 1 Nephi 8:24.

21. 1 Nephi 11:25.

22. 1 Nephi 8:12.

23. 1 Nephi 8:26–27; see also verse 33.

24. See 1 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:18–19.

25. 1 Nephi 8:33.

26. 1 Nephi 8:28; emphasis added.

27. President Boyd K. Packer said, “Largely because of television [and the Internet],

instead of looking over into that spacious building, we are, in effect, living inside of it” (“Finding Ourselves in Lehi’s Dream,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2010, 29; *Ensign*, Aug. 2010, 23).

28. In the same talk, President Thomas S. Monson said, “The great and spacious building in Lehi’s vision represents those in the world who mock God’s word and who ridicule those who embrace it and who love the Savior and live the commandments” (“May You Have Courage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 126).

29. 1 Nephi 8:33.

30. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.

31. From personal conversation and from a translated excerpt of an oral history by Alexander Davydov, recorded July 16, 2010.

32. John 14:15.

33. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.

34. Moses 3:17.

35. See 1 Nephi 19:9.

36. See 2 Nephi 28:20.

37. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.

38. Thomas S. Monson, *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 126.

39. John 6:67.

40. John 6:68–69.





By **Elder Richard G. Scott**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Transforming Power of Faith and Character

*A consistent, righteous life produces an inner power and strength that can be permanently resistant to the eroding influence of sin and transgression.*

When faith is properly understood and used, it has dramatically far-reaching effects. Such faith can transform an individual's life from maudlin, common everyday activities to a symphony of joy and happiness. The exercise of faith is vital to Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. But true faith, faith unto salvation, is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in His doctrines and teachings, faith in the prophetic guidance of the Lord's anointed, faith in the capacity to discover hidden characteristics and traits that can transform life. Truly, faith in the Savior is a principle of action and power.

Faith is a foundation building block of creation. I am confident that the Savior Jesus Christ uses faith in His capacity to act under the direction of Father in Heaven. The Master used it to create the most remote galaxies as well as to compose quarks, the smallest elements of matter we know of today. Yet I have faith that there

are yet smaller building blocks in the wonder of creation.

Faith in the future is demonstrated by a couple sealed in the temple. They understand that by obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the plan of happiness of our Father in Heaven, they can have a joyous life together. They recognize that when the challenges intended to be growth opportunities come, they will find ways, as prompted by the Holy Ghost, to overcome them in ways that are productive and character building.

Faith and character are intimately related. Faith in the power of obedience to the commandments of God will forge strength of character available to you in times of urgent need. Such character is not developed in moments of great challenge or temptation. That is when it is intended to be used. Your exercise of faith in true principles builds character; fortified character expands your capacity to exercise more faith. As a result, your capacity and confidence

to conquer the trials of life is enhanced. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to benefit from exercising the power of faith. You will discover how faith and character interact to strengthen one another. Character is woven patiently from threads of applied principle, doctrine, and obedience.

President Hugh B. Brown said: "Wherever in life great spiritual values await man's appropriation, only faith can appropriate them. Man cannot live without faith, because in life's adventure the central problem is character-building—which is not a product of logic, but of faith in ideals and sacrificial devotion to them" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 105). We exercise faith by doing. Joseph Smith said that "faith [is] the principle of action and of power" (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 72).

We *become* what we want to *be* by consistently *being* what we want to *become* each day. Righteous character is a precious manifestation of what you are becoming. Righteous character is more valuable than any material object you own, any knowledge you have gained through study, or any goals you have attained no matter how well lauded by mankind. In the next life your righteous character will be evaluated to assess how well you used the privilege of mortality.

Neither Satan nor any other power can destroy or undermine your growing character. Only you could do that through disobedience. A sterling character is converted into worthless ashes when eroded by deceit or transgression.

Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Such choices are made with trust in things that are believed and when acted upon are confirmed.



What are some of the empowering principles upon which faith is based?

- Trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed, no matter how challenging the circumstance.
- Obedience to His commandments and a life that demonstrates that He can trust you.
- Sensitivity to the quiet promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- Courageous implementation of that prompting.
- Patience and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and when answers come a piece at a time over an extended period.

“Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your

faith” (Ether 12:6). Thus, every time you try your faith—that is, act in worthiness on an impression—you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit. As you walk to the boundary of your understanding into the twilight of uncertainty, exercising faith, you will be led to find solutions you would not obtain otherwise. With even your strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, God will respond with what in His eternal plan is best for you, when it will yield the greatest advantage. Be thankful that sometimes God lets you struggle for a long time before that answer comes. That causes your faith to increase and your character to grow.

The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to recognize the direction of the Spirit and to be obedient

to it. Your consistent exercise of faith builds strong character. A secure foundation for your growing character is laid by making Jesus Christ and His teachings the center of your life.

Your happiness on earth as well as your eternal salvation require many correct decisions, none of which is difficult to make. Together those decisions forge a character resistant to the eroding influences of sin and transgression. Noble character is like a treasured porcelain made of select raw materials, formed with faith, carefully crafted by consistent righteous acts, and fired in the furnace of uplifting experience. It is an object of great beauty and priceless worth. Yet it can be damaged in a moment through transgression, requiring painful, prolonged effort to be rebuilt. When protected by self-control, righteous character will endure for eternity.

Material things do not of themselves produce happiness and satisfaction and the joy of attainment on earth. Nor do they lead us to exaltation. It is nobility of character, that fabric of inner strength and conviction woven from countless righteous decisions, that gives life its direction. A consistent, righteous life produces an inner power and strength that can be permanently resistant to the eroding influence of sin and transgression. Your faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments will strengthen your character. Your character is a measure of what you are becoming. It is the evidence of how well you are using your time on earth in this period of mortal probation.

An axiom we all understand is that you get what you pay for. That is true for spiritual matters as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths you learn. What you get

is the molding of character, the growth in capacity, and the successful completion of your mortal purpose to be proven and to have joy.

You cannot be passive in life, or in time the natural man will undermine your efforts to live worthily. You become what you do and what you think about. Lack of character leads one under pressure to satisfy appetite or seek personal gain. You cannot successfully bolster a weak character with the cloak of pretense.

In time one who makes decisions based upon circumstance is virtually assured to commit serious transgressions. There is no iron rod of truth to keep that person in the right way. He or she will continually be faced with many subtle temptations to make deviations from the commandments. Those choices are justified by arguing

that they are not that bad, that they are more socially acceptable and provide a broader base of friends. A clever individual without foundation principles can at times acquire, temporarily, impressive accomplishments. Yet that attainment is like a sand castle. When the test of character comes, it crumbles, often taking others with it. Despite how carefully a transgressor seeks to keep the violation of commandments hidden, in time they nearly always become publicly known. Satan himself sees to that. He and his minions are determined to cause the greatest possible harm to each of Father in Heaven's children. One serious act of disobedience or violation of trust invariably raises questions of whether or not there are others. The faith and confidence of others in that individual's character is undermined.

This mortal life is a proving ground. How well you meet its challenges determines how strong your character will be. Your faith in Jesus Christ and His teachings fortifies your character.

I have personally verified that concepts like faith, prayer, love, and humility hold no great significance and produce no miracles until they become a living part of us through our own experience, aided by the sweet prompting of the Holy Spirit. In early life I found that I could learn gospel teachings intellectually and, through the power of reason and analysis, recognize that they were of significant value. But their enormous power and ability to stretch me beyond the limits of my imagination and capacity did not become reality until patient, consistent practice allowed the Holy Spirit to distill and expand their meaning in my heart. I found that while I was sincerely serving others, God forged my personal character. He engendered a growing capacity to recognize the direction of the Spirit. The genius of the gospel plan is that by doing those things the Lord counsels us to do, we are given every understanding and every capacity necessary to provide peace and rich fulfillment in this life. Likewise, we gain the preparation necessary for eternal happiness in the presence of the Lord.

A testimony is fortified by spiritual impressions that confirm the validity of a teaching, of a righteous act. Often such guidance is accompanied by powerful emotions that bring tears to the eyes and make it difficult to speak. But a testimony is not emotion. It is the very essence of character woven from threads born of countless correct decisions. These choices are made with trusting faith in things that are believed and, at



least initially, are not seen. A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future will be secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths with faith anchored in the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained.

Your testimony will be made strong through willing obedience to the law of tithing and by giving fast offerings, and the Lord will bless you richly for it. As your testimony is fortified, Satan will try harder to tempt you. Resist his efforts. You will become stronger and his influence on you weaker.

Satan's increasing influence in the world is allowed to provide an atmosphere in which to prove ourselves. While he causes havoc today, Satan's final destiny was fixed by Jesus Christ through His Atonement and the Resurrection. The devil will not triumph. Even now he must operate within the bounds set by the Lord. He cannot take away any blessing that has been earned. He cannot alter character that has been woven from righteous decisions. He has no power to destroy the eternal bonds forged in a holy temple between a husband, wife, and children. He cannot quench true faith. He cannot take away your testimony. Yes, these things can be lost by succumbing to his temptations. But he has no power in and of himself to destroy them.

To summarize:

- God uses your faith to mold your character.



#### **Dublin, Ireland**

- Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming.
- Strong character results from consistent correct choices.
- The bedrock of character is integrity.
- The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith.

Humility is that quality that permits us to be taught from on high through the Spirit or to be taught from sources whose origin was inspiration from the Lord, such as the scriptures and the comments of the prophets. Humility is the precious fertile soil of righteous character. In it the seeds of personal growth germinate. When cultivated through the exercise of faith, pruned by repentance, and fortified by obedience and good works, such seeds produce the cherished fruit of spiritual direction. Divine inspiration and power then result—inspiration to know the will of the Lord, power to provide the ability to accomplish that inspired will.

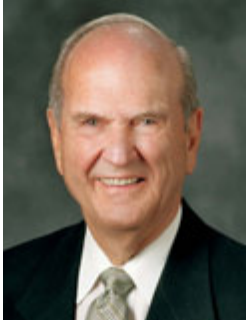
May I share four principles which have brought the deepest feelings of peace and happiness into my own life? The Lord has established these cornerstones in His eternal plan, and each one is essential. All work

together in harmony and reinforce one another. When they are applied with diligence and consistency, they produce strength of character, increasing ability to convert the challenges of life into stepping-stones of happiness now and forever. They are:

- Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His program to acquire the power to achieve.
- Repentance to rectify the consequences of mistakes of omission or commission.
- Obedience to the commandments of the Lord to provide strength and direction in our lives.
- Selfless service to enrich the lives of others.

If you have determined to live righteously, don't become discouraged. Life may seem difficult now, but hold on tightly to that iron rod of truth. You are making better progress than you realize. Your struggles are defining character, discipline, and confidence in the promises of your Father in Heaven and the Savior as you consistently obey Their commandments. May the Holy Ghost prompt you to always make decisions that fortify your character and yield much joy and happiness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■





**By Elder Russell M. Nelson**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Be Thou an Example of the Believers

*Whether full-time missionaries or members, we should all be good examples of the believers in Jesus Christ.*

My beloved brethren, this evening we are assembled in many locations throughout the world. Wonderful full-time missionaries are among us. I would like to invite all full-time missionaries to stand. Wherever you are, elders and mission presidencies, please stand. We are grateful for each one of you! We thank you! We love you! You may be seated.

From time to time we need to remind ourselves why we have missionaries. It is because of a commandment from the Lord, who said:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

This commandment is one of many that have been renewed because the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness. Missionaries serve now just as they did in New Testament times. The book of Acts

describes early missionary labors of the Apostles and other disciples following the Lord’s mortal ministry. There we read of the remarkable conversion and baptism of Saul of Tarsus,<sup>2</sup> who had previously been “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord”<sup>3</sup> and persecuting members of the fledgling Church. From such beginnings, Saul became the converted Paul, one of the Lord’s greatest missionaries. The final 15 chapters of the book of Acts report the missionary labors of Paul and his companions.

## **Auckland, New Zealand**



In a letter to one of his most trusted companions, Paul wrote to young Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but *be thou an example of the believers*, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”<sup>4</sup> That counsel is just as valid for us now as it was then. It applies to our full-time missionaries; it applies equally to each member of the Church. Whether full-time missionaries or members, we should all be good examples of the believers in Jesus Christ.

## **Full-Time Missionaries**

Full-time missionaries, some 52,000 and more, serve in 340 missions around the world. They are believers and devoted servants of the Lord. Their purpose is to “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.”<sup>5</sup>

Like Timothy, most full-time missionaries are young men. Some are sisters; some are senior missionaries. We love each one! Missionaries serve to make life better for God’s children. Heavenly Father loves every one of His children. After all, He is their Father. He wants to bless them with His greatest

gift, that of eternal life.<sup>6</sup> Missionaries so teach wherever they serve. They help people to develop faith in the Lord, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, receive the ordinances of the temple, and endure faithfully to the end. God's work and glory—"to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man"<sup>7</sup>—is also the sacred work and glory of each missionary.

We need more missionaries—more worthy missionaries. During His earthly ministry, the Lord told His disciples, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."<sup>8</sup>

At this morning's session of general conference, our beloved President Thomas S. Monson made an impassioned plea for each young man of this Church to prepare for missionary service. I hope his entire message will be heeded in every home of the Church.

To President Monson's wise counsel, I add my witness. In my family, I have observed the blessings that come to each missionary. Thus far, the number of our children, grandchildren, and their spouses called to serve as full-time missionaries is 49, and that number will continue to increase. In each instance, I have seen the growth in wisdom, maturity in judgment, and flowering of faith that developed in each missionary. They, just as many generations before them, embarked in the service of God to "serve him with all [their] heart, might, mind and strength."<sup>9</sup> Missionary service has helped to shape their divine destiny.

### Member Missionaries

Paul's counsel, "Be thou an example of the believers," applies equally to members. Most have not been and may never be full-time missionaries. But all can be member missionaries.

That statement reminds me of a report of a humorous event. On a large playing field at a missionary training center, a sign was posted. It read, "Missionaries only!" People who also wanted to play on that field posted a new sign of their own. Their sign read, "Every Member a Missionary!"

Each member can be an example of the believers. Brethren, as followers of Jesus Christ, each of you can live in accord with His teachings. You can have "a pure heart and clean hands"; you can have "the image of God engraven upon your [countenance]."<sup>10</sup> Your good works will be evident to others.<sup>11</sup> The light of the Lord can beam from your eyes.<sup>12</sup> With that radiance, you had better prepare for questions. The Apostle Peter so counseled, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>13</sup>

Let your response be warm and joyful. And let your response be relevant to that individual. Remember, he or she is also a child of God, that very God who dearly wants that person to qualify for eternal life and return to Him one day. You may be the very one to open the door to his or her salvation and understanding of the doctrine of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

After your initial response, be ready to take the next step. You may invite

your friend to attend church with you. Many of our friends do not know they are welcome in our Church buildings. "Come and see" was the Savior's invitation to those who desired to learn more about Him.<sup>15</sup> An invitation to attend a Sunday meeting with you or to participate in a Church social or service activity will help to dispel mistaken myths and make visitors feel more comfortable among us.

As a member of the Church, reach out to those you do not know and greet them warmly. Each Sunday extend a hand of fellowship to at least one person you did not know before. Each day of your life, strive to enlarge your own circle of friendship.

You can invite a friend to read the Book of Mormon. Explain that it is not a novel or a history book. It is another testament of Jesus Christ. Its very purpose is "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."<sup>16</sup> There is a power in this book that can touch the hearts and lift the lives of honest seekers of truth. Invite your friend to read the book prayerfully.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said "that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."<sup>17</sup> The Book of Mormon teaches of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is the instrument by which God will fulfill His ancient promise to gather scattered Israel in these latter days.<sup>18</sup>

Many years ago two colleagues of mine—a nurse and her doctor husband—asked me why I lived the way I did. I answered, "Because I know the Book of Mormon is true." I let them borrow my copy of the book, inviting them to read it. A week later





**Dublin, Ireland**

they returned my book with a polite “thanks a lot.”

I responded, “What do you mean, thanks a lot? That’s a totally inappropriate response for one who has read this book. You didn’t read it, did you! Please take it back and read it; then I would like my book back.”

Admitting that they had only turned its pages, they accepted my invitation. When they returned, they said tearfully, “We have read the Book of Mormon. We know it is true! We want to know more.” They learned more, and it was my privilege to baptize both of them.

Another way that you can share the gospel is to invite friends to meet with full-time missionaries in your home. Those missionaries are called and prepared to teach the gospel. Your friends, in the comfort of your home and with your constant reassurance, can begin their journey toward salvation and exaltation. The Lord said, “Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts.”<sup>19</sup>

Scripture tells us that “there are many yet on the earth . . . who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it.”<sup>20</sup> Isn’t that your opportunity? You can become their own disciple of discovery!

Now in this day of the Internet, there are new and exciting ways you can do missionary work. You can

invite friends and neighbors to visit the new mormon.org Web site. If you have blogs and online social networks, you could link your sites to mormon.org. And there you can create your own personal profile. Each profile includes an expression of belief, an experience, and a testimony. Because this is a new feature, most of these profiles are available in English. Profiles in other languages will follow.

These profiles can have a profound influence for good. Two months ago a young man named Zac—a freshman in college—saw an ad for mormon.org on television in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He connected with the Web site and was intrigued by the profiles of Church members. At our Web site he found the link that informed him where he could attend church. The next Sunday, dressed in a white shirt and tie, he attended church, was introduced to members of the ward, and enjoyed all three hours of meetings. He was invited to a member’s home for dinner, followed by his first missionary lesson. In less than two weeks, he was baptized and confirmed as a member of the Church.<sup>21</sup> Welcome, Zac! (He is listening.)

Each exemplary follower of Jesus Christ can become an effective member missionary. Members and full-time missionaries may walk arm in arm in bringing the blessings of the gospel to cherished friends and neighbors.

Many of them are of Israel, now being gathered as promised. This is all part of the preparation for the Second Coming of the Lord.<sup>22</sup> He wants each of us truly to be an example of the believers.

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. The Book of Mormon is true. Joseph Smith is its translator and the prophet of this last dispensation. President Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet today. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19–20.
2. See Acts 9:3–18.
3. Acts 9:1.
4. 1 Timothy 4:12; emphasis added.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 1.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
7. Moses 1:39.
8. Luke 10:2.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
10. Alma 5:19.
11. See Matthew 5:16; Alma 7:24.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11.
13. 1 Peter 3:15.
14. See 2 Nephi 31:2, 21.
15. John 1:39. For this pattern, see also Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7.
16. Title page of the Book of Mormon.
17. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
18. See 3 Nephi 21:1–7. Note that these seven verses comprise one sentence.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 29:7.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
21. Personal communication from William G. Woods, president of the Louisiana Baton Rouge Mission.
22. See Malachi 4:5; 3 Nephi 25:5; Doctrine and Covenants 2:1; 110:14–16; 128:17; 138:46; Joseph Smith—History 1:38.



By **Elder Patrick Kearon**  
Of the Seventy

# “Come unto Me with Full Purpose of Heart, and I Shall Heal You”

*Our Savior is the Prince of Peace, the Great Healer, the only One who can truly cleanse us from the sting of sin.*

**T**onight I would like to share a message of comfort and healing with any of you who feels alone or forsaken, has lost peace of mind or heart, or feels that you have thrown away your last chance. Complete healing and peace can be found at the feet of the Savior.

As a seven-year-old boy living in the Arabian Peninsula, I was consistently told by my parents to *always* wear my shoes, and I understood why. I knew that shoes would protect my feet against the many threats to be found in the desert, such as snakes, scorpions, and thorns. One morning after a night's camping in the desert, I wanted to go exploring, but I did not want to bother with putting on my shoes. I rationalized that I was only going for a little wander and I would stay close by the camp. So instead of shoes, I wore flip-flops. I told myself that flip-flops were shoes—of a sort. And anyway, what could possibly happen?

As I walked along the cool sand—in my flip-flops—I felt something like a

thorn going into the arch of my foot. I looked down and saw not a thorn but a scorpion. As my mind registered the scorpion and I realized what had just happened, the pain of the sting began to rise from my foot and up my leg. I grabbed the top of my leg to try and stop the searing pain from moving farther, and I cried out for help. My parents came running from the camp.

As my father battered the scorpion with a shovel, an adult friend who was camping with us heroically tried to suck the venom from my foot. At this moment I thought that I was going to die. I sobbed while my parents loaded me into a car and set off across the desert at high speed toward the nearest hospital, which was over two hours away. The pain all through my leg was excruciating, and for that entire journey, I assumed that I was dying.

When we finally reached the hospital, however, the doctor was able to assure us that only small infants and the severely malnourished are threatened by the sting of that type of

scorpion. He administered an anesthetic, which numbed my leg and took away any sensation of pain. Within 24 hours I no longer had any effects from the sting of the scorpion. But I had learned a powerful lesson.

I had known that when my parents told me to wear shoes, they did not mean flip-flops; I was old enough to know that flip-flops did not provide the same protection as a pair of shoes. But that morning in the desert, I disregarded what I knew to be right. I ignored what my parents had repeatedly taught me. I had been both lazy and a little rebellious, and I paid a price for it.

As I address you valiant young men, your fathers, teachers, leaders, and friends, I pay tribute to all who are diligently striving to become what the Lord needs and wants you to be. But I testify from my own experience as a boy and as a man that disregarding what we know to be right, whether through laziness or rebelliousness, always brings undesirable and spiritually damaging consequences. No, the scorpion did not in the end threaten my life, but it caused extreme pain and distress to both me and my parents. When it comes to how we live the gospel, we must not respond with laziness or rebelliousness.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ and as bearers of the priesthood, we know the commandments and standards we have covenanted to uphold. When we choose another path from the one we know to be right, as taught by our parents and leaders and as confirmed to our own hearts by the Holy Ghost, it is like stepping onto the desert sand in flip-flops instead of shoes. We then seek to justify our lazy or rebellious behavior. We tell ourselves we're not

really doing anything that wrong, that it doesn't really matter, and that nothing all that bad will result from letting go just a little from the iron rod. Perhaps we console ourselves with the thought that everyone else is doing it—or doing worse—and we won't be negatively affected anyway. We somehow convince ourselves that we are the exception to the rule and therefore immune to the consequences of breaking it. We refuse, sometimes willfully, to be "exactly obedient"<sup>1</sup>—as it says in *Preach My Gospel*—and we hold back a portion of our hearts from the Lord. And then we get stung.

The scriptures teach us that "the Lord *requireth the heart*,"<sup>2</sup> and we are commanded to love the Lord and serve Him with "*all [our] heart*."<sup>3</sup> The promise is that we "may stand blameless before God at the last day" and return to His presence.<sup>4</sup>

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies in the Book of Mormon laid down their weapons of war and buried them deep in the earth, covenanting never again to take up arms against their brethren. But they did more than that. "They became a righteous people" because "they did lay down the weapons of their *rebellion*, that they did not fight against God any more."<sup>5</sup> Their conversion was so complete and so profound that they "never did fall away."<sup>6</sup>

But before their conversion, remember their state: they were living in what the scriptures call "open rebellion against God."<sup>7</sup> Their rebellious hearts sentenced them to live "in a state contrary to the nature of happiness" because they had "gone contrary to the nature of God."<sup>8</sup>

When they laid down their weapons of *rebellion*, they qualified themselves for the Lord's healing and peace, and so can we. The Savior assures, "If they

harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and *I will heal them*."<sup>9</sup> You and I can accept His invitation to "return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal [you]."<sup>10</sup>

Contrast this miraculous healing with what happens "when we

undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride [or] our vain ambition.

. . . The heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and we are left alone "to kick against the pricks . . . and to fight against God."<sup>11</sup>

Brethren, we find healing and relief only when we bring ourselves to the feet of the Great Physician, our Savior,





Jesus Christ. We must lay down our weapons of rebellion (and we each know what they are). We must lay down our sin, vanity, and pride. We must give up our desires to follow the world and to be respected and lauded by the world. We must cease fighting against God and instead give our *whole hearts* to Him, holding nothing back. Then He can heal us. Then He can cleanse us from the venomous sting of sin.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”<sup>12</sup>

President James E. Faust taught:

“When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block. . . .

“. . . Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated.”<sup>13</sup>

Last week I met a 92-year-old man who had been involved in many of the major campaigns of World War II. He had survived three injuries, one of which was a land-mine blast to the jeep in which he was traveling, which killed the driver. *He learned that to survive in a minefield, you must follow exactly in the tracks of the vehicle moving ahead of you.* Any deviation to the right or left

could—and indeed did—prove fatal.

Our prophets and apostles, leaders and parents continually point out the track we must follow if we would avoid a destructive blast to our souls. They know the path that has been safely cleared of mines (or indeed scorpions), and they tirelessly invite us to follow behind them. There are so many devastating traps to entice us from the track. Straying into drugs, alcohol, pornography, or immoral behavior over the Internet or on a video game will head us straight toward an explosion. Deviating to the right or the left of the safe track ahead of us, whether because of laziness or rebelliousness, can prove fatal to our spiritual lives. There are no exceptions to this rule.

If we have strayed from the track, we can change, we can return, and we can recapture our joy and our inner peace. We will discover that returning to the track from which the land mines have been removed brings enormous relief.

No one can find peace in a minefield.

Our Savior is the Prince of Peace, the Great Healer, the only One who can truly cleanse us from the sting of sin and the poison of pride and change our rebellious hearts into converted, covenant hearts. His Atonement

is infinite and embraces us all.

The invitation given to the Nephites, when He ministered to them as the resurrected Christ, is still in force for you and for me: “Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither *and I will heal them.*”<sup>14</sup>

Not one of you has thrown away your last chance. You can change, you can come back, you can claim mercy. Come unto the only One who can heal, and you will find peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), inside back cover.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34; emphasis added.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2; 59:5; emphasis added.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
5. Alma 23:7; emphasis added.
6. Alma 23:6.
7. Mosiah 2:37; Alma 3:18; see also Mormon 2:15.
8. Alma 41:11.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 112:13; emphasis added.
10. 3 Nephi 18:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37, 38.
12. John 3:17.
13. James E. Faust, “Obedience: The Path to Freedom,” *Liahona*, July 1999, 55, 53; *Ensign*, May 1999, 47, 45.
14. 3 Nephi 17:7; emphasis added.



By **Elder Juan A. Uceda**  
Of the Seventy

# He Teaches Us to Put Off the Natural Man

*I bear witness of the reality and power of the Savior's Atonement to cleanse, purify, and make us and our homes holy.*

One morning a family gathered to study the scriptures as usual. As they gathered, the father felt a negative spirit: some members of the family did not look very excited to participate. They had family prayer, and as they started to read the scriptures, the father noticed that one of the children did not have her personal set of scriptures with her. He invited her to go to her room and bring her scriptures. She reluctantly did so, and after a period of time that seemed like an eternity, she returned, sat down, and said, "Do we really have to do this now?"

The father thought to himself that the enemy of all righteousness wanted to create problems so that they would not study the scriptures. The father, trying to stay calm, said, "Yes, we have to do this now because this is what the Lord wants us to do."

She responded, "I don't really want to do this now!"

The father then lost his patience, raised his voice, and said, "This is my home, and we will always read the scriptures in my home!"

The tone and volume of his words

hurt his daughter, and with her scriptures in hand, she left the family circle, ran to her bedroom, and slammed the door. Thus ended the family scripture study—no harmony and little love being felt at home.

The father knew that he had done wrong, so he went to his own bedroom and knelt down to pray. He pleaded with the Lord for help, knowing that he had offended one of His children, a daughter whom he truly loved. He implored the Lord to restore the spirit of love and harmony at home and enable them to be able to continue studying the scriptures as a family. As he was praying, an idea came to his mind: "Go and say, 'I'm sorry.'" He continued to pray earnestly, asking for the Spirit of the Lord to come back into his home. Once again the idea came: "Go and say, 'I'm sorry.'"

He really wanted to be a good father and do the right thing, so he stood up and went to his daughter's bedroom. He gently knocked on the door several times, and there was no answer. So he slowly opened the door and found his girl sobbing and crying on her bed. He knelt next to her

and said with a soft and tender voice, "I'm sorry. I apologize for what I did." He repeated, "I'm sorry, I love you, and I don't want to hurt you." And then from the mouth of a child came the lesson that the Lord wanted to teach him.

She stopped crying, and after a brief silence, she took her scriptures into her hands and started to look up some verses. The father watched as those pure and delicate hands turned the pages of the scriptures, page after page. She came to the verses she sought and started to read very slowly with a soft voice: "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."<sup>1</sup>

While he was still kneeling next to her bed, humility overcame him as he thought to himself, "That scripture was written for me. She has taught me a great lesson."

Then she turned her eyes to him and said, "I am sorry. I am sorry, Daddy."

At that very moment the father realized she did not read that verse to apply that scripture to him, but she read it applying it to herself. He opened his arms and embraced her. Love and harmony had been restored in this sweet moment of reconciliation born of the word of God and the Holy Ghost. That scripture, which his daughter remembered from her own personal scripture study, had touched his heart with the fire of the Holy Ghost.



My beloved brethren, our homes have to be places where the Holy Spirit may dwell. “Only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”<sup>2</sup> There is no place for the natural man in our homes. The natural man is inclined to “cover [his] sins, or to gratify [his] pride, [his] vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, [and when he acts] in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.”<sup>3</sup>

We who hold the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood ought to always remember that “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and

pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”<sup>4</sup>

Contention departs our homes and our lives as we strive to live these Christlike attributes. “And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor’s trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation.”<sup>5</sup> “I am sorry. I am sorry, Daddy.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, teaches us how to establish peace in our homes.

He teaches us to be submissive, or in other words, to yield to the will or power of the Lord. “Go and say, ‘I am sorry.’”

He teaches us to be meek, or in other words, to be “mild of temper; soft; gentle; not easily provoked or irritated; yielding; given to forbearance under injuries.”<sup>6</sup>

He teaches us to be humble, or in other words, “lowly; modest; meek; submissive; opposed to *proud*, *haughty*, *arrogant*, or *assuming*.”<sup>7</sup>

“I am sorry. I apologize for what I did.”

He teaches us to be patient, or in other words, “having the quality of enduring evils without murmuring or fretfulness” or “calm under the sufferance of injuries or offenses.”<sup>8</sup>

He teaches us to be full of love. “I love you, and I don’t want to hurt you.”

Yes, my beloved brethren, He teaches us to put off the natural man, like the father in this story, who pleaded to the Lord for help. Yes, just as the father embraced his daughter in the arms of his love, so too does the Savior extend His arms to embrace us during our times of true repentance.

He teaches us to become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the



Lord.” And then we will reconcile ourselves to God, and we will become friends to God. I bear witness of the reality and power of the Savior’s Atonement to cleanse, purify, and make us and our homes holy as we strive to put off the natural man and follow Him.

He is “the Lamb of God,”<sup>9</sup> He is “the Holy and Righteous One,”<sup>10</sup> “and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”<sup>11</sup> In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mosiah 3:19.
2. Bible Dictionary, “Temple.”
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
5. Mosiah 26:31.
6. *Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*, 9th ed. (1996), “meek.”
7. *Noah Webster’s First Edition*, “humble.”
8. *Noah Webster’s First Edition*, “patient.”
9. John 1:29.
10. Acts 3:14, New International Version.
11. Isaiah 9:6.



**By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf**  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# Pride and the Priesthood

*Pride is a switch that turns off priesthood power.  
Humility is a switch that turns it on.*

**M**y dear brothers, thank you for assembling all around the world for this priesthood session of general conference. Your presence shows your commitment to stand, wherever you are, with your brothers who bear the holy priesthood and serve and honor your Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Often we mark the span of our lives by events that leave imprints on our minds and hearts. There are many such events in my life, one of which happened in 1989 when I heard a timeless sermon by President Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride.” In the introduction it was noted that this topic had been weighing heavily on President Benson’s soul for some time.<sup>1</sup>

I have felt a similar burden during the past months. The promptings of the Holy Spirit have urged me to add my voice as another witness to President Benson’s message delivered 21 years ago.

Every mortal has at least a casual if not intimate relationship with the sin of pride. No one has avoided it; few overcome it. When I told my wife that this would be the topic of my talk, she smiled and said, “It is so good

that you talk about things you know so much about.”

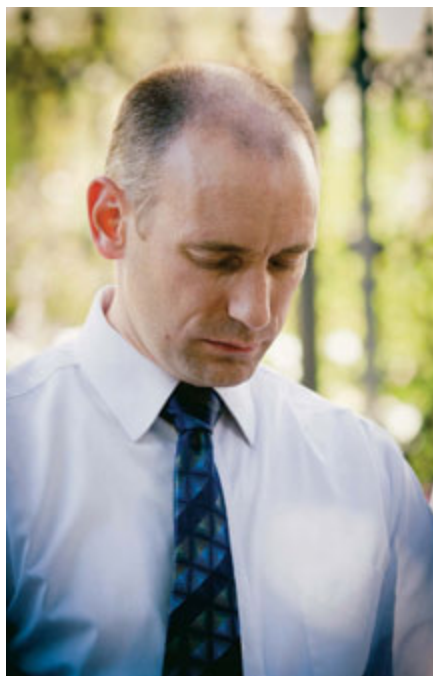
#### Other Meanings of *Pride*

I also remember one interesting side effect of President Benson’s influential talk. For a while it almost became taboo among Church members to say that they were “proud” of their children or their country or that they took “pride” in their work. The very word *pride* seemed to become an outcast in our vocabulary.

In the scriptures we find plenty of examples of good and righteous people who rejoice in righteousness and at the same time glory in the goodness of God. Our Heavenly Father Himself introduced His Beloved Son with the words “in whom I am well pleased.”<sup>2</sup>

Alma gloried in the thought that he might “be an instrument in the hands of God.”<sup>3</sup> The Apostle Paul gloried in the faithfulness of members of the Church.<sup>4</sup> The great missionary Ammon gloried in the success he and his brothers had experienced as missionaries.<sup>5</sup>

I believe there is a difference between being proud of certain things and being prideful. I am proud of many things. I am proud of my



wife. I am proud of our children and grandchildren.

I am proud of the youth of the Church, and I rejoice in their goodness. I am proud of you, my dear and faithful brethren. I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as a bearer of the holy priesthood of God.

### **Pride Is the Sin of Self-Elevation**

So what is the difference between this kind of feeling and the pride that President Benson called “the universal sin”?<sup>6</sup> Pride is sinful, as President Benson so memorably taught, because it breeds hatred or hostility and places us in opposition to God and our fellowmen. At its core, pride is a sin of comparison, for though it usually begins with “Look how wonderful I am and what great things I have done,” it always seems to end with “Therefore, I am better than you.”

When our hearts are filled with pride, we commit a grave sin, for we violate the two great commandments.<sup>7</sup> Instead of worshipping God and loving our neighbor, we reveal the real object of our worship and love—the image we see in the mirror.

Pride is the great sin of self-elevation. It is for so many a personal Rameumptom, a holy stand that justifies envy, greed, and vanity.<sup>8</sup> In

a sense, pride is the original sin, for before the foundations of this earth, pride felled Lucifer, a son of the morning “who was in authority in the presence of God.”<sup>9</sup> If pride can corrupt one as capable and promising as this, should we not examine our own souls as well?

### **Pride Has Many Faces**

Pride is a deadly cancer. It is a gateway sin that leads to a host of other human weaknesses. In fact, it could be said that every other sin is, in essence, a manifestation of pride.

This sin has many faces. It leads some to revel in their own perceived self-worth, accomplishments, talents, wealth, or position. They count these blessings as evidence of being “chosen,” “superior,” or “more righteous” than others. This is the sin of “Thank God I am more special than you.” At its core is the desire to be admired or envied. It is the sin of self-glorification.

For others, pride turns to envy: they look bitterly at those who have better positions, more talents, or greater possessions than they do. They seek to hurt, diminish, and tear down others in a misguided and unworthy attempt at self-elevation. When those they envy stumble or suffer, they secretly cheer.

### **The Laboratory of Sports**

Perhaps there is no better laboratory to observe the sin of pride than the world of sports. I have always loved participating in and attending sporting events. But I confess there are times when the lack of civility in sports is embarrassing. How is it that normally kind and compassionate human beings can be so intolerant and filled with hatred toward an opposing team and its fans?

I have watched sports fans vilify and demonize their rivals. They look for

any flaw and magnify it. They justify their hatred with broad generalizations and apply them to everyone associated with the other team. When ill fortune afflicts their rival, they rejoice.

Brethren, unfortunately we see today too often the same kind of attitude and behavior spill over into the public discourse of politics, ethnicity, and religion.

My dear brethren of the priesthood, my beloved fellow disciples of the gentle Christ, should we not hold ourselves to a higher standard? As priesthood bearers, we must realize that all of God’s children wear the same jersey. Our team is the brotherhood of man. This mortal life is our playing field. Our goal is to learn to love God and to extend that same love toward our fellowman. We are here to live according to His law and establish the kingdom of God. We are here to build, uplift, treat fairly, and encourage all of Heavenly Father’s children.

### **We Must Not Inhale**

When I was called as a General Authority, I was blessed to be tutored by many of the senior Brethren in the Church. One day I had the opportunity to drive President James E. Faust to a stake conference. During the hours we spent in the car, President Faust took the time to teach me some important principles about my assignment. He explained also how gracious the members of the Church are, especially to General Authorities. He said, “They will treat you very kindly. They will say nice things about you.” He laughed a little and then said, “Dieter, be thankful for this. But don’t you ever inhale it.”

That is a good lesson for us all, brethren, in any calling or life situation. We can be grateful for our health, wealth, possessions, or positions, but when we begin to inhale it—when

we become obsessed with our status; when we focus on our own importance, power, or reputation; when we dwell upon our public image and believe our own press clippings—that's when the trouble begins; that's when pride begins to corrupt.

There are plenty of warnings about pride in the scriptures: "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."<sup>10</sup>

The Apostle Peter warned that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."<sup>11</sup> Mormon explained, "None is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart."<sup>12</sup> And by design, the Lord chooses "the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."<sup>13</sup> The Lord does this to show that His hand is in His work, lest we "trust in the arm of flesh."<sup>14</sup>

We are servants of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are not given the priesthood so that we can take our bows and bask in praise. We are here to roll up our sleeves and go to work. We are enlisted in no ordinary task. We are called to prepare the world for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We seek not our own honor but give praise and glory to God. We know that the contribution we can make by ourselves is small; nevertheless, as we exercise the power of the priesthood in righteousness, God can cause a great and marvelous work to come forth through our efforts. We must learn, as Moses did, that "man is nothing"<sup>15</sup> by himself but that "with God all things are possible."<sup>16</sup>

### **Jesus Christ Is the Perfect Example of Humility**

In this, as in all things, Jesus Christ is our perfect example. Whereas Lucifer tried to change the Father's plan of salvation and obtain



honor for himself, the Savior said, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."<sup>17</sup> Despite His magnificent abilities and accomplishments, the Savior was always meek and humble.

Brethren, we hold "the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God."<sup>18</sup> It is the power God has granted to men on earth to act for Him. In order to exercise His power,

we must strive to be like the Savior. This means that in all things we seek to do the will of the Father, just as the Savior did.<sup>19</sup> It means that we give all glory to the Father, just as the Savior did.<sup>20</sup> It means that we lose ourselves in the service of others, just as the Savior did.

Pride is a switch that turns off priesthood power.<sup>21</sup> Humility is a switch that turns it on.



### Be Humble and Full of Love

So how do we conquer this sin of pride that is so prevalent and so damaging? How do we become more humble?

It is almost impossible to be lifted up in pride when our hearts are filled with charity. “No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love.”<sup>22</sup> When we see the world around us through the lens of the pure love of Christ, we begin to understand humility.

Some suppose that humility is about beating ourselves up. Humility does not mean convincing ourselves that we are worthless, meaningless, or of little value. Nor does it mean denying or withholding the talents God has given us. We don’t discover humility by thinking less *of* ourselves; we discover humility by thinking less *about* ourselves. It comes as we go about our work with an attitude of serving God and our fellowman.

Humility directs our attention and love toward others and to Heavenly Father’s purposes. Pride does the opposite. Pride draws its energy and strength from the deep wells of selfishness. The moment we stop obsessing with ourselves and lose ourselves in service, our pride diminishes and begins to die.

My dear brethren, there are so

many people in need whom we could be thinking about instead of ourselves. And please don’t ever forget your own family, your own wife. There are so many ways we could be serving. We have no time to become absorbed in ourselves.

I once owned a pen that I loved to use during my career as an airline captain. By simply turning the shaft, I could choose one of four colors. The pen did not complain when I wanted to use red ink instead of blue. It did not say to me, “I would rather not write after 10:00 p.m., in heavy fog, or at high altitudes.” The pen did not say, “Use me only for important documents, not for the daily mundane tasks.” With greatest reliability it performed every task I needed, no matter how important or insignificant. It was always ready to serve.

In a similar way we are tools in the hands of God. When our heart is in the right place, we do not complain that our assigned task is unworthy of our abilities. We gladly serve wherever we are asked. When we do this, the Lord can use us in ways beyond our understanding to accomplish His work.

Let me conclude with words from President Ezra Taft Benson’s inspired message of 21 years ago:

“Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion.

“We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride. . . .”<sup>23</sup>

“We must yield ‘to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,’ put off the prideful ‘natural man,’ become ‘a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,’ and become ‘as a child, submissive, meek, humble.’ . . .”<sup>24</sup>

“God will have a humble people. . . . ‘Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.’ . . .”<sup>25</sup>

“Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can.”<sup>26</sup>

My beloved brethren, let us follow the example of our Savior and reach out to serve rather than seeking the praise and honor of men. It is my prayer that we will recognize and root out unrighteous pride in our hearts and that we will replace it with “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness.”<sup>27</sup> In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. See Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4.
2. 3 Nephi 11:7.
3. Alma 29:9.
4. See 2 Thessalonians 1:4.
5. See Alma 26.
6. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, 6.
7. See Matthew 22:36–40.
8. See Alma 31:21.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 76:25.
10. Proverbs 13:10.
11. 1 Peter 5:5.
12. Moroni 7:44.
13. 1 Corinthians 1:27.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.
15. Moses 1:10.
16. Matthew 19:26.
17. See Moses 4:1–2.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 107:3.
19. See John 8:28–29.
20. See John 17:4.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–37.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
23. See Alma 6:2–4; Matthew 23:25–26.
24. Mosiah 3:19; see also Alma 13:28.
25. Alma 32:16.
26. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, 6–7.
27. 1 Timothy 6:11.



**By President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# Serve with the Spirit

*Let us do whatever is required to qualify for the Holy Ghost as our companion.*

I am grateful for this opportunity to be one with you, honored by God to hold the priesthood. We have been called to use divine power to serve the children of our Heavenly Father. How well we meet that obligation will have eternal consequences for those we are called to serve and for us and for generations yet unborn.

I hold in sacred memory two priesthood bearers who had qualified for the Spirit of God to go with them on the errand to which the Lord called them. They had found the restored gospel themselves in America. They were the Lord's servants who first spoke of that gospel to two of my European ancestors.

One of those ancestors was a young girl living on a small farm in Switzerland. Another was a young man, an orphan and an immigrant to the United States from Germany, living in St. Louis, Missouri.

Both of them heard a priesthood holder testify of the restored gospel—for the girl by the fireplace of her little home in Switzerland, and for the boy it was sitting in the balcony of a rented hall in America. Both of them knew by the Spirit that the message those elders brought to them was true.

The boy and the girl chose to be baptized. The two of them met for

the first time on the dusty trail years later, walking hundreds of miles to the mountains of western America. They talked as they walked. What they talked about was the miraculous blessing that in all the world, the servants of God had found them and even more miraculous, that they knew their message was true.

They fell in love and were married. And because of a testimony of the Spirit, which began as they heard the words of priesthood holders under the influence of the Holy Ghost, they were sealed for eternity by priesthood power. I am among the tens of thousands of descendants of that boy and that girl who bless the names of two priesthood holders who brought the ministrations of the Spirit of God with them as they climbed the hill in Switzerland and rose to speak in that meeting in St. Louis.

That happy story and millions more like it are repeated across the world and will be over generations. For some it will be the story of a young home teacher who said words that sparked a desire in your grandfather to come back to the Church. For some it will be the words of comfort and blessing from a patriarch that sustained your mother when tragedy nearly overwhelmed her.

There will be a common theme in all those stories. It will be the power of the priesthood in a holder whose power to serve was magnified by the Holy Ghost.

And so my message for us tonight is this: let us do whatever is required to qualify for the Holy Ghost as our companion, and then let us go forward fearlessly so that we will be given the powers to do whatever the Lord calls us to do. That growth in power to serve may come slowly, it may come in small steps that are difficult for you to see, but it will come.

Tonight I will make a few suggestions for the qualification of receiving the Holy Ghost as a companion in your priesthood service. Then I will give a few examples of priesthood service in which you can expect to see your powers to serve strengthened by the influence of the Spirit.

Now, we all know that confirmation into the Church gave us the gift of the Holy Ghost. But the companionship of the Holy Ghost, the manifestations of it in our life and service, requires us to put our lives in order to qualify.

We cultivate spiritual gifts by keeping the commandments and trying to live a blameless life. That requires faith in Jesus Christ to repent and be cleansed through His Atonement. So as priesthood holders we should never miss an opportunity to participate with all our hearts in the promise offered in every sacrament meeting for members of the restored Church to “take upon them the name of [God's] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them.”<sup>1</sup>

Just as we must be cleansed of sin to have the Spirit with us, we must be humble enough before God to recognize our need for it. The disciples of



**Dublin, Ireland**

the resurrected Savior demonstrated that humility, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

The Savior was preparing them for their ministry. They knelt on the ground to pray. Here is the account: “And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.”<sup>2</sup> They were baptized as you have been. And the record says that in answer to their pleading, they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

The Savior prayed aloud to thank His Father for giving the Holy Ghost to those He had chosen because of their belief in Him. And then the Savior prayed for a spiritual blessing for those they were serving. The Lord pled with His Father: “I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.”<sup>3</sup>

As the humble servants of the Savior, we should pray for the manifestations of the Holy Ghost to come to us in our service and to those we serve. Humble prayer to our Heavenly Father, in deep faith in Jesus Christ, is essential to qualify us for the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Our humility and our faith that invite spiritual gifts are increased by our reading, studying, and pondering the scriptures. We have all heard those words. Yet we may read a few lines or pages of scripture every day and hope that will be enough.

But reading, studying, and pondering are not the same. We read words and we may get ideas. We study and we may discover patterns and connections in scripture. But when we ponder, we invite revelation by the Spirit. Pondering, to me, is the thinking and the praying I do after reading and studying in the scriptures carefully.

For me, President Joseph F. Smith set an example of how pondering can invite light from God. It is recorded in the 138th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. He had been reading and studying many scriptures, trying to understand how the effects of the Savior’s Atonement would reach those who had died never having heard His message. Here is his account of how revelation came: “As I pondered over these things which are written, the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great.”<sup>4</sup>

Repentance, prayer, and pondering over the scriptures are essential parts of our qualifying for the gifts of the Spirit in our priesthood service. Further magnification of our power to serve will come as we respond with faith to go forward in our callings with the Holy Ghost to help us.

President Thomas S. Monson put it this way for us: “What does it mean to magnify [your] calling? It means to build it up in dignity . . . , to enlarge

and strengthen it to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.”<sup>5</sup>

I will suggest two services to which we are all called. In carrying them out under the influence of the Spirit, you and others will see your power to serve, strengthen, and magnify.

The first is as His agent to teach and testify to others for Him. The Lord included the youngest and the least experienced of the Aaronic Priesthood holders in that call to serve. After describing the duties of the Aaronic Priesthood holders, He said:

“But neither teachers nor deacons have authority to baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on hands;

“They are, however, to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

Somewhere in the world this week there will be a deacon asked by his quorum president to invite a member of their quorum whom he has never seen to a meeting. The 13-year-old president is not likely to use the words “warn, exhort, and teach,” but that is what the Lord expects of the deacon assigned to go to the rescue.

To the deacon who receives the call to go to his quorum member, I will make three promises. First, as you pray for help, the Spirit will calm your fears. Second, you will be surprised that you know what to say when you get to his home and during the walk with him back to the church. What you say may seem jumbled to you. But you will feel that words were given to you at the moment you needed them. And third, you will feel the approval of the Lord, who called you through your president, whatever the outcome.

I cannot promise what success will come since every person is free to

choose how he or she responds to a servant of God. But the deacon you speak to for the Lord will remember you came to him. I know of one boy, now a man still far away from Church activity, whom a deacon was sent to find, and he told his grandfather of that visit 20 years earlier. And it seemed to have no effect, and yet he even named the deacon who came. The grandfather asked me to find and thank the deacon who was called to invite, to exhort, and to teach. It had been only one day in the life of a boy, but a grandfather and the Lord remember the words the boy was inspired to speak and the boy's name.

I urge all of us, young and old, who are called to speak in a meeting in the name of the Lord to dismiss our feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy. We don't have to use soaring language or convey deep insights. Simple words of testimony will do. The Spirit will give you the words for you to speak and will carry them down into the hearts of humble people who look for truth from God. If we keep trying to speak for the Lord, we will be surprised someday to learn that we have warned, exhorted, taught, and invited with the help of the Spirit to bless lives, with power far beyond our own.

In addition to the call to teach, all

of us will be sent by the Lord to succor those in need. That is another priesthood service in which we will feel the influence of the Spirit increase our power to serve. You will find yourself more able to recognize pain and worry in the faces of people. Names or the faces of people in your quorum will come into your mind with the impression that they are in need.

Bishops have that feeling come to them during the night and each time they sit on the stand looking at the members of their ward or thinking of those who are not there. It can happen to them when they find themselves near a hospital or a care center.





**Members in Rome, Italy, translate general conference talks.**

More than once I have heard the words when I walked in the door of a hospital: “I knew you would come.”

We need not worry about knowing the right thing to say or do when we get there. The love of God and the Holy Spirit may be enough. When I was a young man I feared that I would not know what to do or to say to people in great need.

Once I was at the hospital bedside of my father as he seemed near death. I heard a commotion among the nurses in the hallway. Suddenly, President Spencer W. Kimball walked into the room and sat in a chair on the opposite side of the bed from me. I thought to myself, “Now here is my chance to watch and listen to a master at going to those in pain and suffering.”

President Kimball said a few words of greeting, asked my father if he had received a priesthood blessing, and then, when Dad said that he had, the prophet sat back in his chair.

I waited for a demonstration of the comforting skills I felt I lacked and so much needed. After perhaps five minutes of watching the two of them simply smiling silently at each other, I saw President Kimball rise and say, “Henry, I think I’ll go before we tire you.”

I thought I had missed the lesson, but it came later. In a quiet moment with Dad after he recovered enough to go home, our conversation turned to the visit by President Kimball. Dad said quietly, “Of all the visits I had, that visit I had from him lifted my spirits the most.”

President Kimball didn’t speak many words of comfort, at least that I could hear, but he went with the Spirit of the Lord as his companion to give the comfort. I realize now that he was demonstrating the lesson President Monson taught: “How does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it.”

That is true whether we are called to teach the gospel by the Spirit or go with the Holy Ghost to those with feeble knees and hands that hang down.<sup>7</sup> Our priesthood service will be strengthened, people will be blessed, and the light of heaven will be there. The light of heaven will be there for us as well as for those we serve. We may be tired. Our own and our family’s troubles may loom large. But there is a blessing of encouragement for those who serve under the influence of the Spirit.

President George Q. Cannon had more than his fair share of sorrow,

opposition, and trials in his years of priesthood service. He also had experience with the Holy Ghost as his companion in difficult times and hard service. This is the assurance to us in our priesthood service, in the Church and in our families. For me the promise has been true when I have felt the Spirit in my priesthood service. “Whenever darkness fills our minds, we may know that we are not possessed of the Spirit of God. . . . When we are filled with the Spirit of God we are filled with joy, with peace, and with happiness, no matter what our circumstances may be; for it is a spirit of cheerfulness and of happiness. The Lord has given unto us the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is our privilege to have that Holy Ghost reign within us, so that from morning till night and from night till morning we shall have the joy, the light and the revelation thereof.”<sup>8</sup>

We can watch for that blessing of happiness and joy to come when we need it during the difficult times in our faithful priesthood service.

I testify that we are called of God by prophecy. This is the true Church of Jesus Christ, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. God lives and hears our every prayer. Jesus is the resurrected Christ and our Savior. You can know these things are true by the power of the Holy Ghost, which will come to you in your service. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
2. 3 Nephi 19:9.
3. 3 Nephi 19:21.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 138:11.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 60; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 51.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:58–59.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
8. George Q. Cannon, in Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, 5 vols. (1987–92), 4:137.





# General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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October 2010



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***Latter-day Saints gather for the 180th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. Pictured clockwise from top left are Church members in São Paulo, Brazil; Auckland, New Zealand; Formosa, Argentina; Cape Town, South Africa; Stockholm, Sweden; Dublin, Ireland; and Montevideo, Uruguay.***





By President Thomas S. Monson

# The Three Rs of Choice

*Each of us has come to this earth with all the tools necessary to make correct choices.*

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, my earnest prayer tonight is that I might enjoy the help of our Heavenly Father in giving utterance to those things which I feel impressed to share with you.

I have been thinking recently about choices and their consequences.

Scarcely an hour of the day goes by but what we are called upon to make choices of one sort or another. Some are trivial, some more far-reaching. Some will make no difference in the eternal scheme of things, and others will make *all* the difference.

As I've contemplated the various aspects of choice, I've put them into three categories: first, the *right* of choice; second, the *responsibility* of choice; and third, the *results* of choice. I call these the three Rs of choice.

I mention first the *right* of choice. I am so grateful to a loving Heavenly Father for His gift of agency, or the right to choose. President David O. McKay, ninth President of the Church, said, "Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God's greatest gift to man."<sup>1</sup>

We know that we had our agency before this world was and that Lucifer attempted to take it from us. He had no confidence in the principle of agency or in us and argued for imposed

salvation. He insisted that with his plan none would be lost, but he seemed not to recognize—or perhaps not to care—that in addition, none would be any wiser, any stronger, any more compassionate, or any more grateful if his plan were followed.

We who chose the Savior's plan knew that we would be embarking on a precarious, difficult journey, for we walk the ways of the world and sin and stumble, cutting us off from our Father. But the Firstborn in the Spirit offered Himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of all. Through unspeakable suffering He became the great Redeemer, the Savior of all mankind, thus making possible our successful return to our Father.

The prophet Lehi tells us: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."<sup>2</sup>

Brethren, within the confines of whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we will always have the *right* to choose.

Next, with the *right* of choice comes the *responsibility* to choose. We cannot be neutral; there is no middle ground. The Lord knows this; Lucifer knows this. As long as we live upon this earth, Lucifer and his hosts will never abandon the hope of claiming our souls.

Our Heavenly Father did not launch us on our eternal journey without providing the means whereby we could receive from Him God-given guidance to assist in our safe return at the end of mortal life. I speak of prayer. I speak too of the whisperings from that still, small voice within each of us, and I do not overlook the holy scriptures, written by mariners who successfully sailed the seas we too must cross.

Each of us has come to this earth with all the tools necessary to make correct choices. The prophet Mormon tells us, "The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil."<sup>3</sup>

We are surrounded—even at times bombarded—by the messages of the adversary. Listen to some of them; they are no doubt familiar to you: "Just this once won't matter." "Don't worry; no one will know." "You can stop smoking or drinking or taking drugs any time you want." "Everybody's doing it, so it can't be that bad." The lies are endless.

Although in our journey we will encounter forks and turnings in the road, we simply cannot afford the luxury of a detour from which we may never return. Lucifer, that clever piper, plays his lilting melody and attracts the unsuspecting away from the safety of their chosen pathway, away from the counsel of loving parents, away from the security of God's teachings. He seeks not just the so-called refuse of humanity; he seeks all



Unlike Alice, we all know where we want to go, and it *does* matter which way we go, for by choosing our path, we choose our destination.

Decisions are constantly before us. To make them wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say no, the courage to say yes. Decisions *do* determine destiny.

I plead with you to make a determination right here, right now, not to deviate from the path which will lead to our goal: eternal life with our Father in Heaven. Along that straight and true path there are other goals: missionary service, temple marriage, Church activity, scripture study, prayer, temple work. There are countless worthy goals to reach as we travel through life. Needed is our commitment to reach them.

Finally, brethren, I speak of the *results* of choice. All of our choices have consequences, some of which have little or nothing to do with our eternal salvation and others of which have *everything* to do with it.

Whether you wear a green T-shirt or a blue one makes no difference in the long run. However, whether you decide to push a key on your computer which will take you to pornography can make *all* the difference in your life. You will have just taken a step off the straight, safe path. If a friend pressures you to drink alcohol or to try drugs and you succumb to the pressure, you are taking a detour from which you may not return. Brethren, whether we are 12-year-old deacons or mature high priests, we are susceptible. May we keep our eyes, our hearts, and our determination focused on that goal which is eternal and worth any price we will have to pay, regardless of the sacrifice we must make to reach it.

No temptation, no pressure, no enticing can overcome us unless we

of us, including the very elect of God. King David listened, wavered, and then followed and fell. So did Cain in an earlier era and Judas Iscariot in a later one. Lucifer's methods are cunning; his victims, numerous.

We read of him in 2 Nephi: "Others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security."<sup>4</sup> "Others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell . . . until he grasps them with his awful chains."<sup>5</sup> "And thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell."<sup>6</sup>

When faced with significant choices, how do we decide? Do we

succumb to the promise of momentary pleasure? To our urges and passions? To the pressure of our peers?

Let us not find ourselves as indecisive as is Alice in Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. She is confronted by the Cheshire cat, of whom Alice asks, "Which path shall I follow?"

The cat answers, "That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take."<sup>7</sup>

allow such. If we make the wrong choice, we have no one to blame but ourselves. President Brigham Young once expressed this truth by relating it to himself. Said he: "If Brother Brigham shall take a wrong track, and be shut out of the Kingdom of heaven, no person will be to blame but Brother Brigham. I am the only being in heaven, earth, or hell, that can be blamed." He continued: "This will equally apply to every Latter-day Saint. Salvation is an individual operation."<sup>8</sup>

The Apostle Paul has assured us, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."<sup>9</sup>

We have all made incorrect choices. If we have not already corrected such choices, I assure you that there is a way to do so. The process is called repentance. I plead with you to correct your mistakes. Our Savior died to provide you and me that blessed gift. Although the path is not easy, the promise is real: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."<sup>10</sup> "And I, the Lord, remember them no more."<sup>11</sup> Don't put your eternal life at risk. If you have sinned, the sooner you begin to make your way back, the sooner you will find the sweet peace and joy that come with the miracle of forgiveness.

Brethren, you are of a noble birthright. Eternal life in the kingdom of our Father is your goal. Such a goal is not achieved in one glorious attempt but rather is the result of a lifetime of righteousness, an accumulation of wise choices, even a constancy of purpose. As with anything really worthwhile, the reward of eternal life requires effort.



The scriptures are clear:

"Ye shall observe to do . . . as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

"Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you."<sup>12</sup>

In closing may I share with you an example of one who determined early in life what his goals would be. I speak of Brother Clayton M. Christensen, a member of the Church who is a professor of business administration in the business school at Harvard University.

When he was 16 years old, Brother Christensen decided, among other things, that he would not play sports on Sunday. Years later, when he attended Oxford University in England, he played center on the basketball team. That year they had an undefeated season and went through to the British equivalent of what in the United States would be the NCAA basketball tournament.

They won their games fairly easily in the tournament, making it to the final four. It was then that Brother Christensen looked at the schedule and, to his absolute horror, saw that the final basketball game was scheduled to be played on a Sunday. He and the team had worked so hard

to get where they were, and he was the starting center. He went to his coach with his dilemma. His coach was unsympathetic and told Brother Christensen he expected him to play in the game.

Prior to the final game, however, there was a semifinal game. Unfortunately, the backup center dislocated his shoulder, which increased the pressure on Brother Christensen to play in the final game. He went to his hotel room. He knelt down. He asked his Heavenly Father if it would be all right, just this once, if he played that game on Sunday. He said that before he had finished praying, he received the answer: "Clayton, what are you even asking me for? You know the answer."

He went to his coach, telling him how sorry he was that he wouldn't be playing in the final game. Then he went to the Sunday meetings in the local ward while his team played without him. He prayed mightily for their success. They did win.

That fateful, difficult decision was made more than 30 years ago. Brother Christensen has said that as time has passed, he considers it one of the most important decisions he ever made. It would have been very easy to have said, "You know, in general, keeping the Sabbath day holy is the right commandment, but in my



**By President Henry B. Eyring**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

particular extenuating circumstance, it's okay, just this once, if I don't do it." However, he says his entire life has turned out to be an unending stream of extenuating circumstances, and had he crossed the line just that once, then the next time something came up that was so demanding and critical, it would have been so much easier to cross the line again. The lesson he learned is that it is easier to keep the commandments 100 percent of the time than it is 98 percent of the time.<sup>13</sup>

My beloved brethren, may we be filled with gratitude for the *right* of choice, accept the *responsibility* of choice, and ever be conscious of the *results* of choice. As bearers of the priesthood, all of us united as one can qualify for the guiding influence of our Heavenly Father as we choose carefully and correctly. We are engaged in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, like those of olden times, have answered His call. We are on His errand. We shall succeed in the solemn charge: "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."<sup>14</sup> That this may be so is my solemn and humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Master, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 208.
2. 2 Nephi 2:27.
3. Moroni 7:16.
4. 2 Nephi 28:21.
5. 2 Nephi 28:22.
6. 2 Nephi 28:21.
7. Adapted from Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1898), 89.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 294.
9. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
10. Isaiah 1:18.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
12. Deuteronomy 5:32–33.
13. See Clayton M. Christensen, "Decisions for Which I've Been Grateful" (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, June 8, 2004), [www.byui.edu/presentations](http://www.byui.edu/presentations).
14. Isaiah 52:11.

## Trust in God, Then Go and Do

*You show your trust in Him when you listen with the intent to learn and repent and then you go and do whatever He asks.*

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is an honor to address you on this Sabbath day. I am humbled by the assignment to speak to the millions of Latter-day Saints and our friends across the world. In preparation for this sacred opportunity, I prayed and pondered to learn about your personal needs and what message the Lord wanted me to give.

Your needs are great and varied. Each of you is a unique child of God. God knows you individually. He sends messages of encouragement, correction, and direction fitted to you and to your needs.

To discover what God would have me add to this conference, I read the messages of His servants in scripture and in past conferences. I received an answer to my prayer as I read the words of Alma, a great servant of the Lord in the Book of Mormon:

"O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

"Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.

"But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me."<sup>1</sup>

And then I found in Alma's reflection the direction for which I had been praying: "For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true."<sup>2</sup>

As I read that message from a servant of God, my errand for today became clear. God sends messages and authorized messengers to His children. I am to build trust in God and His servants enough that we will go out and obey His counsel. He wants that because He loves us and wants



our happiness. And He knows how a lack of trust in Him brings sadness.

That lack of trust has brought sorrow to Heavenly Father's children from before the world was created. We know through the revelations of God to the Prophet Joseph Smith that many of our brothers and sisters in the pre-mortal world rejected the plan for our mortal life presented by our Heavenly Father and His eldest Son, Jehovah.<sup>3</sup>

We don't know all the reasons for Lucifer's terrible success in inciting that rebellion. However, one reason is clear. Those who lost the blessing of coming into mortality lacked sufficient trust in God to avoid eternal misery.

The sad pattern of lack of trust in God has persisted since the Creation. I will be careful in giving examples from the lives of God's children since I do not know all the reasons for their lack of faith enough to trust Him. Many of you have studied the moments of crisis in their lives.

Jonah, for instance, not only rejected the message from the Lord to go to Nineveh but went the other way. Naaman could not trust the direction of the Lord's prophet to bathe in a river to allow the Lord to heal his leprosy, feeling the simple task was beneath his dignity.

The Savior invited Peter to leave the safety of a boat to walk to Him across water. We ache for him and see our own need for greater trust in God as we hear the account:

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

"And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"<sup>4</sup>

We can take courage from the fact that Peter came to trust the Lord enough to stay faithful in His service

all the way to his martyrdom.

The young Nephi in the Book of Mormon stirs in us a desire to develop trust in the Lord to obey His commandments, however hard they appear to us. Nephi faced danger and possible death when he said these words of trust that we can and must feel steadily in our hearts: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."<sup>5</sup>

That trust comes from knowing



God. More than any other people on earth, we have, through the glorious events of the Restoration of the gospel, felt the peace that the Lord offered His people with the words “Be still, and know that I am God.”<sup>6</sup> My heart is filled with gratitude for what God has revealed about Himself that we might trust Him.

For me it began in 1820 with a young boy in a grove of trees on a farm in the state of New York. The boy, Joseph Smith Jr., walked among the trees to a secluded spot. He knelt to pray with complete trust that God would answer his pleading to know what he should do to be cleansed and saved through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Each time I read his account, my trust in God and His servants expands:

“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>8</sup>

The Father revealed to us that He lives, that Jesus Christ is His Beloved Son, and that He loved us enough to send that Son to save us, who are His children. And because I have a testimony that He called that unlettered boy as an apostle and prophet, I trust His apostles and prophets today and those they call to serve God.

That trust has blessed my life and the lives of my family. Years ago I heard President Ezra Taft Benson speak in a conference like this. He counseled us to do all we could to



get out of debt and stay out. He mentioned mortgages on houses. He said that it might not be possible, but it would be best if we could pay off all our mortgage debt.<sup>9</sup>

I turned to my wife after the meeting and asked, “Do you think there is any way we could do that?” At first we couldn’t. And then by evening I thought of a property we had acquired in another state. For years we had tried to sell it without success.

But because we trusted God and a few words from the midst of His servant’s message, we placed a phone call Monday morning to the man in San Francisco who had our property

listed to sell. I had called him a few weeks before, and he had said then, “We haven’t had anyone show interest in your property for years.”

But on the Monday after conference, I heard an answer that to this day strengthens my trust in God and His servants.

The man on the phone said, “I am surprised by your call. A man came in today inquiring whether he could buy your property.” In amazement I asked, “How much did he offer to pay?” It was a few dollars more than the amount of our mortgage.

A person might say that was only a coincidence. But our mortgage was

paid off. And our family still listens for any word in a prophet's message that might be sent to tell what we should do to find the security and peace God wants for us.

Such trust in God can bless communities as well as families. I grew up in a small town in New Jersey. Our branch of the Church had fewer than 20 members who regularly attended.

Among them was a woman—an older, very humble convert to the Church. She was an immigrant who spoke with a heavy Norwegian accent. She was the only member of the Church in her family and the only member of the Church in the city in which she lived.

Through my father, who was the branch president, the Lord called her as the president of the branch Relief Society. She had no handbook to tell her what to do. No other member of the Church lived near her. She only knew that the Lord cared for those in need and the few words in the motto of the Relief Society: "Charity never faileth."

It was in the depths of what we now call the Great Depression. Thousands were out of work and homeless. So, feeling she had her errand from the Lord, she asked her neighbors for old clothes. She washed the clothes, pressed them, and put them in cardboard boxes on her back porch. When men without money needed clothes and asked her neighbors for help, they would say, "Go to the house down the street. There is a Mormon lady living there who will give you what you need."

The Lord did not run the city, but He changed a part of it for the better. He called one tiny woman—alone—who trusted Him enough to find out what He wanted her to do and then did it. Because of her trust in the Lord, she was able to help in that city hundreds

of Heavenly Father's children in need.

That same trust in God can bless nations. I have come to know that we can trust God to fulfill the promise of Alma that "behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have."<sup>10</sup>

God does not rule in nations, but He is mindful of them. He can and does place people in positions of influence who want what is best for the people and who trust in the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

I have seen it in my travels across the world. In a city of more than 10 million people, I spoke to the Latter-day Saints gathered by the thousands in conference. It was held in a large sports arena.

Before the meeting began, I noticed a handsome young man sitting on the front row. He was surrounded by others who, like him, were better dressed than most of those around them. I asked the General Authority of the Church near me who the men were. He whispered that it was the mayor of the city and his staff.

As I walked to my car after the meeting, I was surprised to see the mayor waiting to greet me, flanked by his staff. He stepped forward, extended his hand to me, and said, "I thank you for coming to our city and to our country. We are grateful for what you do to build up your people. With such people and such families, we could create the harmony and the prosperity we want for our people."

I saw in that moment that he was one of the honest in heart placed by God in power among His children. We are a tiny minority among the citizens of that great city and nation. The mayor knew little of our doctrine and few of our people. Yet God had sent him the message that Latter-day Saints,

under covenant to trust God and His authorized servants, would become a light to his people.

I know the servants of God who will speak to you during this conference. They are called of God to give messages to His children. The Lord has said of them: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same."<sup>12</sup>

You show your trust in Him when you listen with the intent to learn and repent and then you go and do whatever He asks. If you trust God enough to listen for His message in every sermon, song, and prayer in this conference, you will find it. And if you then go and do what He would have you do, your power to trust Him will grow, and in time you will be overwhelmed with gratitude to find that He has come to trust you.

I testify that God speaks today through His chosen servants in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thomas S. Monson is God's prophet. Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live and love us. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Alma 29:1-3.
2. Alma 29:8.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36-37; Abraham 3:27-28.
4. Matthew 14:25-31.
5. 1 Nephi 3:7.
6. Psalm 46:10.
7. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 28.
8. Joseph Smith—History 1:16-17.
9. See, for example, Ezra Taft Benson, "Prepare for the Days of Tribulation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 33.
10. Alma 29:8.
11. See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3; Isaiah 45:1, 13.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.



**By President Boyd K. Packer**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Cleansing the Inner Vessel

*Nowhere are the generosity and the kindness and mercy of God more manifest than in repentance.*

This general conference was convened at a time when there is such confusion and such danger that our young people hardly know which way they can walk. Having been warned through the revelations that it would be this way, the prophets and apostles have always been shown what to do.

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith “that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.”<sup>1</sup> When the keys were restored, they provided priesthood authority to be present in every home through the grandfathers, the fathers, and the sons.

Fifteen years ago, with the world in turmoil, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the fifth proclamation in the history of the Church. It is a guide that members of the Church would do well to read and to follow.

It states in part: “We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between

a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.

“And the Gods said: We will bless them. And . . . we will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.”<sup>3</sup>

This commandment has never been rescinded.

“And we will prove them here-with, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”<sup>4</sup>

It is intended that we be happy, for “men are, that they might have joy.”<sup>5</sup>

Lehi taught that men are free and must be “free . . . to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day.”<sup>6</sup>

The old saying “The Lord is voting for me, and Lucifer is voting against me, but it is *my* vote that counts” describes a doctrinal certainty that our agency is more powerful than the

adversary’s will. Agency is precious. We can foolishly, blindly give it away, but it cannot be forcibly taken from us.

There is also an age-old excuse: “The devil made me do it.” Not so! He can deceive you and mislead you, but he does not have the power to force you or anyone else to transgress or to keep you in transgression.

To be entrusted with the power to create life carries with it the greatest of joys and dangerous temptations. The gift of mortal life and the capacity to kindle other lives is a supernal blessing. Through the righteous exercise of this power, as in nothing else, we may come close to our Father in Heaven and experience a fulness of joy. This power is not an incidental part of the plan of happiness. It is the key—the very key.

Whether we use this power as the eternal laws require or reject its divine purpose will forever determine what we will become. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”<sup>7</sup>

There is something very liberating when an individual determines of his or her own free will to be obedient to our Father and our God and expresses that willingness to Him in prayer.

When we obey, we can enjoy these powers in the covenant of marriage. From our fountains of life will spring our children, our family. Love between husband and wife can be constant and bring fulfillment and contentment all the days of our lives.

If one is denied these blessings in mortality, the promise is that they will be provided for in the world to come.

Pure love presupposes that only after a pledge of eternal fidelity, a legal and a lawful ceremony, and ideally after the sealing ordinance in the temple, are those life-giving powers released for the full expression of love. It is to be shared only and solely

between man and woman, husband and wife, with that one who is our companion forever. On this the gospel is very plain.

We are free to ignore the commandments, but when the revelations speak in such blunt terms, such as “thou shalt not,” we had better pay attention.

The adversary is jealous toward all who have power to beget life. Satan cannot beget life; he is impotent. “He seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”<sup>8</sup> He seeks to degrade the righteous use of the

life-giving powers by tempting you into immoral relationships.

The Lord used the expression “is like unto” to create an image His followers could understand, such as:

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man.”<sup>9</sup>

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field.”<sup>10</sup>

In our day the dreadful influence of pornography is like unto a plague sweeping across the world, infecting one here and one there, relentlessly trying to invade every home, most

frequently through the husband and father. The effect of this plague can be, unfortunately often is, spiritually fatal. Lucifer seeks to disrupt “the great plan of redemption,”<sup>11</sup> “the great plan of happiness.”<sup>12</sup>

Pornography will always repel the Spirit of Christ and will interrupt the communications between our Heavenly Father and His children and disrupt the tender relationship between husband and wife.

The priesthood holds consummate power. It can protect you from the plague of pornography—and it is a plague—if you are succumbing to its influence. If one is obedient, the priesthood can show how to break a habit and even erase an addiction. Holders of the priesthood have that authority and should employ it to combat evil influences.

We raise an alarm and warn members of the Church to wake up and understand what is going on. Parents, be alert, ever watchful that this wickedness might threaten your family circle.

We teach a standard of moral conduct that will protect us from Satan’s many substitutes or counterfeits for marriage. We must understand that any persuasion to enter into any relationship that is not in harmony with the principles of the gospel must be wrong. From the Book of Mormon we learn that “wickedness never was happiness.”<sup>13</sup>

Some suppose that they were preset and cannot overcome what they feel are inborn temptations toward the impure and unnatural. Not so! Remember, God is our Heavenly Father.

Paul promised that “God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”<sup>14</sup> You





can, if you will, break the habits and conquer an addiction and come away from that which is not worthy of any member of the Church. As Alma cautioned, we must “watch and pray continually.”<sup>15</sup>

Isaiah warned, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”<sup>16</sup>

Years ago I visited a school in Albuquerque. The teacher told me about a youngster who brought a kitten to class. As you can imagine, that disrupted everything. She had him hold the kitten up in front of the children.

It went well until one of the children asked, “Is it a boy kitty or a girl kitty?”

Not wanting to get into that lesson, the teacher said, “It doesn’t matter. It’s just a kitty.”

But they persisted. Finally, one boy raised his hand and said, “I know how you can tell.”

Resigned to face it, the teacher said, “How can you tell?”

And the student answered, “You can vote on it!”

You may laugh at this story, but if we are not alert, there are those today who not only tolerate but advocate voting to change laws that would legalize immorality, as if a vote would somehow alter the designs of God’s laws and nature. A law against nature would be impossible to enforce. For instance, what good would a vote against the law of gravity do?

There are both moral and physical laws “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world” that cannot be changed.<sup>17</sup> History demonstrates over and over again that moral standards cannot be changed by battle and cannot be changed by ballot. To legalize that which is basically wrong or evil will not prevent the pain and penalties that will follow as surely as night follows day.

Regardless of the opposition, we are determined to stay on course. We will hold to the principles and laws and ordinances of the gospel. If they are misunderstood either innocently or willfully, so be it. We cannot change; we will not change the moral standard. We quickly lose our way when we disobey the laws of God. If we do not protect and foster the family, civilization and our liberties must needs perish.

“I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”<sup>18</sup>

Every soul confined in a prison of sin, guilt, or perversion has a key to the gate. The key is labeled “repentance.” If you know how to use this key, the adversary cannot hold you. The twin principles of repentance and forgiveness exceed in strength the awesome power of the tempter. If you are bound by a habit or an addiction that is unworthy, you must stop conduct that is harmful. Angels will coach you,<sup>19</sup> and priesthood leaders will guide you through those difficult times.

Nowhere are the generosity and the kindness and mercy of God more manifest than in repentance. Do you understand the consummate cleansing power of the Atonement made by the Son of God, our Savior, our Redeemer? He said, “I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”<sup>20</sup> In that supernal act of love, the Savior paid the penalties for our sins so that we might not have to pay.

For those who truly desire it, there is a way back. Repentance is like unto a detergent. Even ground-in stains of sin will come out.

Priesthood holders carry with them the antidote to remove the terrible images of pornography and to wash away guilt. The priesthood has the power to unlock the influence of our habits, even to unchain from addiction, however tight the grip. It can heal over the scars of past mistakes.

I know of no more beautiful and consoling words in all of revelation than these: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>21</sup>

Sometimes, even after confession and paying penalties, the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive one’s self. You must come to know that forgiveness means forgiveness.

“As often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.”<sup>22</sup>

President Joseph Fielding Smith told me of a repentant woman struggling to find her way out of a very immoral life. She asked him what she should do now.

In turn, he asked her to read to him from the Old Testament the account of Lot’s wife, who was turned to a pillar of salt.<sup>23</sup> Then he asked her, “What lesson do you gain from those verses?”

She answered, "The Lord will destroy the wicked."

"Not so!" President Smith said that the lesson for this repentant woman and for you is "Don't look back!"<sup>24</sup>

Strangely enough, it may be that the simplest and most powerful prevention and cure for pornography, or any unclean act, is to ignore and avoid it. Delete from the mind any unworthy thought that tries to take root. Once you have decided to remain clean, you are asserting your God-given agency. And then, as President Smith counseled, "Don't look back."

I promise that ahead of you is peace and happiness for you and your family. The ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home. And I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you who are struggling against this terrible plague, to find the healing that is available to us in the priesthood of the Lord. I bear witness of that power in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:20.
2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
3. Abraham 4:27–28.
4. Abraham 3:25.
5. 2 Nephi 2:25.
6. 2 Nephi 2:26.
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
8. 2 Nephi 2:27.
9. Matthew 13:45.
10. Matthew 13:44.
11. Jacob 6:8; Alma 34:31.
12. Alma 42:8.
13. Alma 41:10.
14. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
15. Alma 13:28.
16. Isaiah 5:20.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 130:20.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
19. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
22. Mosiah 26:30.
23. See Genesis 19:26.
24. See Boyd K. Packer, *The Things of the Soul* (1996), 116.



**By Elder Jay E. Jensen**  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# The Holy Ghost and Revelation

*The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and with the Father and the Son, He knows all things.*

As a young elder, I had been in the mission field about one year, and while reading scriptures and words of the latter-day Apostles about revelation and the Holy Ghost, I had a stunning awakening. I did not have a testimony of my own, specifically of the Father and the Son. I went on my mission living on the borrowed light of my wonderful parents. Never doubting their words, I had not thought about seeking my own spiritual witness. On a February night in San Antonio, Texas, in 1962, I knew that I had to know for myself. In our small apartment I found a place where I could quietly pray out loud, pleading, "Heavenly Father, are You there? I must know for myself!"

Sometime later that night I came to know for myself for the first time in my life that God and Jesus are real. I did not hear an audible voice nor see a heavenly being. I knew in the same way you too may have come to know—which is "by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 121:26) and the spirit of revelation (see D&C 8:1–3) speaking peace to my mind (see D&C 6:23) and assurances to my heart (see Alma 58:11).

From that experience I witnessed the results of Alma's counsel to "awake and arouse [my] faculties . . . to [conduct] an experiment upon [His] words" (Alma 32:27). These words or seeds have grown into trees, indeed giant trees of testimony. The process continues with more experiments upon the word, resulting in additional trees of testimony, now a veritable forest based on revelation through and by the Holy Ghost.

#### The Holy Ghost Is a Desired Gift

When the Savior visited the Americas, He called twelve disciples. One of His messages to them and the people was about the Holy Ghost. After teaching them, the Savior departed and promised to return the next day. The people worked through the night to gather as many as possible to hear Him.

The disciples gathered the people into 12 groups to teach them what the Savior taught them. Foremost among their teachings was the importance of the Holy Ghost. (See 3 Nephi 11–18.) Then the people knelt and prayed. Their heartfelt desire was to be given the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 19:8–9).

The Savior appeared to them and reinforced the importance of the Holy Ghost as He prayed to the Father:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; . . .

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words” (3 Nephi 19:20–21).

Based on this Book of Mormon event, I understand better why President Wilford Woodruff said that “the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon man. . . .

“[It] is not restricted to men, nor to apostles or prophets; it belongs to every faithful man and woman, and to every child who is old enough to receive the gospel of Christ” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 49).

### Revelation Provides Answers in Times of Need

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and with the Father and the Son, He knows all things (see D&C 35:19; 42:17). He has several important roles; foremost among them is to teach and testify of the Father and the Son (see 3 Nephi 28:11). Other roles are that He reveals the truth of all things (see Moroni 10:5) and He leads to do good (see D&C 11:12).

President Thomas S. Monson exemplifies this important role of being led to do good. He follows the example of the Savior, “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He has taught the importance of not ignoring a spiritual prompting from the Holy Ghost to visit someone and to minister to him or her and to rescue the one.

But sometimes there is no one like President Monson, no home teacher, no caring sister available to minister in time of need. In those situations I have

come to find solace and direction from the Comforter, another role of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 36:2).

Our grandson Quinton was born with multiple birth defects and lived three weeks short of a year, during which time he was in and out of the hospital. Sister Jensen and I were living in Argentina at that time. We truly wanted to be there with our children to comfort them and be comforted by them. This was our grandchild whom we loved and wanted to be near. We could only pray, and we did so fervently!

Sister Jensen and I were on a mission tour when we received word Quinton had died. We stood in the hallway of a meetinghouse and hugged and comforted each other. I witness to you that assurances came to us from the Holy Ghost, a peace which

passes all understanding and continues to this day (see Philippians 4:7). We also witnessed the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost in the lives of our son and daughter-in-law and their children, who to this day speak of that time with such faith, peace, and comfort.

### Revelation and the Book of Mormon

That same gift of revelation has influenced my testimony of the Book of Mormon. I have read, studied, searched, and feasted upon it again and again. The Holy Ghost has revealed to me its truth and divinity.

President Gordon B. Hinckley called the Book of Mormon one of the four essential cornerstones of the Church, the others being Joseph Smith’s First Vision, the restoration of the priesthood, and of course our testimony of Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone (see

### Full-time missionaries and a sister in Las Caobas, Dominican Republic, prepare for a baptismal service between sessions of general conference.







Ephesians 2:19–21). “These four great God-given gifts,” he explained, “are the unshakable cornerstones which anchor The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as the individual testimonies and convictions of its members” (“Four Cornerstones of Faith,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 7).

These four God-given gifts have become the anchors to my faith and testimony, each one confirmed to me by revelation through the Holy Ghost. However, for a few minutes I would like to focus on two of these cornerstone gifts—the First Vision and the Book of Mormon. It is significant that each begins in a family setting where children were born of goodly parents and were taught well by them (see 1 Nephi 1:1). Events in the lives of Lehi and Joseph Smith parallel each other (see 1 Nephi 1 and Joseph Smith—History 1):

- Each has a specific need. Lehi’s is to save himself and his family from Jerusalem’s imminent destruction, and Joseph Smith’s is to know which church is true.

- Each prays.
- Each has a vision of the Father and the Son.
- To each is given a book.
- Both preach.
- Each receives revelation from the Holy Ghost and by visions or dreams.
- Finally, wicked people threaten them. Lehi and his people escape and survive. Joseph is martyred.

Is it any wonder that missionaries invite sincere seekers of truth to begin their study of the Book of Mormon in 1 Nephi? This book is *saturated* with the Spirit of the Lord. In these early chapters there is a clear message that revelation and the Holy Ghost are given not only to prophets but also to fathers and mothers and children.

The message about revelation and the Holy Ghost continues throughout the Book of Mormon. These truths are summarized by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none”

(*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 196).

As Latter-day Saints, we have testimonies of the Book of Mormon given to us by revelation, assuring us that this religion and its doctrines are true (see introduction to the Book of Mormon).

The things of the Spirit are sacred and hard to express. We, like Ammon, declare, “Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel” (Alma 26:16).

However, I witness that the Holy Ghost is real and He is the testator, revelator, comforter, guide, and supernal teacher.

Humbly I bear witness that this true and living Church, this religion, rests on these four cornerstones. I testify that Jesus Christ is in very deed the chief cornerstone (see Ephesians 2:19–21). President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s prophet, and these 15 men seated behind me are prophets, seers, apostles, and revelators. They hold the holy priesthood and keys of the kingdom. I love, honor, and sustain them. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Mary N. Cook**

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# Be an Example of the Believers

*I would like to invite you to “be . . . an example of the believers . . . in faith [and] in purity.”*

A short time ago little Ruby was born into our family. As I looked into her sweet face, I marveled at the knowledge that before she came to earth, she lived in the presence of our Heavenly Father. She had accepted His great plan of happiness and chose to follow Him and Jesus Christ, our Savior.<sup>1</sup> Because of her decision, she was permitted to come to earth to experience mortality and progress toward eternal life. With her spirit united with her body, Ruby has entered a time of learning in which she can prove herself, choose to follow Christ, and prepare to be worthy of eternal life.

Ruby came to this earth pure, but as part of the plan, she will face trials and temptations and she will make mistakes. Through our Savior’s Atonement, however, Ruby can be forgiven, receive a fulness of joy, and be pure again—ready to live forever in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

A few hours after her birth, I was privileged to hold this precious child in my arms. I said to her mother, “Oh, we have to teach Ruby how to be a virtuous woman, pure and priceless as her name implies.”<sup>2</sup>

Her mother replied, “I am starting today.”

What will Ruby’s mother do to “start today”? How can we as parents, grandparents, and leaders start and keep our children—our youth—on the path to eternal life? We must “be . . . [examples] of the believers.”<sup>3</sup>

The prophet Brigham Young said: “We should never permit ourselves to do anything that we are not willing to see our children do. We should set them an example that we wish them to imitate.”<sup>4</sup> Each of us can start today by being that good example.

Today I would like to invite you to “be . . . an example of the believers . . . in faith [and] in purity”<sup>5</sup>—two principles required for salvation.

Be an example of the believers in faith. Actively strengthen your own faith and testimony of Jesus Christ, thus preparing to testify by word and example to your children.

Let me tell you of a wonderful mother whose life was an example of faith. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was a very young boy, he watched and learned about faith in God from his mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Lucy sought answers by searching the

scriptures,<sup>6</sup> and Joseph too employed the practice, turning to the Bible for guidance as his mother had.<sup>7</sup>

Lucy also solved family problems by privately seeking the Lord’s help through prayer. One day, experiencing discord in her family regarding the subject of religion, Lucy said she “retired to a grove of handsome wild cherry trees not far distant and prayed to the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

Lucy also prayed with great faith when faced with personal health issues, when Joseph nearly lost his leg to osteomyelitis, and when Joseph’s sister Sophronia almost died from typhoid fever. Regarding Sophronia’s illness, Lucy wrote: “I gazed upon my child. . . . My husband and I clasped our hands together and fell upon our knees by the bedside and poured our grief and supplications into his ears.”<sup>9</sup> Sophronia lived. I am confident that Lucy’s children often witnessed her praying with faith and receiving answers to those prayers.

Lucy prayed in faith for guidance, and Joseph too retired to a grove of trees, where he prayed with faith, seeking an answer from the Lord as his mother had.

Like Lucy, we must show our children and youth how to strengthen their faith and testimony of Jesus Christ by strengthening our own through studying the scriptures and through prayer, personally as well as with them.

Unlike Lucy, today we are blessed to have more than the Bible. We have latter-day scriptures and the words of our latter-day prophets to “safely guide us”<sup>10</sup> on the path to eternal life. From the Book of Mormon we learn about those on the path who were “continually holding fast to the rod of iron,”<sup>11</sup> likening it to “the word of God.”<sup>12</sup> In today’s world replete with temptations, “holding fast” can be challenging,



as Satan in his conniving ways tries to pull us away from God's ways. If we have one hand on the rod and one hand in the world, we put our children and youth in danger of losing their way on the path. If our example is confusing, then in Jacob's words we lose "the confidence of [our] children, because of [our] bad examples."<sup>13</sup>

Parents, grandparents, and leaders, your message must be clear. Clarity can only result from having both hands on the rod and from living by the truths found in the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets. You may not be raising a prophet as Lucy was, but you are certainly raising tomorrow's leaders, and your actions are just as tangibly linked to their faith.

Next, be an example of the believers in purity. The only way for us to become pure is through the Atonement of our Savior. For each of us, the process of becoming pure begins with faith, repentance, and our first covenant of baptism.

To help our children live their baptismal covenant, Elder Robert D. Hales advised: "We teach that the moment they step out of the water, they step out of the world and into the kingdom of God. By covenant, they agree to obey His commandments."<sup>14</sup>

"Covenants place us under a strong

obligation to honor our commitments to God. To keep our covenants, we must give up activities or interests that prevent us from honoring those covenants."<sup>15</sup>

*For the Strength of Youth* is a marvelous tool to help youth understand this sacred obligation of covenant making and the blessings of purity that come from covenant keeping. It contains words of latter-day prophets—the iron rod that will safely guide them along the strait and narrow path, turning them away from Satan's entrapments that can delay their progress. In this booklet, you will also find the many blessings that come from obedience and seeking that which is "virtuous [and] lovely."<sup>16</sup>

Parents, obtain a personal copy of this booklet and read it often. Live the standards yourself. Have thoughtful gospel conversations with youth that will help them develop their own desire to live and discover for themselves the meaning and purpose of the standards.

The standards found in the sections "Entertainment and the Media" and "Dress and Appearance" can be particularly challenging because they are becoming increasingly at odds with the standards of the world.

We must model that which is virtuous and lovely by our personal media

choices. We must take care that the media we invite into our homes does not dull the sensitivity to the Spirit, harm relationships with our family and friends, or reveal personal priorities that are inconsistent with gospel principles. By example we can help our children understand that spending long periods of time using the Internet, social media, and cell phones; playing video games; or watching television keeps us from productive activities and valuable interactions with others.

We also model that which is virtuous and lovely by our dress and appearance. As a covenant people we have the responsibility to care for, protect, and properly clothe our bodies. We must help our children and youth understand that we respect our bodies as temples and as gifts from God.<sup>17</sup> We set the example by refusing to purchase or wear immodest clothing that is too tight, too sheer, or revealing in any other manner.

Covenant keepers strive to be obedient "at all times . . . and in all places"<sup>18</sup> because of their love of God and His promised blessings. One evening, while walking with my husband, we passed by an outdoor wedding reception in progress. We didn't know these people, yet there was an immediate impression of virtue.



Their choices of music and dress were lovely. The radiant bride's gown was unquestionably modest, as were her bridal attendants' dresses. This family chose not to mix the ways of the world with the sanctity of that day.

Now, may I say a word to the marvelous youth of our Church. Thank you for your righteous examples to your friends, teachers, leaders, and families. I recognize that many of you are the only member of the Church in your family. You may even attend church alone. I commend you for your commitment and righteous example. Be patient and continue to live righteously. There are many who can help you. President Thomas S. Monson said, "Even an exemplary family . . .

can use all the supportive help they can get from good men [and women] who genuinely care."<sup>19</sup>

Look around in your ward and stake for leaders and friends who are examples of the believers and learn from them.

When I was a young woman, I identified examples of the believers. In addition to my parents, one was my aunt Carma Cutler. I vividly remember her speaking at a stake standards night when I was 16. She taught of the importance of being chaste and worthy of a temple marriage. I was deeply touched by her testimony. I had observed her virtuous life since I was a very young girl, and I knew it was consistent with her teachings.

I wanted to follow her example.

Young men and young women, *you* can start today by being an example of the believers in faith and in purity. Strengthen your faith and testimony daily through scripture study and prayer. Keep your baptismal covenant, which will keep you pure and worthy of the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You can start today to be that example for others to follow.

And you never know—you might be the example my little Ruby will need someday. For now, Ruby has a wonderful start on the path to eternal life. Her parents are setting patterns of righteousness in her home, starting each day with a resolve to be examples of the believers. Hopefully, using her agency, Ruby will choose to follow.

I am grateful for the plan of happiness, and I testify it is the only way that Ruby—and each of us—can be pure again and live forever in the presence of our Father in Heaven. May we each start today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Abraham 3:22–26.
2. See Proverbs 31:10.
3. 1 Timothy 4:12.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 173.
5. 1 Timothy 4:12.
6. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 50.
7. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–12.
8. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 58.
9. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 69.
10. "The Iron Rod," *Hymns*, no. 274.
11. 1 Nephi 8:30.
12. 1 Nephi 11:25.
13. Jacob 2:35.
14. Robert D. Hales, *Return: Four Phases of Our Mortal Journey Home* (2010), 60.
15. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 63.
16. Articles of Faith 1:13.
17. See 1 Corinthians 3:16.
18. Mosiah 18:9.
19. Thomas S. Monson, "Examples of Righteousness," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2008, 66.



By **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Two Lines of Communication

*We must use both the personal line and the priesthood line in proper balance to achieve the growth that is the purpose of mortal life.*

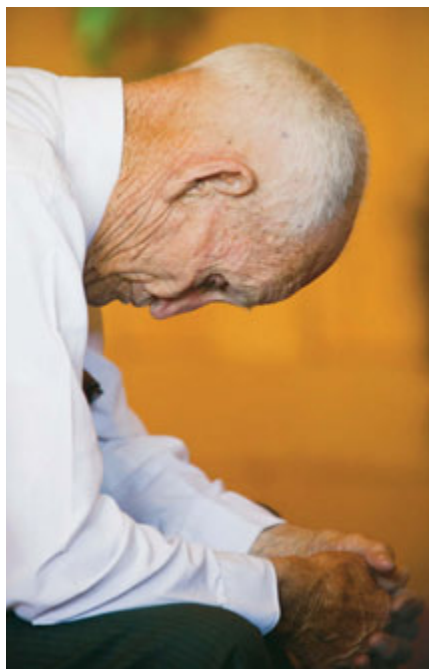
Our Heavenly Father has given His children two lines of communication with Him—what we may call the personal line and the priesthood line. All should understand and be guided by both of these essential lines of communication.

## I. The Personal Line

In the personal line we pray directly to our Heavenly Father, and He answers us by the channels He has established, without any mortal intermediary. We pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, and He answers us through His Holy Spirit and in other ways. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to testify of the Father and the Son (see John 15:26; 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 28:11), to guide us into truth (see John 14:26; 16:13), and to show us all things we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5). This personal line of communication with our Heavenly Father through His Holy Spirit is the source of our testimony of truth, of our knowledge, and of our personal guidance from a loving Heavenly Father. It is an essential feature of His

marvelous gospel plan, which allows each one of His children to receive a personal witness of its truth.

The direct, personal channel of communication to our Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost is based on worthiness and is so



essential that we are commanded to renew our covenants by partaking of the sacrament each Sabbath day. In this way we qualify for the promise that we may always have His Spirit to be with us, to guide us.

On this personal line of communication with the Lord, our belief and practice is similar to that of those Christians who insist that human mediators between God and man are unnecessary because all have direct access to God under the principle Martin Luther espoused that is now known as “the priesthood of all believers.” I will say more of that later.

The personal line is of paramount importance in personal decisions and in the governance of the family. Unfortunately, some members of our church underestimate the need for this direct, personal line. Responding to the undoubted importance of prophetic leadership—the priesthood line, which operates principally to govern heavenly communications on Church matters—some seek to have their priesthood leaders make personal decisions for them, decisions they should make for themselves by inspiration through their personal line. Personal decisions and family governance are principally a matter for the personal line.

I feel to add two other cautions we should remember in connection with this precious direct, personal line of communication with our Heavenly Father.

First, in its fulness the personal line does not function independent of the priesthood line. The gift of the Holy Ghost—the means of communication from God to man—is conferred by priesthood authority as authorized by those holding priesthood keys. It does not come merely by desire or belief. And the right to the continuous



companionship of this Spirit needs to be affirmed each Sabbath as we worthily partake of the sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants of obedience and service.

Similarly, we cannot communicate reliably through the direct, personal line if we are disobedient to or out of harmony with the priesthood line. The Lord has declared that “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36). Unfortunately, it is common for persons who are violating God’s commandments or disobedient to the counsel of their priesthood leaders to declare that God has revealed to them that they are excused from obeying some commandment or from following some counsel. Such persons may be receiving revelation or inspiration, but it is not from the source they suppose. The devil is the father of lies, and he is ever anxious to frustrate the work of God by his clever imitations.

## II. The Priesthood Line

Unlike the personal line, in which our Heavenly Father communicates with us directly through the Holy

Ghost, the priesthood line of communication has the additional and necessary intermediaries of our Savior, Jesus Christ; His Church; and His appointed leaders.

Because of what He accomplished by His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ has the power to prescribe the conditions we must fulfill to qualify for the blessings of His Atonement. That is why we have commandments and ordinances. That is why we make covenants. That is how we qualify for the promised blessings. They all come through the mercy and grace of the Holy One of Israel, “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ conferred the authority of the priesthood that bears His name and He established a church that also bears His name. In this last dispensation, His priesthood authority was restored and His Church was reestablished through heavenly ministrations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This restored priesthood and this reestablished Church are at the heart of the priesthood line.

The priesthood line is the channel by which God has spoken to His

children through the scriptures in times past. And it is this line through which He currently speaks through the teachings and counsel of living prophets and apostles and other inspired leaders. This is the way we receive the required ordinances. This is the way we receive calls to service in His Church. His Church is the way and His priesthood is the power through which we are privileged to participate in those cooperative activities that are essential to accomplishing the Lord’s work. These include preaching the gospel, building temples and chapels, and helping the poor.

In respect to this priesthood line, our belief and practice is similar to the insistence of some Christians that authoritative ordinances (sacraments) are essential and must be performed by one authorized and empowered by Jesus Christ (see John 15:16). We believe the same but of course differ with other Christians on how we trace that authority.

Some members or former members of our church fail to recognize the importance of the priesthood line. They underestimate the importance

of the Church and its leaders and its programs. Relying entirely on the personal line, they go their own way, purporting to define doctrine and to direct competing organizations contrary to the teachings of prophet-leaders. In this they mirror the modern hostility to what is disparagingly called “organized religion.” Those who reject the need for organized religion reject the work of the Master, who established His Church and its officers in the meridian of time and who reestablished them in modern times.

Organized religion, established by divine authority, is essential, as the Apostle Paul taught:

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12–13).

We should all remember the Lord’s declaration in modern revelation that the voice of the Lord’s servants is

the voice of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 21:5; 68:4).

I feel to add two cautions we should remember in connection with reliance on the vital priesthood line.

First, the priesthood line does not supersede the need for the personal line. We all need a personal testimony of truth. As our faith develops, we necessarily rely on the words and faith of others, like our parents, teachers, or priesthood leaders (see D&C 46:14). But if we are solely dependent on one particular priesthood leader or teacher for our personal testimony of the truth instead of getting that testimony through the personal line, we will be forever vulnerable to disillusionment by the action of that person. When it comes to a mature knowledge or testimony of the truth, we should not be dependent on a mortal mediator between us and our Heavenly Father.

Second, like the personal line, the priesthood line cannot function fully and properly in our behalf unless we are worthy and obedient. Many scriptures teach that if we persist in serious violations of the commandments of God, we are “cut off from his presence” (Alma 38:1). When that happens, the Lord and His servants are seriously inhibited in giving us spiritual help and we cannot obtain it for ourselves.

History provides us a vivid example of the importance of the Lord’s servants being in tune with the Spirit. The young Prophet Joseph Smith could not translate when he was angry or upset.

David Whitmer recalled: “One morning when he was getting ready to continue the translation, something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went up stairs, and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation, but he could not do anything. He

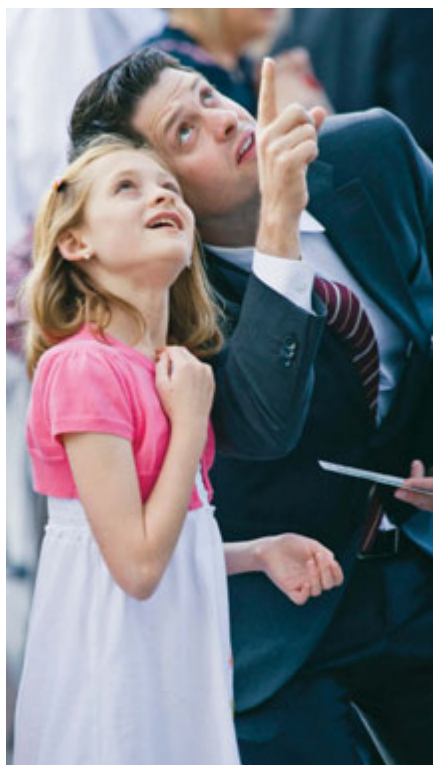
could not translate a single syllable. He went down stairs, out into the orchard and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, asked Emma’s forgiveness and then came up stairs where we were and the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful.”<sup>1</sup>

### III. The Need for Both Lines

I will conclude with further examples of the need for both of the lines our Heavenly Father has established for communication with His children. Both lines are essential to His purpose to bring about the immortality and eternal life of His children. An early scriptural account of this need is in Father Jethro’s counsel that Moses should not try to do so much. The people were waiting upon their priesthood leader from morning till night to “enquire of God” (Exodus 18:15) and also to “judge between one and another” (verse 16). We often note how Jethro counseled Moses to delegate by appointing judges to handle the personal conflicts (see verses 21–22). But Jethro also gave Moses counsel that illustrates the importance of the personal line: “Thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that *they* must do” (verse 20; emphasis added).

In other words, Israelites who followed Moses should be taught not to bring every question to that priesthood leader. They should understand the commandments and seek inspiration to work out most problems for themselves.

Recent events in the nation of Chile illustrate the need for both lines. Chile suffered a devastating earthquake. Many of our members lost homes; some lost family members. Many lost confidence. Quickly—because our





church is prepared to respond to such disasters—food, shelter, and other material aid was provided. The Saints of Chile heard the voice of the Lord through His Church and its leaders responding to their material needs. But however sufficient the priesthood line, it was not enough. Each member needed to seek the Lord in prayer and receive the direct message of comfort and guidance that comes through the Holy Spirit to those who seek and listen.

Our missionary work is another example of the need for both lines. The men and women who are called to be missionaries are worthy and willing because of the teachings they have received through the priesthood line and the testimony they have received through the personal line. They are called through the priesthood line. Then, as representatives of the Lord and under the direction of His priesthood line, they teach investigators. Sincere seekers after truth listen, and the missionaries encourage

them to pray to know the truth of the message for themselves through the personal line.

A final example applies these principles to the subject of priesthood authority in the family and the Church.<sup>2</sup> All priesthood authority in the Church functions under the direction of one who holds the appropriate priesthood keys. This is the priesthood line. But the authority that presides in the family—whether father or single-parent mother—functions in family matters without the need to get authorization from anyone holding priesthood keys. That is like the personal line. Both lines must be functioning in our family life and in our personal lives if we are to have the growth and achieve the destiny identified in our Heavenly Father's plan for His children.

We must use both the personal line and the priesthood line in proper balance to achieve the growth that is the purpose of mortal life. If personal religious practice relies too much on

the personal line, individualism erases the importance of divine authority. If personal religious practice relies too much on the priesthood line, individual growth suffers. The children of God need both lines to achieve their eternal destiny. The restored gospel teaches both, and the restored Church provides both.

I testify of the Lord's prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who holds the keys that govern the priesthood line. I testify of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose church this is. And I testify of the restored gospel, whose truth can be known by each of us through the precious personal line to our Heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. In "Letter from Elder W. H. Kelley," *The Saints' Herald*, Mar. 1, 1882, 68. A similar report is quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:131.
2. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 24–27.





By President Thomas S. Monson

# The Divine Gift of Gratitude

*A grateful heart . . . comes through expressing gratitude to our Heavenly Father for His blessings and to those around us for all that they bring into our lives.*

This has been a marvelous session. When I was appointed President of the Church, I said, “I’ll take one assignment for myself. I’ll be the adviser for the Tabernacle Choir.” I’m very proud of my choir!

My mother once said of me, “Tommy, I’m very proud of all that you’ve done. But I have one comment to make to you. You should have stayed with the piano.”

So I went to the piano and played a number for her: “Here we go, [here we go] to a birthday party.”<sup>1</sup> Then I gave her a kiss on the forehead, and she embraced me.

I think of her. I think of my father. I think of all those General Authorities who’ve influenced me, and others, including the widows whom I visited—85 of them—with a chicken for the oven, sometimes a little money for their pocket.

I visited one late one night. It was midnight, and I went to the nursing home, and the receptionist said, “I’m sure she’s asleep, but she told me to be sure to awaken her, for she said, ‘I know he’ll come.’”

I held her hand; she called my name. She was wide awake. She pressed my hand to her lips and said, “I knew you’d come.” How could I not have come?

Beautiful music touches me that way.

My beloved brothers and sisters, we have heard inspired messages of truth, of hope, and of love. Our thoughts have turned to Him who atoned for our sins, who showed us the way to live and how to pray, and who demonstrated by His own actions the blessings of service—even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the book of Luke, chapter 17, we read of Him:

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

“And as he entered into a certain village, there [he met] ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

“And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

“And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

“And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

“There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

“And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”<sup>2</sup>

Through divine intervention those who were lepers were spared from a cruel, lingering death and given a new lease on life. The expressed gratitude by one merited the Master’s blessing; the ingratitude shown by the nine, His disappointment.

My brothers and sisters, do we remember to give thanks for the blessings we receive? Sincerely giving thanks not only helps us recognize our blessings, but it also unlocks the doors of heaven and helps us feel God’s love.

My beloved friend President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “When you walk with gratitude, you do not walk with arrogance and conceit and egotism, you walk with a spirit of thanksgiving that is becoming to you and will bless your lives.”<sup>3</sup>

In the book of Matthew in the Bible, we have another account of gratitude, this time as an expression from the Savior. As He traveled in the wilderness for three days, more than 4,000 people followed and traveled with Him. He took compassion on them, for they may not have eaten during the entire three days. His disciples, however, questioned, “Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?” Like many of us, the disciples saw only what was lacking.



“And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And [the disciples] said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

“And [Jesus] commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

“And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and *gave thanks*, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”

Notice that the Savior gave thanks for what they had—and a miracle followed: “And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.”<sup>4</sup>

We have all experienced times when our focus is on what we lack rather than on our blessings. Said the Greek philosopher Epictetus, “He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not,

but rejoices for those which he has.”<sup>5</sup>

Gratitude is a divine principle. The Lord declared through a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. . . .

“And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things.”<sup>6</sup>

In the Book of Mormon we are told to “live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which [God] doth bestow upon you.”<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of our circumstances, each of us has much for which to be grateful if we will but pause and contemplate our blessings.

This is a wonderful time to be on earth. While there is much that is wrong

in the world today, there are many things that are right and good. There are marriages that make it, parents who love their children and sacrifice for them, friends who care about us and help us, teachers who teach. Our lives are blessed in countless ways.

We can lift ourselves and others as well when we refuse to remain in the realm of negative thought and cultivate within our hearts an attitude of gratitude. If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues. Someone has said that “gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.”<sup>8</sup>

How can we cultivate within our hearts an attitude of gratitude? President Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church, provided an answer. Said he: “The grateful man sees so much in the world to be thankful for, and with him the good outweighs the evil. Love overpowers jealousy, and light drives darkness out of his life.” He continued: “Pride destroys our gratitude and sets up selfishness in its place. How much happier we are in the presence of a grateful and loving soul, and how careful we should be to cultivate, through the medium of a prayerful life, a thankful attitude toward God and man!”<sup>9</sup>

President Smith is telling us that a prayerful life is the key to possessing gratitude.

Do material possessions make us happy and grateful? Perhaps momentarily. However, those things which provide deep and lasting happiness and gratitude are the things which money cannot buy: our families, the gospel, good friends, our health, our abilities, the love we receive from those around us. Unfortunately, these are some of the things we allow ourselves to take for granted.

The English author Aldous Huxley



wrote, “Most human beings have an almost infinite capacity for taking things for granted.”<sup>10</sup>

We often take for granted the very people who most deserve our gratitude. Let us not wait until it is too late for us to express that gratitude. Speaking of loved ones he had lost, one man declared his regret this way: “I remember those happy days, and often wish I could speak into the ears of the dead the gratitude which was due them in life, and so ill returned.”<sup>11</sup>

The loss of loved ones almost inevitably brings some regrets to our hearts. Let’s minimize such feelings as much as humanly possible by frequently expressing our love and gratitude to them. We never know how soon it will be too late.

A grateful heart, then, comes through expressing gratitude to our Heavenly Father for His blessings and to those around us for all that they bring into our lives. This requires conscious effort—at least until we have truly learned and cultivated an attitude of gratitude. Often we feel grateful and *intend* to express our thanks but forget to do so or just don’t get around to it. Someone has said that “feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”<sup>12</sup>

When we encounter challenges and problems in our lives, it is often

difficult for us to focus on our blessings. However, if we reach deep enough and look hard enough, we will be able to feel and recognize just how much we have been given.

I share with you an account of one family which was able to find blessings in the midst of serious challenges. This is an account I read many years ago and have kept because of the message it conveys. It was written by Gordon Green and appeared in an American magazine over 50 years ago.

Gordon tells how he grew up on a farm in Canada, where he and his siblings had to hurry home from school while the other children played ball and went swimming. Their father, however, had the capacity to help them understand that their work amounted to something. This was especially true after harvesttime when the family celebrated Thanksgiving, for on that day their father gave them a great gift. He took an inventory of everything they had.

On Thanksgiving morning he would take them to the cellar with its barrels of apples, bins of beets, carrots packed in sand, and mountains of sacked potatoes as well as peas, corn, string beans, jellies, strawberries, and other preserves which filled their shelves. He had the children count everything carefully. Then they went out to the barn and figured how many

tons of hay there were and how many bushels of grain in the granary. They counted the cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, and geese. Their father said he wanted to see how they stood, but they knew he really wanted them to realize on that feast day how richly God had blessed them and had smiled upon all their hours of work. Finally, when they sat down to the feast their mother had prepared, the blessings were something they felt.

Gordon indicated, however, that the Thanksgiving he remembered most thankfully was the year they seemed to have nothing for which to be grateful.

The year started off well: they had leftover hay, lots of seed, four litters of pigs, and their father had a little money set aside so that someday he could afford to buy a hay loader—a wonderful machine most farmers just dreamed of owning. It was also the year that electricity came to their town—although not to them because they couldn’t afford it.

One night when Gordon’s mother was doing her big wash, his father stepped in and took his turn over the washboard and asked his wife to rest and do her knitting. He said, “You spend more time doing the wash than sleeping. Do you think we should break down and get electricity?” Although elated at the prospect, she



shed a tear or two as she thought of the hay loader that wouldn't be bought.

So the electrical line went up their lane that year. Although it was nothing fancy, they acquired a washing machine that worked all day by itself and brilliant lightbulbs that dangled from each ceiling. There were no more lamps to fill with oil, no more wicks to cut, no more sooty chimneys to wash. The lamps went quietly off to the attic.

The coming of electricity to their farm was almost the last good thing that happened to them that year. Just as their crops were starting to come through the ground, the rains started. When the water finally receded, there wasn't a plant left anywhere. They planted again, but more rains beat the crops into the earth. Their potatoes rotted in the mud. They sold a couple of cows and all the pigs and other livestock they had intended to keep, getting very low prices for them because everybody else had to do the same thing. All they harvested that year was a patch of turnips which had somehow weathered the storms.

Then it was Thanksgiving again. Their mother said, "Maybe we'd better forget it this year. We haven't even got a goose left."

On Thanksgiving morning, however, Gordon's father showed up with a jackrabbit and asked his wife to cook it. Grudgingly she started the job, indicating it would take a long time to cook that tough old thing. When it

was finally on the table with some of the turnips that had survived, the children refused to eat. Gordon's mother cried, and then his father did a strange thing. He went up to the attic, got an oil lamp, took it back to the table, and lighted it. He told the children to turn out the electric lights. When there was only the lamp again, they could hardly believe that it had been that dark before. They wondered how they had ever seen anything without the bright lights made possible by electricity.

The food was blessed, and everyone ate. When dinner was over, they all sat quietly. Wrote Gordon:

"In the humble dimness of the old lamp we were beginning to see clearly again. . . .

"It [was] a lovely meal. The jack rabbit tasted like turkey and the turnips were the mildest we could recall. . . .

". . . [Our] home . . . , for all its want, was so rich [to] us."<sup>13</sup>

My brothers and sisters, to express gratitude is gracious and honorable, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live with gratitude ever in our hearts is to touch heaven.

As I close this morning, it is my prayer that in addition to all else for which we are grateful, we may ever reflect our gratitude for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His glorious gospel provides answers to life's greatest questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where do our spirits go when we die? That gospel brings to those who live in darkness the light of divine truth.

He taught us how to pray. He taught us how to live. He taught us how to die. His life is a legacy of love. The sick He healed; the downtrodden He lifted; the sinner He saved.

Ultimately, He stood alone. Some Apostles doubted; one betrayed Him.

The Roman soldiers pierced His side. The angry mob took His life. There yet rings from Golgotha's hill His compassionate words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>14</sup>

Who was this "man of sorrows, . . . acquainted with grief"?<sup>15</sup> "Who is this King of glory,"<sup>16</sup> this Lord of lords? He is our Master. He is our Savior. He is the Son of God. He is the Author of Our Salvation. He beckons, "Follow me."<sup>17</sup> He instructs, "Go, and do thou likewise."<sup>18</sup> He pleads, "Keep my commandments."<sup>19</sup>

Let us follow Him. Let us emulate His example. Let us obey His words. By so doing, we give to Him the divine gift of gratitude.

My sincere, heartfelt prayer is that we may in our individual lives reflect that marvelous virtue of gratitude. May it permeate our very souls, now and evermore. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. John Thompson, "Birthday Party," *Teaching Little Fingers to Play* (1936), 8.
2. Luke 17:11-19.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 250.
4. See Matthew 15:32-38; emphasis added.
5. *The Discourses of Epictetus; with the Encheiridion and Fragments*, trans. George Long (1888), 429.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59:7, 21.
7. Alma 34:38.
8. Cicero, in *A New Dictionary of Quotations on Historical Principles*, sel. H. L. Mencken (1942), 491.
9. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 263.
10. Aldous Huxley, *Themes and Variations* (1954), 66.
11. William H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (1908), 4.
12. William Arthur Ward, in Allen Klein, comp., *Change Your Life!* (2010), 15.
13. Adapted from H. Gordon Green, "The Thanksgiving I Don't Forget," *Reader's Digest*, Nov. 1956, 69-71.
14. Luke 23:34.
15. Isaiah 53:3.
16. Psalm 24:8.
17. Matthew 4:19.
18. Luke 10:37.
19. John 14:15.



**By Elder L. Tom Perry**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Priesthood of Aaron

*The priesthood you bear is a special gift, for the giver is the Lord Himself. Use it, magnify it, and live worthy of it.*

As I spoke in general conference 25 years ago, I introduced a visual aid who stood beside me. It was my eldest grandson. He had recently received the Aaronic Priesthood and been ordained a deacon. I took the opportunity on that occasion to address my remarks to him on the importance of receiving the Aaronic Priesthood.

I said to my grandson:

"I am not overly pleased with worldly conditions that you and other young men are inheriting as you assume your role in moving toward manhood. While those of us who are older have been of an age and position to influence the world, I believe we've greatly failed you in what we have allowed the conditions in the world to become. This places you in a position where many of those with whom you must associate have not been reared with an understanding of or respect for traditional values. Thus, peer pressure becomes much more difficult and extreme.

"We have brought into our homes radios, record players, and television

sets. While each has the potential of providing wholesome entertainment, so much of what has been produced for our listening and watching pleasure is not of the caliber to inspire and encourage young men. In fact, most of what is produced is degrading. The flip of a switch right in your own home has the potential of destroying within you a sense of what is right and what is wrong" ("I Confer the Priesthood of Aaron," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 46).

The more things change, the more they stay the same—except for technology. I'm tempted to ask the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood if they even know what a record player is. For those who don't, it's something we used to go to the family room and play so we could listen to music. Imagine that—we had to go to it instead of carrying it around with us everywhere.

I also taught my grandson Terry four lessons based on the story of Daniel in the Old Testament. I told him to (1) keep his body healthy and clean, (2) develop his mind and become wise, (3) be strong and resist

temptation in a world filled with it, and (4) trust in the Lord, especially when you need His protection.

I closed my counsel to Terry with these words: "These stories in the scriptures will never grow old. They will be just as exciting for you when you are reading them as a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a missionary, a home teacher, an elders quorum president, or whatever the Lord calls on you to do. They will teach you to have faith, courage, love for your fellowmen, confidence, and trust in the Lord" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 48).

I am happy to report that Terry has been faithful to the charge I gave him 25 years ago. He later received the Melchizedek Priesthood, served a faithful mission, currently serves as an elders quorum president, and of course is a father of a beautiful daughter.

A lot has changed in the last quarter of a century. Another thing that has happened is many of my grandchildren have grown up and had their own children. This summer I had the opportunity of standing in a circle of priesthood holders and laying my hands on the head of my eldest great-grandson as his father conferred on him the Aaronic Priesthood. Even though my great-grandson is not present to stand by my side today, I would like to address my remarks to him and all you wonderful young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood.

It is a very special blessing to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. History records the glorious day when the priesthood was restored to the earth, giving men the right to again act as God's agents as they performed the sacred priesthood ordinances. It was on April 5, 1829, that Oliver Cowdery arrived at the home of Joseph Smith in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Oliver



inquired of the Prophet about his work translating an ancient record, the Book of Mormon. Convinced of the divine nature of the work, Oliver agreed to act as scribe in completing the translation. The work of translation progressed rapidly once Oliver committed to act as scribe.

By May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver had already reached 3 Nephi. The history of the resurrected Savior visiting the Western Hemisphere and His teachings about baptism thrilled them. As they read in 3 Nephi, their minds started to wonder about baptism. What manner of baptism was correct, and who had authority to perform this sacred, saving ordinance? They sought an answer to these fundamental doctrinal questions. They resolved to seek an answer by prayer, and they went to a nearby place on the banks of the Susquehanna River. They poured out their hearts, and the heavens were opened to them. An angel appeared, introducing himself as John the Baptist, and he told Joseph and Oliver he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the higher priesthood (see Joseph Smith—History 1:72).

Placing his hands on their heads, he said: “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness” (D&C 13:1).

Later, Oliver recounted the event in these words: “But . . . think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed . . . when we received under his hand the Holy Priesthood” (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote).

After mankind had been waiting for centuries for God’s authority to be restored, the power and glory of the holy Aaronic Priesthood returned to the earth. In section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn why the lesser priesthood is called the Aaronic Priesthood:

“The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his

seed, throughout all their generations.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances. . . .

“The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments” (D&C 107:13–14, 20).

Not only do young men of the Aaronic Priesthood receive the power and authority to be agents of the Lord in carrying out their priesthood responsibilities, but they also receive the keys of the ministering of angels.

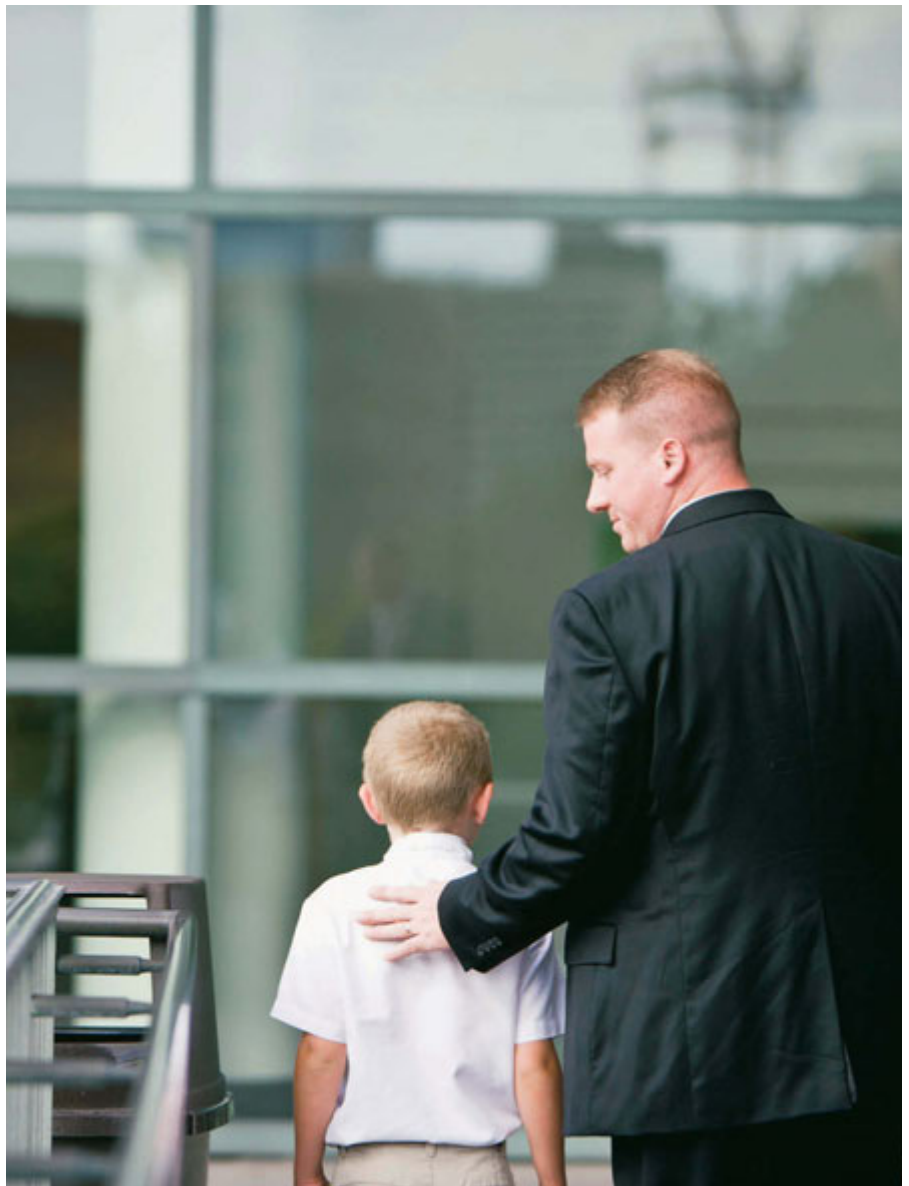
Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, I testify to you that the Lord is bound by solemn covenant to bless your lives according to your faithfulness. If you will heed the voice of warning of the Holy Ghost and will follow His direction, you will be blessed with the ministering of angels. This blessing will add wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory to your

life. This is a sure blessing promised to you by the Lord.

A few months ago I had the opportunity of attending a ward fast and testimony meeting. One who stood to bear his testimony was an Aaronic Priesthood adviser. His testimony provided me with a new appreciation of what it means for an Aaronic Priesthood bearer to hold the keys of the ministering of angels.

This adviser described some of his experiences with the ward Aaronic Priesthood that morning. As he was walking to church he noticed two young deacons with fast-offering envelopes going to the homes of the members. He was impressed with the way they were dressed in their Sunday best and how they approached their assignment with quiet dignity. He then accompanied two priests to administer the sacrament in a residential home for physically and mentally disabled men. This was the first opportunity for these two young men to visit this home, and their adviser noted the respectful and caring way in which they approached their priesthood assignment.

Then the adviser shared a brief experience that deeply touched his heart, because one of the priests reminded him of what it really means to be a true minister of Jesus Christ—literally, a ministering angel. The young priest who was passing the water to the congregation came to a man who appeared to have Down syndrome. The man's condition prevented him from taking the cup from the tray to drink from it. This young priest immediately assessed the situation. He placed his left hand behind the man's head so he would be in a position to drink, and with the right hand he took a cup from the tray and gently and slowly lifted it to the man's lips. An expression of appreciation came to the



man's face—the expression of someone to whom someone else has ministered. This wonderful young priest then continued his assignment to pass the blessed water to the other members of the congregation.

The adviser expressed in his testimony the feelings he had at that tender moment. He said he wept silently with joy, and he knew the Church was in good hands with these young, caring, obedient bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood.

President Ezra Taft Benson once said: “Give me a young man who has kept himself morally clean and has faithfully attended his Church meetings. Give me a young man who has

magnified his priesthood and has earned the Duty to God Award and is an Eagle Scout. Give me a young man who is a seminary graduate and has a burning testimony of the Book of Mormon. Give me such a young man, and I will give you a young man who can perform miracles for the Lord in the mission field and throughout his life” (“To the ‘Youth of the Noble Birthright,’” *Ensign*, May 1986, 45).

Parents of these magnificent young men and women, we charge you with the sacred responsibility of teaching your children the doctrines of the holy priesthood. Your children must learn at an early age of the blessing of having the Lord's eternal priesthood

and what they must do individually to qualify for these blessings.

Bishops, you have the priesthood keys to preside over the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their priesthood duties. Please be certain each young man who is worthy to receive the Aaronic Priesthood understands the obligations and blessings which come to him as a bearer of the priesthood. Help him learn to magnify the priesthood now by giving him important assignments and by helping him serve and minister to others.

Young men, I challenge you to build your lives on a foundation of truth and righteousness. It is the only foundation that will stand the pressures of this life and endure through the eternities. The priesthood you bear is a special gift, for the giver is the Lord Himself. Use it, magnify it, and live worthy of it. I want you to know that I have a special and personal testimony of its power. It has blessed my life in so many ways.

I also challenge you to determine today that you will honor this great blessing and prepare to advance in each office of the Aaronic Priesthood—deacon, teacher, and priest. Prepare yourselves for the great blessing of receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood, which you will need to be worthy to receive before you serve as a full-time missionary. The Lord needs you to prepare yourselves for His service, especially the great responsibility you will have of declaring His gospel to the world. I promise you if you will prepare to receive His holy priesthood, He will literally pour out blessings upon your heads. This witness I leave with you in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus the Christ, amen. ■



**By Elder David A. Bednar**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Receive the Holy Ghost

*These four words—“Receive the Holy Ghost”—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon.*

**M**y message focuses on the importance of striving in our daily lives to actually receive the Holy Ghost. I pray for and invite the Spirit of the Lord to instruct and edify each of us.

### The Gift of the Holy Ghost

In December of 1839, while in Washington, D.C., to seek redress for the wrongs done to the Missouri Saints, Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee wrote to Hyrum Smith: “In our interview with the President [of the United States], he interrogated us wherein we differed in our religion from the other religions of the day. Brother Joseph said we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 97).

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead; He is a personage of spirit and bears witness of all truth. In the scriptures the Holy Ghost is referred to as the Comforter (see John 14:16–27; Moroni 8:26), a teacher (see John 14:26; D&C 50:14), and a revelator (see 2 Nephi 32:5).

Revelations from the Father and the Son are conveyed through the Holy Ghost. He is the messenger for and the witness of the Father and the Son.

The Holy Ghost is manifested to men and women on the earth both as the power and as the gift of the Holy Ghost. The power can come upon a person before baptism; it is the convincing witness that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, sincere investigators can acquire a conviction of the truthfulness of the Savior’s gospel, of the Book of Mormon, of the reality of the Restoration, and of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed only after proper and authorized baptism and by the laying on of hands by those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Lord declared:

“Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“And whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them” (D&C 33:11, 15).



The Apostle Paul made this practice clear to the Ephesians when he asked:

“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

“And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism.

“Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them” (Acts 19:2–6).

Baptism by immersion is “the introductory ordinance of the gospel, and must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete” (Bible Dictionary, “Baptism”). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “baptism is a holy ordinance preparatory to the reception of the Holy Ghost; it is the channel and key by which the Holy Ghost will be administered. The Gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, cannot be received through the medium of any other principle than the principle of righteousness” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 95–96).

The ordinance of confirming a new member of the Church and bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost is both simple and profound. Worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands upon the head of an individual and call him or her by name. Then, by the authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of the Savior, the individual is confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and this important phrase is uttered: “Receive the Holy Ghost.”



The simplicity of this ordinance may cause us to overlook its significance. These four words—“Receive the Holy Ghost”—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). The Holy Ghost does not become operative in our lives merely because hands are placed upon our heads and those four important words are spoken. As we receive this ordinance, each of us accepts a sacred and ongoing responsibility to desire, to seek, to work, and to so live that we indeed “receive the Holy Ghost” and its attendant spiritual gifts. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift

is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33).

What should we do to make this authorized admonition to seek for the companionship of the third member of the Godhead an ongoing reality? Let me suggest that we need to (1) sincerely desire to receive the Holy Ghost, (2) appropriately invite the Holy Ghost into our lives, and (3) faithfully obey God’s commandments.

#### **Sincerely Desire**

We first should desire, yearn for, and seek the companionship of the



Holy Ghost. You and I can learn a great lesson about righteous desires from the faithful disciples of the Master described in the Book of Mormon:

“And the twelve did teach the multitude; and behold, they did cause that the multitude should kneel down upon the face of the earth, and should pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus. . . .

“And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them” (3 Nephi 19:6, 9).

Do we likewise remember to pray earnestly and consistently for that which we should most desire, even the Holy Ghost? Or do we become distracted by the cares of the world and the routine of daily living and take for granted or even neglect this most valuable of all gifts? Receiving the Holy Ghost starts with our sincere and constant desire for His companionship in our lives.

### **Appropriately Invite**

We more readily receive and recognize the Spirit of the Lord as we appropriately invite Him into our lives. We cannot compel, coerce, or command the Holy Ghost. Rather, we should invite Him into our lives with the same gentleness and tenderness by which He entreats us (see D&C 42:14).

Our invitations for the companionship of the Holy Ghost occur in many ways: through the making and keeping of covenants; by praying

sincerely as individuals and families; by searching the scriptures diligently; through strengthening appropriate relationships with family members and friends; by seeking after virtuous thoughts, actions, and language; and by worshipping in our homes, in the holy temple, and at church. Conversely, casualness about or the breaking of covenants and commitments, failing to pray and study the scriptures, and inappropriate thoughts, actions, and language cause the Spirit to withdraw from or to avoid us altogether.

As King Benjamin taught his people, “And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved” (Mosiah 2:36).

### **Faithfully Obey**

Faithfully obeying God’s commandments is essential to receiving the Holy Ghost. We are reminded of this truth each week as we listen to the sacrament prayers and worthily partake of the bread and water. As we pledge our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments, we are promised that we may always have His Spirit

to be with us (see D&C 20:77). Thus, everything the Savior’s gospel teaches us to do and become is intended to bless us with the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Consider the reasons we pray and study the scriptures. Yes, we yearn to communicate in prayer with Heavenly Father in the name of His Son. And yes, we desire to obtain the light and knowledge available in the standard works. But please remember that these holy habits primarily are ways whereby we always remember Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son and are prerequisites to the ongoing companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Reflect on the reasons we worship in the house of the Lord and in our Sabbath meetings. Yes, we serve our kindred dead in the temple—and our families and friends in the wards and branches in which we live. And yes, we enjoy the righteous sociality we find among our brothers and sisters. But we primarily gather together in unity to seek the blessings of and





instruction from the Holy Ghost.

Praying, studying, gathering, worshipping, serving, and obeying are not isolated and independent items on a lengthy gospel checklist of things to do. Rather, each of these righteous practices is an important element in an overarching spiritual quest to fulfill the mandate to receive the Holy Ghost. The commandments from God we obey and the inspired counsel from Church leaders we follow principally focus upon obtaining the companionship of the Spirit. Fundamentally, all gospel teachings and activities are centered on coming unto Christ by receiving the Holy Ghost in our lives.

You and I should strive to become like the stripling warriors described in the Book of Mormon, who did “perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them. . . .

“ . . . And they are strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually” (Alma 57:21; 58:40).

### Testimony

The Lord has declared that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30). This restored Church is true because it is the Savior’s Church; He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And it is a living church because of the workings and gifts of the Holy Ghost. How blessed we are to live at a time when the priesthood is upon the earth and we can receive the Holy Ghost.

Several years after the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, he appeared to President Brigham Young and shared this timeless counsel: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful and [be] sure to keep the Spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach [you what] to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it. They can tell the Spirit of the Lord from all other spirits.

It will whisper peace and joy to their souls, and it will take malice, hatred, envying, strife, and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness, and build up the kingdom of God. Tell the brethren if they will follow the Spirit of the Lord they will go right” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 98).

I pray we will sincerely desire and appropriately invite the Holy Ghost into our daily lives. I also pray each of us will faithfully obey God’s commandments and in reality receive the Holy Ghost. I promise the blessings described by the Prophet Joseph Smith to Brigham Young are applicable to and attainable by every individual who hears or reads this message.

I bear witness of the living reality of the Father and the Son. I testify the Holy Ghost is a revelator, a comforter, and the ultimate teacher from whom we should learn. And I witness that the blessings and gifts of the Spirit operate in the restored, in the true, and in the living Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By **Elder Larry R. Lawrence**  
Of the Seventy

# Courageous Parenting

*What the world really needs is courageous parenting from mothers and fathers who are not afraid to speak up and take a stand.*

I would like to speak today to the parents of teenagers. Your bright and energetic youth are the future of the Church, and for that reason they are a prime target of the adversary. Many of you faithful mothers and fathers are listening to conference today, praying for answers to help you guide your children through these important years. My oldest grandchildren have recently become teens, so the subject is near to my heart. There are no perfect parents and no easy answers, but there are principles of truth that we can rely on.

The Young Men and Young Women Mutual theme for 2010 was taken from the book of Joshua. It begins, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid” (Joshua 1:9). This phrase from the scriptures would be a good theme for parents as well. In these last days, what the world really needs is courageous parenting from mothers and fathers who are not afraid to speak up and take a stand.

Imagine for a moment that your daughter was sitting on the railroad tracks and you heard the train whistle blowing. Would you warn her to get off the tracks? Or would you hesitate, worried that she might think you were being overprotective? If she ignored

your warning, would you quickly move her to a safe place? Of course you would! Your love for your daughter would override all other considerations. You would value her life more than her temporary goodwill.

Challenges and temptations are coming at our teenagers with the speed and power of a freight train. As we are reminded in the family proclamation, parents are responsible for the protection of their children.<sup>1</sup> That means spiritually as well as physically.

In the Book of Mormon, we read about Alma the Younger counseling his wayward son. Corianton had made some serious mistakes while serving a mission among the Zoramites. Alma loved him enough to speak very directly to the problem. He expressed his deep disappointment that his son had been immoral and explained to him the serious consequences of sin.

I am inspired every time I read these courageous words from Alma: “And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good . . . ; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities” (Alma 39:12). This early intervention by his father became a turning point for Corianton. He repented and served

faithfully thereafter (see Alma 42:31; 43:1–2).

Contrast Alma’s example with that of another father from the scriptures, Eli in the Old Testament. Eli served as the high priest in Israel during the childhood of Samuel the prophet. The scriptures explain that the Lord rebuked him severely “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Samuel 3:13). Eli’s sons never did repent, and all of Israel suffered because of their folly. The story of Eli teaches us that parents who love their children cannot afford to be intimidated by them.

Several years ago at general conference, Elder Joe J. Christensen reminded us that “parenting is not a popularity contest.”<sup>2</sup> In the same spirit, Elder Robert D. Hales has observed, “Sometimes we are afraid of our children—afraid to counsel with them for fear of offending them.”<sup>3</sup>

Years ago our 17-year-old son wanted to go on a weekend trip with his friends, who were all good boys. He asked for permission to go. I wanted to say yes, but for some reason I felt uncomfortable about the trip. I shared my feelings with my wife, who was very supportive. “We need to listen to that warning voice,” she said.

Of course, our son was disappointed and asked why we didn’t want him to go. I answered honestly that I didn’t know why. “I just don’t feel good about it,” I explained, “and I love you too much to ignore these feelings inside.” I was quite surprised when he said, “That’s OK, Dad. I understand.”

Young people understand more than we realize because they too have the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are trying to recognize the Spirit when He speaks, and they are watching our example. From us they learn to pay



attention to their promptings—that if they “don’t feel good about something,” it’s best not to pursue it.

It’s so important for husbands and wives to be united when making parenting decisions. If either parent doesn’t feel good about something, then permission should not be granted. If either feels uncomfortable about a movie, a television show, a video game, a party, a dress, a swimsuit, or an Internet activity, have the courage to support each other and say no.

I would like to share with you a letter from a heartbroken mother. Her teenage son gradually lost the Spirit and drifted away from Church activity. She explained how this happened: “All throughout my son’s teenage years, I worried and tried to stop him from playing violent video games. I talked to my husband and showed him articles in the *Ensign* and in the newspaper that cautioned about these games. But my husband felt it was OK. He said that our son wasn’t out using drugs and that I should stop worrying.

There were times that I would hide the controllers, and my husband would give them back. It began to be easier for me to give in . . . than to fight it. I really feel that gaming is just as addictive as drugs. I would do anything to prevent other parents from going through this experience.”

Brothers and sisters, if your spouse doesn’t feel good about something, show respect for those feelings. When you take the easy way out by saying and doing nothing, you may be enabling destructive behavior.

Parents can prevent a lot of heartache by teaching their children to postpone romantic relationships until the time comes when they are ready for marriage. Prematurely pairing off with a boyfriend or girlfriend is dangerous. Becoming a “couple” creates emotional intimacy, which too often leads to physical intimacy. Satan knows this sequence and uses it to his advantage. He will do whatever he can to keep young men from serving missions and to prevent temple marriages.

It is vital that parents have the courage to speak up and intervene before Satan succeeds. President Boyd K. Packer has taught that “when morality is involved, we have both the *right* and the *obligation* to raise a warning voice.”<sup>4</sup>

I have always believed that nothing really good happens late at night and that young people need to know what time they are expected to come home.

There is a great deal of wisdom displayed when parents stay up and wait for their children to return home. Young men and women make far better choices when they know their parents are waiting up to hear about their evening and to kiss them good night.

May I express my personal warning about a practice that is common in many cultures. I am referring to sleepovers, or spending the night at the home of a friend. As a bishop I discovered that too many youth violated the Word of Wisdom or the law of chastity for the first time as part



kneel together as a family. It takes courage to turn off the television and the computer and to guide your family through the pages of the scriptures every day. It takes courage to turn down other invitations on Monday night so that you can reserve that evening for your family. It takes courage and willpower to avoid overscheduling so that your family can be home for dinner.

One of the most effective ways we can influence our sons and daughters is to counsel with them in private interviews. By listening closely, we can discover the desires of their hearts, help them set righteous goals, and also share with them the spiritual impressions that we have received about them. Counseling requires courage.

Try to imagine what the rising generation could become if these five righteous patterns were practiced consistently in every home. Our young people could be like Helaman's army: invincible (see Alma 57:25–26).

Parenting teenagers in the latter days is a very humbling assignment. Satan and his followers are striving to bring this generation down; the Lord is counting on valiant parents to bring them up. Parents, “be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid” (Joshua 1:9). I know that God hears and will answer your prayers. I testify that the Lord supports and blesses courageous parents. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. Joe J. Christensen, “Rearing Children in a Polluted Environment,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 11.
3. Robert D. Hales, “With All the Feeling of a Tender Parent: A Message of Hope to Families,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 90.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “Our Moral Environment,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 67.

of a sleepover. Too often their first exposure to pornography and even their first encounter with the police occurred when they were spending the night away from home.

Peer pressure becomes more powerful when our children are away from our influence and when their defenses are weakened late at night. If you have ever felt uneasy about an overnight activity, don't be afraid to respond to that warning voice inside. Always be prayerful when it comes to protecting your precious children.

Courageous parenting does not always involve saying no. Parents also need courage to say yes to the counsel of modern-day prophets. Our Church leaders have counseled us to establish righteous patterns in our homes. Consider five fundamental practices that have the power to fortify our youth: family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, family dinner together, and regular one-on-one interviews with each child.

It takes courage to gather children from whatever they're doing and



By Elder Per G. Malm  
Of the Seventy

## Rest unto Your Souls

*To find rest unto our souls includes peace of mind and heart, which is the result of learning and following the doctrine of Christ.*

In downtown Gothenburg, Sweden, there is a broad boulevard with beautiful trees on each side. One day I saw a hole in the trunk of one of the huge trees, so I curiously looked inside and saw that the tree was completely hollow. Hollow yes, but empty no! It was filled with all sorts of waste.

I was surprised that the tree could still stand. So I looked up and saw a wide steel belt mounted around the upper part of the trunk. Attached to the belt were several steel wires, and they in turn were fastened and anchored to nearby buildings. From a distance it looked like the other trees; it was only when looking inside that one could detect that it was hollow instead of having a solid, strong trunk. Many years earlier something had started the process of weakening the trunk a little bit here and a little bit there. It did not happen overnight. However, just like a young tree grows bit by bit into a sturdy tree, so we can grow step by step in our capacity to be solid and filled from the inside out, in contrast to the hollow tree.

It is through the healing Atonement of Jesus Christ that we may have the strength to stand tall and strong and to have our souls be filled—with light, understanding, joy, and love. His

invitation is extended to “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33). His promise is:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

Of this rest President Joseph F. Smith said: “To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. We know of the doctrine that it is of God, and we do not ask any questions of anybody about it; they are welcome to their opinions, to their ideas and to their vagaries. The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into ‘God’s rest’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 56).

To find rest unto our souls includes peace of mind and heart, which is

the result of learning and following the doctrine of Christ, and becoming Christ’s extended hands in serving and helping others. Faith in Jesus Christ and following His teachings give us a firm hope, and this hope becomes a solid anchor to our souls. We can become steadfast and immovable. We can have lasting inner peace; we can enter into the rest of the Lord. Only if we turn away from light and truth will a hollow feeling of emptiness, like the tree’s, occupy the innermost chambers of our souls, and we even might attempt to fill that emptiness with things of no lasting value.

In view of our existence as spirit children before we came to earth and immortality in the life hereafter, this earth life is indeed but a very short moment.

It is, however, a day of probation, but it is also a day of opportunities when we choose to follow the invitation to not waste the days of our probation (see 2 Nephi 9:27). The thoughts that we dwell on inside our minds, the feelings we foster inside our hearts, and the actions we choose to take will all have a determining impact on our lives, both here and in the hereafter.

A helpful habit is to lift our vision daily in order to maintain an eternal perspective of the things we plan and do, especially if we detect a tendency to wait until a future tomorrow to do what we know we should pursue while we have our present today.

Along our way we are aided in our choices through the sustaining influence of the Spirit. Now, if we choose to act contrary to the light and understanding that we have, we will experience a bad conscience, which of course does not feel good. But a bad conscience is a blessing in that we immediately are reminded that it is time



joyfully walking home along the road, but most of the eggs were broken when the child arrived home. A friend of the family was there and admonished my grandmother to scold the child for behaving so badly. Instead, Grandmother calmly and wisely said, “No, that will not make the eggs whole again. We will simply use what we can and make some pancakes that we can enjoy together.”

When we learn to handle the small and simple daily things in a wise and inspired way, the result is a positive influence that will solidify harmony in our souls and build up and strengthen those around us. This is so because everything which invites us to do good “is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore [we] may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God” (Moroni 7:16).

Now, the hollow tree that I told you about no longer stands. Some youths put firecrackers into the empty space, which caused the tree to catch on fire. It could not be saved and had to be taken down. Beware of things that will destroy from the inside out, whether big or small! They can have an explosive effect and cause spiritual death.

Let us instead focus on those things that will sustain a lasting peace of mind and heart. Then our “confidence [will] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). The promise to enter into the rest of the Lord, to receive the gift of peace, is far from a temporary, worldly satisfaction. It is indeed a heavenly gift: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). He has the power to heal and to strengthen the soul. He is Jesus Christ, of whom I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

to repent. When we are humble and desire to do what is right, we will be anxious to act promptly to change our ways, while those who are proud and who may seek “to become a law unto [themselves]” (D&C 88:35) will allow Satan to lead “them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever” (2 Nephi 26:22) unless the spirit of repentance enters their hearts. To follow evil influences can never result in a feeling of peace simply because peace is a gift from God and it only comes through

the Spirit of God. “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

In our day-to-day actions, it is often the small and simple things that will have a long-lasting impact (see Alma 37:6–7). What we say, how we act, and how we choose to react will influence not only ourselves but also those around us. We can build up, or we can tear down. A simple and positive example is a story told about my grandmother. She sent one of her young children to buy some eggs. The trusted child was probably





By **Elder Jairo Mazzagardi**  
Of the Seventy

# Avoiding the Trap of Sin

*Stay strong and make good choices that will allow you to eat the fruit of the tree of life.*

On a beautiful sunny morning, I invited my almost eight-year-old granddaughter, Vicki, to walk with me near a lake, which is actually a water reservoir for our beautiful city.

We walked happily, listening to the soft noise of the crystal clear brook running alongside our path. The path was lined with beautiful green trees and sweet-scented flowers. We could hear birds singing.

I asked my blue-eyed, cheerful, and innocent granddaughter how she was preparing for baptism.

She answered with a question: “Grandpa, what is sin?”

I silently prayed for inspiration and tried to respond as simply as I could: “Sin is the intentional disobedience to God’s commandments. It makes Heavenly Father sad, and its results are suffering and sadness.”

Clearly concerned, she asked me, “And how does it get us?”

The question first reveals purity, but it also reveals a concern for how to avoid involvement with sin.

For her to understand more clearly, I used the natural elements we had around us as an illustration.

Continuing down our path, we found by the side of a barbed-wire fence a stone post of considerable size; it was a heavy structure with flowers, bushes, and little trees growing around it. Over time these plants would become bigger than the post itself.

I remembered that a little farther down the path, we would find another post that had already been taken over little by little, almost unnoticed, by the vegetation that grew around it. I imagine that a post would not perceive that, despite its strength, it could be encompassed and destroyed by fragile plants. The post would have thought, “No problem. I am strong and big, and this small plant will do me no harm.”

So as a nearby tree grows bigger, the post does not notice at first; then the post starts enjoying the shade the tree provides. But the tree continues to grow, and it encircles the post with two branches that at first seem fragile but that in time intertwine and surround the post.

Still the post does not realize what is happening.

Soon, in our walk, we found the proverbial post. It had been plucked

out from the ground. My little granddaughter looked impressed and asked me, “Grandpa, is this the tree of sin?”

I then explained to her that it was only a symbol, or an example, of how sin gets us.

I don’t know what the effect of our conversation will be on her, but it made me think of the many faces of sin and of how it sneaks into our lives if we allow it to.

We must be alert because small choices can bring great consequences, just as going to bed early and waking up early have great consequences. Doctrine and Covenants 88:124 teaches us, “Arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.” Those who go to bed early wake up rested, with the body and mind invigorated and blessed by the Lord because of obedience.

What may appear to be of little importance, such as going to bed late, not praying for a day, skipping fasting, or breaking the Sabbath—such little slips—will make us lose sensitivity little by little, allowing us to do worse things.

When I was a teenager, my curfew was 10:00 p.m. Today, that is the time some go out in order to have fun. Yet we know that it is at night that some of the worst things happen. It is during the dark hours that some youth go to places with inappropriate environments, where music and lyrics do not allow them to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Then, under these circumstances, they become easy prey to sin.

Often, becoming prey to sin starts with someone choosing friends whose standards are not consistent with the gospel; and in order to be popular or to be accepted by peers, the person then compromises gospel



principles and laws, going down a path that will bring only pain and sadness to this person and to his or her loved ones.

We must be alert not to let sin grow around us. Forms of sin are everywhere—even, for example, in a computer or cell phone. These technologies are useful and can bring great benefits to us. But their inappropriate use—such as involvement in time-wasting games, programs that would drive you to carnal pleasure, or much worse things such as pornography—is destructive. Pornography destroys character and makes its user sink in the quicksand of filth, out of which the person can escape only with much help.

This terrible monster causes pain and suffering both to the user and to his or her innocent children, spouse, father, and mother. The fruit of carnal pleasure is bitterness and sadness. The fruit of obedience and sacrifice is sweetness and everlasting joy.

Decisions about standards to follow must be made in advance, not when temptation appears. Our parameters must be:

- This I will do because it is right, it comes from the Lord, and it will bring me happiness.
- This I will not do because it will drag me away from truth, from the Lord, and from the eternal happiness He promises to the faithful and obedient.

Since the Father knew we would make wrong choices, He, in His wonderful plan of love, provided a Savior of the world to atone for the sins of all those who repent; who come to Him looking for help, consolation, and forgiveness; and who are willing to take upon them His name, Jesus Christ.

If we sin, we must look for help quickly because alone we cannot escape sin's trap, just as the proverbial fence post cannot free itself. Someone must help us get rid of the deadly embrace.

Parents can help, and the bishop is called by God to help us. It is to him that we must go and open our hearts.

Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43 explains:

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”

A few months after our walk near the lake, my granddaughter was interviewed by her bishop—her father—for baptism. After the interview I asked her how it went. She answered, almost rebuking me, “Grandpa, an interview is confidential. You know that.”

Bishops, I hope you take that response seriously. It seems to me that my granddaughter grew a lot in understanding in a very short time.

Just as the tree I have described brought sadness, pain, suffering, and entrapment, another tree can bring the opposite. It is mentioned in 1 Nephi 8:10–12:

“And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.

“And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

“And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with

exceedingly great joy.”

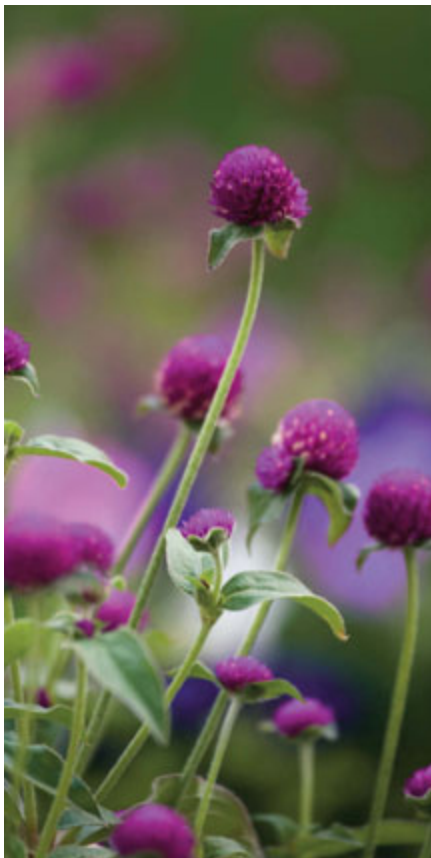
Dear brethren and sisters, stay strong and make good choices that will allow you to eat the fruit of the tree of life. If, for any reason, you have erred or left the path, our hand is extended and we say to you, “Come. There is hope. We love you, and we want to help you be happy.”

Heavenly Father loves us so much that He has given His only Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ loves us so much that He gave His life in atonement for our sins!

What are we willing to give to be clean and receive that joy?

Of these truths I bear my testimony in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Elder Mervyn B. Arnold**  
Of the Seventy

## What Have You Done with My Name?

*Someday each one of us will have to account to our Savior, Jesus Christ, for what we have done with His name.*

When President George Albert Smith was young, his deceased grandfather George A. Smith appeared to him in a dream and asked, “I would like to know what you have done with my name.” President Smith responded, “I have never done anything with your name of which you need be ashamed.”<sup>1</sup>

Each week as we partake of the sacrament, we covenant and promise that we are willing to take upon us the name of Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments. If we are willing to do so, we are promised that most wonderful blessing—that His Spirit will always be with us.<sup>2</sup>

Just as President George Albert Smith had to account to his grandfather for what he had done with his name, someday each one of us will have to account to our Savior, Jesus Christ, for what we have done with His name.

The importance of having a good name is spoken of in Proverbs, where we read: “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold”<sup>3</sup> and “The [name] of the just is blessed.”<sup>4</sup>

As I pondered these scriptures and the importance of having a good name, a flood of memories came into my mind about the good name and legacy my parents left my four brothers, my two sisters, and me. My parents did not have the riches of the world, nor did they have silver or gold. Nine of us lived in a two-bedroom, one-bath home with an enclosed back porch, where my sisters slept. When my parents passed away, my brothers and sisters and I gathered to divide their earthly possessions, which were few in number. My mother left a few dresses, some used furniture, and a few other personal items. My father left some carpenter tools, some old hunting rifles, and little else. The only things of any monetary value were a modest home and a small savings account.

Together we wept openly, giving thanks, knowing they had left us something much more precious than silver or gold. They had given us their love and their time. They had often borne testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel, which we can now read in their precious journals. Not so much by words but more by their example, they had taught us to work hard, to be

honest, and to pay a full tithing. They also engendered a desire to further our education, to serve a mission, and most important, to find an eternal companion, be married in the temple, and endure to the end. Truly they left us the legacy of a good name, for which we shall ever be grateful.

When the beloved prophet Helaman and his wife were blessed with two sons, they named them Lehi and Nephi. Helaman told his sons why they were named after two of their ancestors who had lived upon the earth almost 600 years prior to their births. He said:

“Behold, my sons, . . . I have given unto you the names of our first parents [Lehi and Nephi] . . . ; and this I have done that when you remember your names . . . ye may remember *their works*; and when ye remember *their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.*

“Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, *that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them.*

“. . . *That ye may have that precious gift of eternal life.*”<sup>5</sup>

Brothers and sisters, in 600 years,

how will our names be remembered?

Speaking of how we can take upon us the name of Christ, and thus protect our good name, Moroni taught:

“And again I would exhort you that ye would *come unto Christ*, and lay hold upon *every good gift*, and *touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.* . . .

“Yea, *come unto Christ*, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness.”<sup>6</sup>

In the inspired pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*, we read that freedom of choice is a God-given, eternal principle that carries with it moral responsibilities for the choices made. “While [we] are free to choose for [ourselves], [we] are not free to choose the consequences of [our] actions. When [we] make a choice, [we] will receive the consequences of that choice.”<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after my sweetheart, Devonna, and I were married, she shared with me a story about how she learned in her youth this important doctrine that we are free to choose but that we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions. With the help of my daughter Shelly, I would like to relate Sister Arnold’s experience:

“When I was 15 years old, I often felt that there were too many rules and commandments. I wasn’t sure that a normal, fun-loving teenager could enjoy life with so many restrictions. Furthermore, the many hours spent working on my father’s ranch were seriously dipping into my time with my friends.

“This particular summer, one of my jobs was to ensure that the cows grazing on the mountain pasture did not break through the fence and get into the wheat field. A cow grazing on the growing wheat can bloat, causing suffocation and death. One cow in particular was always trying to stick her head through the fence. One morning, as I was riding my horse along the fence line checking on the cattle, I found that the cow had broken through the fence and gotten into the wheat field. To my dismay, I realized that she had been eating wheat for quite some time because she was already bloated and looked much like a balloon. I thought, ‘You stupid cow! That fence was there to protect you, yet you broke through it and you have eaten so much wheat that your life is in danger.’

“I raced back to the farmhouse to get my dad. However, when we returned, I found her lying dead on the ground. I was saddened by the loss of that cow. We had provided her with a beautiful mountain pasture to graze in and a fence to keep her away from the dangerous wheat, yet she foolishly broke through the fence and caused her own death.

“As I thought about the role of the fence, I realized that it was a protection, just as the commandments and my parents’ rules were a protection. The commandments and rules were for my own good. I realized that obedience to the commandments could save me from physical and spiritual

**When she was 15, Sister Arnold (represented here by her daughter), realized the protecting power of the commandments while watching over grazing livestock.**



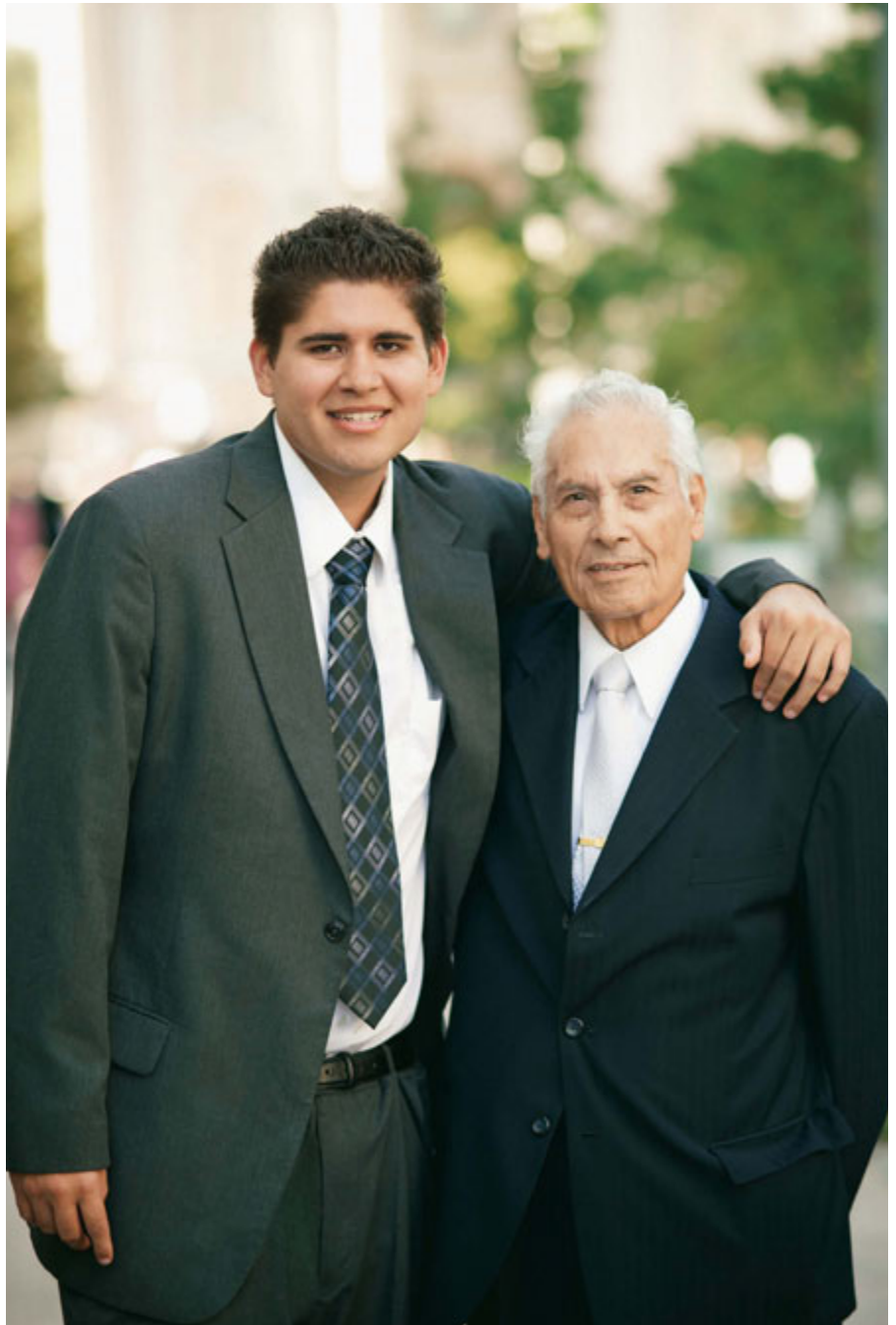
death. That enlightenment was a pivotal point in my life.”

Sister Arnold learned that our kind, wise, and loving Heavenly Father has given us commandments not to restrict us, as the adversary would have us believe, but to bless our lives and to protect our good name and our legacy for future generations—just as they had for Lehi and Nephi. Just like the cow that received the consequences of her choice, each one of us must learn that the grass is *never* greener on the other side of the fence—nor will it ever be, for “wickedness never was happiness.”<sup>8</sup> Each one of us will receive the consequences of our choices when this life is over. The commandments are clear, they are protective—they are not restrictive—and the wonderful blessings of obedience are numberless!

Our Heavenly Father knew that we would all make mistakes. I am so grateful for the Atonement, which allows each of us to repent, to make necessary adjustments so that once again we can be one with our Savior, and to feel the sweet peace of forgiveness.

Our Savior invites us on a daily basis to cleanse our names and return to His presence. His encouragement is full of love and tenderness. Envision with me the Savior’s embrace as I read His words: “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”<sup>9</sup>

Today I would like to extend the same challenge to each one of you that my parents, who will be forever remembered because of their good names, extended to me. Before you act, picture the Savior standing at your side and ask yourself, “Would I think it, would I say it, or would I do it knowing He is there?” For surely He is there. Our beloved President Thomas S. Monson, who I testify is a prophet,



often quotes the following verse of scripture when speaking of our Lord and Savior: “For I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts.”<sup>10</sup>

In that glorious day when we stand before our beloved Savior to report what we have done with His name, may we be able to declare: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”<sup>11</sup> “I have honored Thy name.” I testify Jesus is the Christ.

He did die that we might live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Presidents of the Church Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 2003), 134.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
3. Proverbs 22:1.
4. Proverbs 10:7.
5. Helaman 5:6–8; emphasis added.
6. Moroni 10:30, 32; emphasis added.
7. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2001), 4.
8. Alma 41:10.
9. 3 Nephi 9:13.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
11. 2 Timothy 4:7.



**By Elder M. Russell Ballard**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One

*There is hope for the addicted, and this hope comes through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**B**rothers and sisters, the advent of the fall season here in the Rocky Mountains brings with it the glorious colors of leaves transforming from green to blazing oranges, reds, and yellows. During the fall all nature is in a state of transition, preparing for the cold, austere beauty of winter.

Autumn is a particularly exciting time for the fly fishermen, for this is the time trout are driven by an almost insatiable hunger to feast in order to fortify their bodies against the scarcity of winter food.

The goal of the fly fisherman is to catch trout through skillful deception. The adept fisherman studies trout behavior, weather, the water current, and the types of insects trout eat and when those insects hatch. He will often craft by hand the lures he uses. He knows these artificial insects embedded with tiny hooks need to be a perfect deception because the trout will identify even the slightest flaw and reject the fly.

What a thrill it is to watch a trout break the surface of the water, inhale the fly, and resist until it is finally exhausted and reeled in. The test is the pitting of the fisherman's knowledge

and skill against the noble trout.

The use of artificial lures to fool and catch a fish is an example of the way Lucifer often tempts, deceives, and tries to ensnare us.

Like the fly fisherman who knows that trout are driven by hunger, Lucifer knows our "hunger," or weaknesses, and tempts us with counterfeit lures which, if taken, can cause us to be yanked from the stream of life into his unmerciful influence. And unlike a fly fisherman who catches and releases the fish unharmed back into the water, Lucifer will not voluntarily let go. His goal is to make his victims as miserable as he is.

Lehi said, "And because he [Lucifer] had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind" (2 Nephi 2:18).

I add my voice today to the voices of my Brethren that Lucifer is a clever and cunning intelligence. One of the main methods he uses against us is his ability to lie and deceive to convince us that evil is good and good is evil. Right from the very beginning in the great Council in Heaven, Satan "sought to destroy the agency of man, which I,

the Lord God, had given him. . . .

"And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will" (Moses 4:3–4).

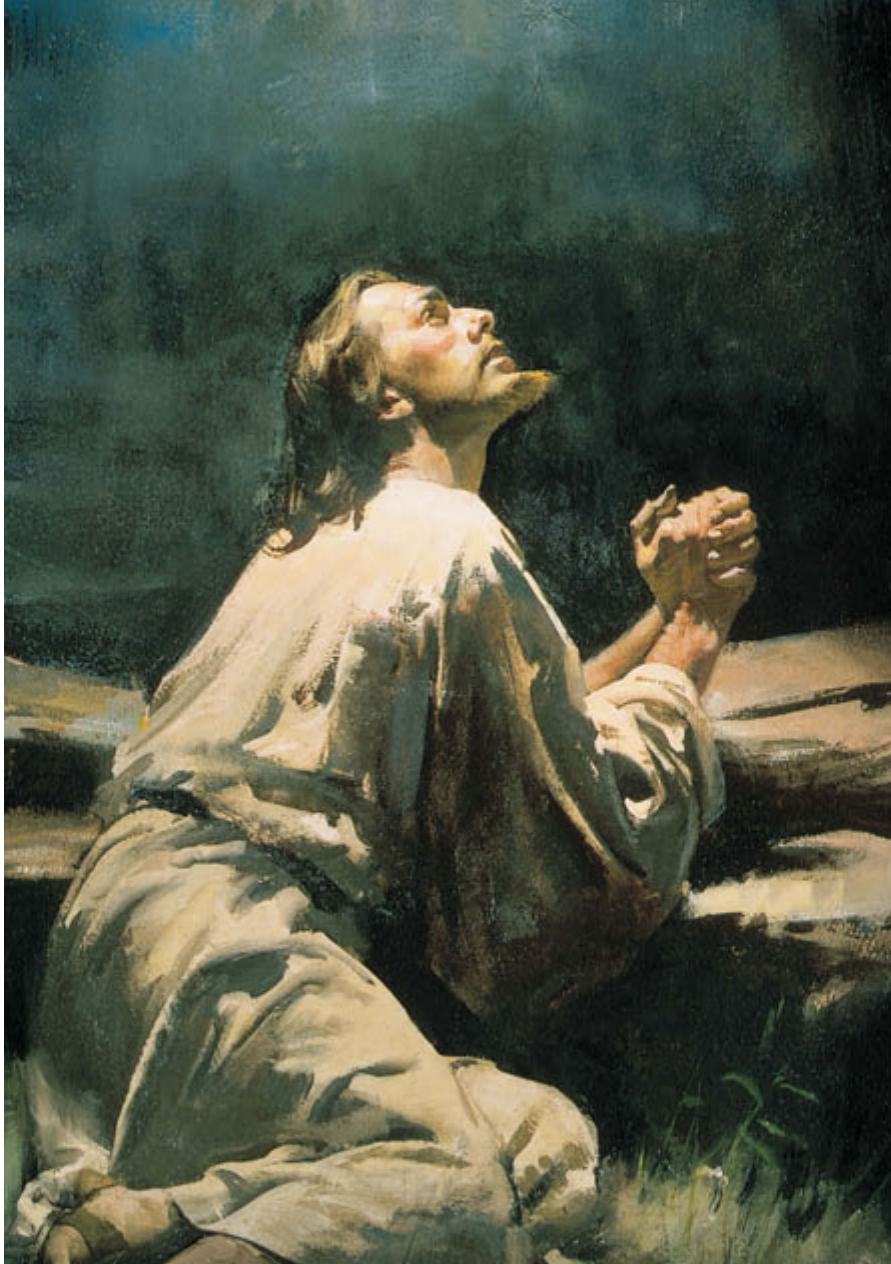
The battle over man's God-given agency continues today. Satan and his minions have their lures all around us, hoping that we will falter and take his flies so he can reel us in with counterfeit means. He uses addiction to steal away agency. According to the dictionary, addiction of any kind means to surrender to something, thus relinquishing agency and becoming dependent on some life-destroying substance or behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers tell us there is a mechanism in our brain called the pleasure center.<sup>2</sup> When activated by certain drugs or behaviors, it overpowers the part of our brain that governs our willpower, judgment, logic, and morality. This leads the addict to abandon what he or she knows is right. And when that happens, the hook is set and Lucifer takes control.

Satan knows how to exploit and ensnare us with artificial substances and behaviors of temporary pleasure. I have observed the impact when one struggles to win back control, to become free from destructive abuse and addiction, and to regain self-esteem and independence.

Some of the most addictive drugs that, if abused, can hijack the brain and take away one's agency include nicotine; opiates—heroin, morphine, and other painkillers; tranquilizers; cocaine; alcohol; marijuana; and methamphetamines.

I am grateful for doctors who are trained to prescribe proper medications to relieve pain and suffering. Unfortunately, too many in our communities today, including some of our own members, become addicted to



and then abuse prescription medications. Lucifer, the father of all lies, knows this and uses his influence to steal away one's agency and capture the abuser with his awful chains (see 2 Nephi 28:22).

Recently I talked to a sister who was in the psychiatric unit of a local hospital. She shared with me her sorrowful journey from complete mental and physical health, a wonderful marriage and family, into mental illness, debilitating health, and the breakup of her family—all of which started with the abuse of prescription painkillers.

Two years prior to our conversation, she hurt her back in a car accident. Her doctor prescribed a medication to relieve the almost unbearable pain. She

thought she needed something more, so she forged prescriptions and finally resorted to buying heroin. This led to her arrest and incarceration. Her obsession with drugs caused her marriage to fail. Her husband divorced her and retained custody of the children. She told me that besides helping to dull her pain, the drugs also provided a short-term but heightened sense of euphoria and well-being. But each dosage of drugs lasted only a few hours, and with each use the duration of relief seemed to lessen. She began to take more and more of the drugs and got caught up in the vicious cycle of addiction. Drugs became her life. The night before I talked with her, she tried to commit suicide. She said she could no longer

deal with the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. She felt trapped with no way out—with no hope.

This sister's problem with prescription and other drug abuse is not unique; it is happening all around us. In some places more people die from prescription drug abuse than die from automobile accidents.<sup>3</sup> Brothers and sisters, stay away from any kind of substance that may trap you. Even one sniff of something or one pill or one drink of alcohol can lead to addiction. A recovering alcoholic told me that just one drink is the difference between addiction and sobriety. Satan knows this. Do not let him hook you with his artificial lures that can quickly turn into addiction.

Now, brothers and sisters, please don't misunderstand what I am saying. I'm not questioning prescription medications for those suffering with treatable illness or great physical pain. They are indeed a blessing. What I am saying is that we need to carefully follow the doses prescribed by doctors. And we need to keep such medications in a safe place where youngsters or anyone else cannot gain access to them.

There is also great concern about some of the pernicious, addictive behaviors like gambling and evil pornography that are so personally destructive and so rampant in our society. Remember, brothers and sisters, any kind of addiction is to surrender to something, thus relinquishing agency and becoming dependent. Thus, video-gaming and texting on cell phones need to be added to the list. Some gamers claim to spend up to 18 hours a day going through level after level of video games, neglecting all other aspects of their lives. Texting on cell phones can become an addiction, causing the important interpersonal human communication



to become lost. Not long ago a bishop told me two of his youth were standing side by side texting one another rather than talking to each other.

Medical research describes addiction as “a disease of the brain.”<sup>4</sup> This is true, but I believe that once Satan has someone in his grasp, it also becomes a disease of the spirit. But no matter what addictive cycle one is caught in, there is always hope. The prophet Lehi taught his sons this eternal truth: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27).

If anyone who is addicted has a desire to overcome, then there is a way to spiritual freedom—a way to escape from bondage—a way that is proven. It begins with prayer—sincere, fervent, and constant communication with the Creator of our spirits and bodies, our Heavenly Father. It is the same principle in breaking a bad habit or repenting from sin of any kind. The formula for having our heart, our body, our mind, and our spirit transformed is found in the scriptures.

The prophet Mormon counseled us: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love . . . ; that ye may become the sons of God; . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:48).

This and many other scriptures

testify to us there is hope for the addicted, and this hope comes through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and by humbling oneself before God, pleading to be freed of the bondage of addiction and offering our whole soul to Him in fervent prayer.

Priesthood leaders can help as those with addictions seek counsel from them. Where necessary, they can refer them to qualified licensed counselors and LDS Family Services. The addiction recovery program, adapted from the original 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, is readily available through LDS Family Services.

To those who are dealing with an addiction personally or within your family, I repeat, fervent prayer is key to gaining the spiritual strength to find peace and overcome an addictive craving. Heavenly Father loves all of His children, so thank Him and express sincere faith in Him. Ask Him for the strength to overcome the addiction you are experiencing. Set aside all pride and turn your life and your heart to Him. Ask to be filled with the power of Christ’s pure love. You may have to do this many times, but I testify to you that your body, mind, and spirit can be transformed, cleansed, and made whole, and you will be freed. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Because our goal is to become more like our Savior and to eventually qualify to live with our Heavenly Father, each of us needs to experience the mighty change in our hearts described by the

prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 5:14). Our love for our Father in Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be reflected in our daily choices and actions. They have promised peace, joy, and happiness to those who keep Their commandments.

Brothers and sisters, may we all be aware of the artificial flies being presented to us by the counterfeit fisher of men, Lucifer. May we have the wisdom and spiritual insight to discern and refuse his many dangerous offerings.

And for those of you who have fallen prey to any kind of addiction, there is hope because God loves all of His children and because the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ makes all things possible.

I have seen the marvelous blessing of recovery that can set one free from the chains of addiction. The Lord is our Shepherd, and we shall not want as we trust in the power of the Atonement. I know the Lord can and will free the addicted from their bondage, for as the Apostle Paul proclaimed, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). I pray, my brothers and sisters, that this may be so with those who may be struggling with this challenge at this time in their lives, and do so humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. As a noun, *addiction* has three senses, one being “a surrender to a master” ([audioenglish.net/dictionary/addiction.htm](http://audioenglish.net/dictionary/addiction.htm)).
2. See National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior—the Science of Addiction* (2010), 18, [drugabuse.gov/scienceofaddiction/sciofaddiction.pdf](http://drugabuse.gov/scienceofaddiction/sciofaddiction.pdf).
3. See Erika Potter, “Drug Deaths Overtake Auto Deaths in Utah,” Dec. 2009, [universe.byu.edu/node/4477](http://universe.byu.edu/node/4477).
4. See National Institute on Drug Abuse, “The Neurobiology of Drug Addiction,” section IV, no. 30, [drugabuse.gov/pubs/teaching/teaching2/teaching5.html](http://drugabuse.gov/pubs/teaching/teaching2/teaching5.html); see also [drugabuse.gov/funding/budget08.html](http://drugabuse.gov/funding/budget08.html).





By President Thomas S. Monson

## Till We Meet Again

*Endure to the end we must, for our goal is eternal life in the presence of our Father in Heaven.*

My brothers and sisters, my heart is full as we bring to a close this wonderful general conference of the Church. We have been spiritually fed as we have listened to the counsel and testimonies of those who have participated in each session. I am certain I speak for all members everywhere when I express deep appreciation for the truths we have been taught. We could echo the words, found in the Book of Mormon, of those who heard the sermon of the great King Benjamin and “cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>1</sup>

I hope that we will take the time to read the conference talks, which will be reprinted in the November issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines, for they are deserving of our careful study.

What a blessing it is that we have been able to meet here, in this magnificent Conference Center, in peace and comfort and safety. We have had unprecedented coverage of the conference, reaching across the continents and the oceans to people everywhere. Though we are far removed from many of you, we feel of your spirit and send our love and appreciation to you.

To our Brethren who have been released at this conference, may I express the heartfelt gratitude of all of us for your many years of devoted service. Countless are those who have been blessed by your contributions to the work of the Lord.

The Tabernacle Choir and other

choirs which participated in the sessions have provided truly heavenly music that has enhanced and beautified all else which has taken place. I thank you for sharing with us your musical talents and abilities.

I love and appreciate my faithful counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf. They are truly men of wisdom and understanding, and their service is invaluable. I could not do all that I am called upon to do without their support and assistance. I love and admire my Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and all in the Quorums of the Seventy and in the Presiding Bishopric. They serve selflessly and effectively. I similarly express my appreciation for the women and men who serve as general auxiliary officers.

How blessed we are to have the



restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It provides answers to questions concerning where we came from, why we are here, and where we will go when we pass from this life. It provides meaning and purpose and hope to our lives.

We live in a troubled world, a world of many challenges. We are here on this earth to deal with our individual challenges to the best of our ability, to learn from them, and to overcome them. Endure to the end we must, for our goal is eternal life in the presence of our Father in Heaven. He loves us and wants nothing more than for us to succeed in this goal. He will help us and bless us as we call upon Him in our prayers, as we study His words, and as we obey His commandments. Therein is found safety; therein is found peace.

May God bless you, my brothers and sisters. I thank you for your prayers in my behalf and in behalf of all of the General Authorities. We are deeply grateful for you and for all that you do to further the kingdom of God on earth.

May heaven's blessings be with you. May your homes be filled with love and courtesy and with the Spirit of the Lord. May you constantly nourish your testimonies of the gospel, that they will be a protection to you against the buffetings of Satan.

Conference is now over. As we return to our homes, may we do so safely. May the spirit we have felt here be and abide with us as we go about those things which occupy us each day. May we show increased kindness toward one another; may we ever be found doing the work of the Lord.

I love you; I pray for you. I bid you farewell till we meet again in six months' time. In the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTE**

1. Mosiah 5:2.



**By Julie B. Beck**

Relief Society General President

## "Daughters in My Kingdom": The History and Work of Relief Society

*Studying the history of Relief Society gives definition and expression to who we are as disciples and followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ.*

This meeting is a gift to all of Heavenly Father's daughters who desire to learn His mind and will and understand their responsibilities in His plan. I have visited many of you this past year, and my heart has been touched as I have looked into your eyes, hugged you, laughed with you, cried with you, and listened to your grief, joy, and triumph. Each of you is precious beyond description and known by our Heavenly Father. As daughters of God, you are preparing for eternal designations, and each of you has a female identity, nature, and responsibility. The success of families, communities, this Church, and the precious plan of salvation is dependent on your faithfulness. Oh, dear sisters, how we love and pray for you!

All of us are in the middle of a very personal mortal experience. Two sisters I have met recently represent how to live faithfully. One sister lives in central Brazil. Her lovely redbrick home, set in a yard of red soil, surrounded by a wall of red blocks, is a haven and refuge from the world outside. Her bright-eyed children know how to sing Primary songs, and on the walls of her home hang pictures of the Savior, temples, and prophets of God cut from the *Liahona* magazine. She and her husband made personal sacrifices to be sealed in the temple so their children could be born in the covenant. She told me that she prays continually for the Lord to give her strength and inspiration sufficient to bring up her children in the light, truth, and strength of the gospel.



Another sister lives alone in a tiny apartment on the 80th floor of a building in Hong Kong. She has some physical difficulties, but she is cheerfully independent. She is the only member of the Church in her family. On a little shelf are her scriptures, her Relief Society manuals, and other Church books. She has created a Spirit-filled haven in her home, and she is a light to everyone in her branch.

### Warnings

We know that many sisters live in oppressive or dangerous circumstances. Some are constantly hungry, and some must summon daily courage to continue in faith despite disappointments and being betrayed by others. Because we are living in the last days of this earth, there are signs of a great struggle everywhere. Myths and misperceptions regarding the strength, purpose, and position of Latter-day Saint women abound. Prevailing myths imply that we are of lower importance than men, that we are generally sweet but uninformed, and that no matter what we do, we will never be enough to be accepted by our Heavenly Father. As the Apostle Peter said, there are “false teachers among you, who privily

shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them.”<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Mormon describes what is happening:

“For behold, at that day shall [Satan] rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

“And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

“And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains.”<sup>2</sup>

In the growing climate of entitlement, excuse, apathy, and enticement, daughters of God who are not watchful, prayerful, and inspired are increasingly at risk of becoming what the scriptures describe as “silly women”<sup>3</sup> who worship a variety of “strange gods.”<sup>4</sup> Sadly, as a result of life’s difficulties and the world’s popular heresies, many sisters believe the myths more than the truth. Their misalignment with God’s plan is demonstrated

in findings that many are not doing essential things such as praying and reading scriptures. The Lord Himself has said that “this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words.”<sup>5</sup>

### Relief Society Was Organized to Be a Defense and a Refuge

In order to watch over, teach, and inspire His daughters in these perilous times, God authorized the Prophet Joseph Smith to organize the women of the Church. This divinely appointed and priesthood-directed organization is called Relief Society.

The purpose of Relief Society is to prepare daughters of God for the blessings of eternal life as they increase in faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help others who are in need.

Relief Society clarifies our work and unifies us as daughters of God in defense of His plan. In this day of mistaken identities, confusion, and distraction, Relief Society is meant to be a compass and guide to teach the truth to faithful women. Righteous women today seek an outpouring of revelation to resist distractions, fight evil and spiritual destruction, and rise

above personal disasters by increasing their faith, strengthening their families, and providing relief to others.

### **History and Work of Relief Society**

Our presidency has prayed, fasted, pondered, and counseled with prophets, seers, and revelators to learn what God would have us do to help His daughters be strong in the face of “the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth.”<sup>6</sup> An answer has come that the sisters of the Church should know and learn from the history of Relief Society. Understanding the history of Relief Society strengthens the foundational identity and worth of faithful women.

In consequence of this, a history of Relief Society for the Church is being completed and will be available for our use next year. In anticipation of this, Relief Society history is receiving increased attention, such as on the visiting teaching page of the *Liahona* and the *Ensign*. The preparation of the history has been an inspired and revelatory experience.

As we have studied the history of Relief Society, we have learned that the Lord’s vision and purpose for Relief Society was not of a sleepy meeting on Sunday. He had in mind something much, much bigger than a women’s club or special-interest entertainment group.

He intended Relief Society to help build His people and prepare them for the blessings of the temple. He established this organization to align His daughters with His work and to enlist their help in building His kingdom and strengthening the homes of Zion.

### **History Teaches Us Who We Are**

We study our history to learn who we are. There is a worldwide hunger among good women to know

their identity, value, and importance. Studying and applying the history of Relief Society gives definition and expression to who we are as disciples and followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our faithfulness and service are signs of our conversion and commitment to remember and follow Him. In July of 1830, at the beginning of the Restoration of His Church, the Lord selected His first female leader of this dispensation, and in a revelation to her, He said, “I speak unto you, Emma Smith, my daughter; for verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom.”<sup>7</sup>

The history of Relief Society teaches us that our Heavenly Father knows His daughters. He loves them, He has given them specific responsibilities, and He has spoken to and guided them during their mortal missions. Additionally, the history of Relief Society elevates and validates the standing of women and demonstrates how they work in companionship with faithful priesthood leaders.

### **History Teaches Us What We Are to Do**

We study our history to learn what we are to do. Through our history we learn how to prepare for the blessings of eternal life. The Relief Society as an organization has always had the responsibility to organize the energies of the sisters in the wards and branches of Zion. Through Relief Society meetings, the ministry of visiting teachers, and their combined service, daughters of God are taught, watched over, and inspired in their responsibility in the Lord’s work and kingdom. Ward and branch Relief Society presidents are set apart to direct that work.

One year ago at this meeting, policies regarding Relief Society meetings were announced. We are

happy to report that in most wards and branches throughout the world, Relief Society presidencies and sisters have embraced those policies and the spirit behind them. It has been a joy to see a rejuvenation of the historical purpose and work of Relief Society. We have also seen an increase in the dignity, identity, and relevance of Relief Society as all meetings of the sisters are now simply named and announced what they are—Relief Society meetings. We are seeing an increase of faith and personal righteousness, a strengthening of families and homes, and more relief being offered by Relief Society sisters through the correct use of Relief Society meetings. All policies regarding Relief Society meetings, visiting teaching, and other Relief Society work have their foundation in the history of Relief Society and are approved by the First Presidency.

It has always been a responsibility of Relief Society to participate in the work of salvation. From the beginning of the restored Church, the sisters have been there first, last, and always in responding to the happenings of everyday life. From Relief Society, sisters go forth to serve in Primary, Young Women, Sunday School, and other efforts, and they are beacons of light and virtue to the rising generation. Personal service builds each individual sister, and the united service of millions of faithful women creates a formidable force of faith in the Lord’s work. History shows that since the beginning of the Restoration, sisters have been at the forefront in sharing the gospel, and they continue this effort as they serve missions, prepare young men and women to serve missions, and invite their friends, neighbors, and family members to share in the blessings of the gospel.



We also learn from history that the Prophet Joseph Smith used Relief Society meetings to instruct the sisters in their preparation for the temple. Today, family history and temple work continue to be some of the primary obligations of Relief Society.

Our understanding of our historical purpose helps women learn to prioritize properly so they will “not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor [their] labor for that which cannot satisfy.”<sup>8</sup> Relief Society has always had the responsibility to do as the Apostle Paul taught—to teach young women to be sober, discreet, and chaste and to teach those who are married to love their husbands, love their children, and strengthen their homes.<sup>9</sup> The history of Relief Society teaches us to take care of the essential things which will save and sanctify us and the things which are necessary to make us personally self-reliant and useful in the Lord’s kingdom.

A constant theme through our history is that sisters who utilize the power of the Holy Ghost operate with the inspiration of the Lord in their lives and receive revelation for their responsibilities.

### **History Unites Faithful Women**

We study our history because it unites faithful women. The history of Relief Society is a Spirit-filled story of strong, faithful, purposeful women. As a part of the Lord’s restored Church, Relief Society can now be found in nearly 170 nations. Everywhere in the world adult women in the Lord’s Church can be given serious and important responsibilities.

Young girls and young women in the Church learn to set goals through the Faith in God and Personal Progress programs, which focus them toward the temple and their future responsibilities. In Relief Society they continue to progress toward the blessings of the temple and eternal life by increasing their faith and personal righteousness, strengthening their families and homes, and seeking out and helping those who are in need. Faithful sisters learn to do this with very little applause or recognition for the work they do. That is because Relief Society thrives on the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said that when we give our alms (or offerings)

in secret, our Father in Heaven, who sees in secret, will reward us openly.<sup>10</sup>

Through the history and work of Relief Society, we are connected to a great worldwide sisterhood of young and old, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, single and married, strong and immovable daughters of God.

### **Knowledge of History Can Help Us Change**

We study our history because it helps us change. Ultimately, the value of history is not so much in its dates, times, and places. It is valuable because it teaches us the principles, purposes, and patterns we are to follow, it helps us know who we are and what we are to do, and it unites us in strengthening the homes of Zion and building the kingdom of God on the earth. Relief Society, when it operates in an inspired way, can replace fear, doubt, and selfishness with faith, hope, and charity. As we move the Lord’s work forward, the history of Relief Society will continue to be written by faithful sisters throughout the world. The Lord is strengthening Relief Society in the living present and preparing a glorious future for His daughters.

I bear you my testimony of the reality of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the gospel, the good news of our identity and purpose, was restored to the earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. 2 Peter 2:1.
2. 2 Nephi 28:20–22.
3. 2 Timothy 3:6.
4. Joshua 24:23.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 63:58.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 25:1.
8. 2 Nephi 9:51.
9. See Titus 2:4–5.
10. See Matthew 6:4; 3 Nephi 13:4.



**By Silvia H. Allred**  
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Steadfast and Immovable

*If we are faithful and endure to the end, we will receive all of Heavenly Father's blessings, even eternal life and exaltation.*

I am grateful to be part of this gathering of faithful women across the world. I have met thousands of you in different countries. Your faithfulness and devotion have strengthened me. Your examples of goodness and commitment to the gospel have inspired me. Your quiet acts of selfless service and your words of testimony and conviction have humbled me.

I will ask each of you tonight the same questions I have asked many of you in our conversations:

1. What helps you be steadfast and immovable as you face the challenges that try your faith?
2. What sustains you through trials and adversity?
3. What helps you endure and become a true disciple of Christ?

Some of the answers you have given me include:

1. Your knowledge that Heavenly Father loves you and cares for you.
2. Your hope that through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, all the

blessings promised to the faithful will be fulfilled.

3. Your knowledge of the plan of redemption.

My message today will expand on these affirmations that have come from your hearts.

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." The first time I remember feeling with all certainty that Heavenly Father knew me, loved me, and cared for me was when I entered the waters of baptism at age 15. Before then, I knew God existed and Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world. I believed in Them and loved Them, but I had never felt Their love and care for me, individually, until that day as I rejoiced in my opportunity to make baptismal covenants.

I realized what a great miracle it had been to have been found and taught by the missionaries, especially with only a handful of missionaries amongst two million people! I knew then that Heavenly Father knew me and loved me in such a special way that He guided the missionaries to my home.

I know now that God is a God of love. This is true because we are His children and He desires that all of us have joy and eternal happiness. His work and His glory are that we might have immortality and eternal life.<sup>1</sup> That is why He provided an eternal plan of happiness for us. Our purpose in life is to gain eternal life and exaltation for ourselves and to help others do the same. He created this earth for us to obtain a physical body and be tested in our faith. He gave us the precious gift of agency, through which we can choose the pathway that leads to everlasting happiness. Heavenly Father's plan of redemption is for you and me. It is for all of His children.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."<sup>2</sup>

"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God. . . . And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

Adam and Eve bore children, and the plan continued to be carried out.

I know that each of us has a vital and essential role as a daughter of God. He has bestowed upon His daughters divine attributes for the purpose of forwarding His work. God has entrusted women with the sacred work of bearing and rearing children. No other work is more important. It is a holy calling. The noblest office for a woman is the sacred work of building eternal families, ideally in partnership with her husband.

I am aware that some of our sisters have not yet received the blessings of marriage or children. I assure you that in due time you will receive all the blessings promised to the faithful. You



must “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, . . . and endure to the end” to have eternal life.<sup>4</sup> In the eternal perspective, the missing blessings “shall be but a small moment.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition, you don’t have to be married to keep the commandments and to nurture families, friends, and neighbors. Your gifts, talents, skills, and spiritual strengths are greatly needed in building up the kingdom. The Lord relies on your willingness to perform these essential duties.

The Lord says:

“I [will] not forget thee.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”<sup>6</sup>

The Lord loves you. He knows your hopes and your disappointments. He will not forget you because your pains and your suffering are continually before Him.

The greatest expression of God’s love for us was His willingness to send His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins, to be our Savior and Redeemer.

In John 3:16 we read, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his

only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The Savior says, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus Christ’s willingness to be the sacrificial lamb was an expression of His love for the Father and of His infinite love for each of us.

Isaiah describes the Savior’s suffering:

“He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

“. . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: . . . and with his stripes we are healed.”<sup>8</sup>

The Lord Himself declared, “I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”<sup>9</sup>

He broke the bands of death and made it possible for all mankind to be resurrected. He gave us the gift of immortality.

Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins, suffered, and died to satisfy the demands of justice that we might not suffer if we repent.

We demonstrate our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior when we

place our faith in Him, repent of our sins, and receive the saving ordinances required to enter God’s presence.

These saving ordinances are symbols of the covenants we make. The covenants of obedience to His laws and commandments bind us to God and strengthen our faith. Our faith and steadfastness in Christ will give us the courage and confidence we need to face life’s challenges, which are part of our mortal experience.

Soon after my husband was called to preside over the Paraguay Asunción Mission in 1992, we attended a branch conference in an isolated community in the Paraguayan Chaco.<sup>10</sup> We traveled four hours on a paved road and then seven more hours on a primitive road. The perils and discomfort of the long trip were soon forgotten when we greeted the happy and welcoming members of Mistolar.

Julio Yegros was the young branch president, and he and his wife, Margarita, were one of the few families who had been sealed in the temple. I asked them to share their experience of their trip to the temple.

At the time, the closest temple was the Buenos Aires Temple in Argentina.



**Auckland, New Zealand**

The trip from Mistolar required 27 hours one way to reach the temple, and they had gone with their two small children. It was in the middle of a very cold winter, but with much sacrifice they made it to the temple and were sealed together as an eternal family. On the way back, the two babies got very sick and died. They buried them along the way and returned home empty-handed. They were sad and lonely but amazingly felt comforted and peaceful. They said of the experience: “Our children were sealed to us in the house of the Lord. We know we will have them back with us for all eternity. This knowledge has given us peace and comfort. We have to remain worthy and faithful to the covenants we made in the temple, and then we will be reunited with them.”

How do we increase our faith and hope to be like that of these faithful members from Paraguay?

How do we strengthen our belief in the affirmations that I have heard over and over again from so many of you, that you believe in God’s love for you, that you trust you will receive His blessings, and that you understand the plan of redemption through the Savior Jesus Christ and your important part in His plan?

I will suggest four things that have helped me: prayer, scripture study, obedience, and service.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is the act of communicating with Heavenly Father. When we pray, we acknowledge our faith in Him and His power to bless us.

In Alma 37:37 we read, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

### **Scripture Study**

A knowledge and understanding of Heavenly Father’s plan helps us know who we are and what we should become.

The Lord commanded, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”<sup>11</sup>

There is a great need for each woman to study the scriptures. As we become more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, we will be able to apply them to our lives and have more power to accomplish God’s purposes. Daily personal prayer and scripture study also invite the influence and power of the Holy Ghost into our lives.

### **Obedience**

The Lord says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”<sup>12</sup> Our faithful obedience will help us develop the attributes of godliness and change our hearts.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we are counseled:

“Cleave unto the covenants which thou hast made. . . .

“Keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive.”<sup>13</sup>

Our commitment to live the gospel

nurtures our faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

### **Service**

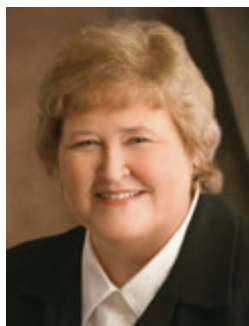
We have multiple opportunities to serve Him. Each sister is asked to seek out and help the poor and the needy among and around us. The “poor and the needy” includes those with spiritual and emotional needs as well. Each one has also been charged to save our dead, which can be done by working on family history or by doing temple work. We have been commanded to share the gospel with others, and there are many ways to participate in missionary work. All of these things are ways we can serve the Lord. Our Heavenly Father expects those who are strong to strengthen the weak, and your own faith will be strengthened as you strengthen and care for His children.

I know Heavenly Father loves each of His children perfectly, individually, and constantly. I know that, as women, we have an essential part in the plan of happiness. Our best effort is all He requires from us, and each of us is needed in building up the kingdom. The Atonement is real. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that if we are faithful and endure to the end, we will receive all of Heavenly Father’s blessings, even eternal life and exaltation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### **NOTES**

1. See Moses 1:39.
2. Genesis 1:27–28.
3. Moses 5:5.
4. 2 Nephi 31:20.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
6. Isaiah 49:15–16.
7. John 15:9.
8. Isaiah 53:4–5.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
10. The semiarid, sparsely populated area of western Paraguay.
11. John 5:39.
12. John 14:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 25:13, 15.





**By Barbara Thompson**  
Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# And of Some Have Compassion, Making a Difference

*The beauty of visiting teaching is seeing lives changed, tears wiped away, testimonies growing, people loved, families strengthened.*

**M**y dear sisters, what a blessing it is to be with you, to feel your strength and love for the Lord. Thank you for the love and compassion you share with others on a daily basis.

In the early days of Relief Society in Nauvoo, we know that sisters traveled from house to house, ministering to one another, determining needs, bringing food, caring for the sick, and showing forth compassion for each woman and her family.<sup>1</sup> This brings to mind the scripture in Jude: “And of some have compassion, making a difference.”<sup>2</sup> As I ponder upon this scripture and its meaning, my thoughts turn to the Savior and the many times the scriptures speak of the love and compassion Christ had for everyone.

In the New Testament we read often that Christ was “moved with compassion”<sup>3</sup> upon the people as He responded to their needs. He had compassion when He saw that they were hungry and He fed them, or when

they were sick and He healed them, or when they were in need of spiritual enrichment and He taught them.

Compassion means to feel love and mercy toward another person. It means to have sympathy and desire to relieve the suffering of others. It means to show kindness and tenderness toward another.

The Savior has asked us to do the things which He has done,<sup>4</sup> to bear one another’s burdens, to comfort those who need comfort, to mourn with those who mourn,<sup>5</sup> to feed the hungry, visit the sick,<sup>6</sup> to succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down,<sup>7</sup> and to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.”<sup>8</sup> To me these words and actions describe visiting teachers—those who minister to others.

Visiting teaching gives women the opportunity to watch over, strengthen, and teach one another. Much like a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood is charged with the responsibility “to

watch over the church always, and [to] be with and strengthen them,”<sup>9</sup> a visiting teacher shows her love by prayerfully considering each woman she is called to serve.

Sister Julie B. Beck has reminded us, “Because we follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, we value this sacred assignment to love, know, serve, understand, teach, and minister in His behalf.”<sup>10</sup>

Today I want to talk about two things:

- The blessings you bring to others as you serve as a visiting teacher.
- And the blessings you receive as you serve others.

## **The Blessings You Bring to Others as You Serve as a Visiting Teacher**

Not long ago I visited with a group of women in Anchorage, Alaska. There were about 12 women in the room, and 6 more joined by speakerphone from cities and towns all over Alaska. Many of these women lived hundreds of miles away from the Church building. These women taught me about visiting teaching.

To make a personal visit to all of the sisters would require an airplane ride, travel by boat, or traveling very long distances by car. Obviously, the time and expense made in-home visits impossible. However, these sisters felt closely connected because they were fervently praying for one another and were seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to know what their sisters needed, even though they weren’t there in person very often. They managed to stay in contact by phone, by Internet, and by mail. They served with love because they had made covenants with the Lord and desired to bless and strengthen their sisters.

Another dedicated pair of visiting teachers in the Democratic Republic



of Congo walked great distances to visit a woman and her baby. These sisters prayerfully prepared a message and wanted to know how they could make a difference in the life of the dear woman they were visiting. The woman was thrilled with their visit. For her their visit was a message from heaven given just to her. As the visiting teachers met in her humble home, the sister, her family, and the visiting teachers were all lifted and blessed. The long walk didn't seem a sacrifice. These visiting teachers had compassion, making a difference for good and blessing the life of this woman.

Long distances, expense, and safety issues make in-person, monthly contacts impossible in some areas of the Church, but through the power of personal revelation, sisters who truly seek to love one another and are watching over and strengthening one another find meaningful ways to accomplish this call from the Lord.

An inspired Relief Society president counsels with her bishop and prayerfully makes visiting teaching assignments to assist him in watching over and caring for each woman in the ward. When we understand this process of counseling and revelation, we better understand our important responsibility to minister and can more confidently rely on the Spirit to guide our efforts.

I am one who has visited several

women each month and then proudly declared with a sigh of relief, "My visiting teaching is done!" Well, the part I report on may be done, but if that is the only reason I do it, what a shame.

The beauty of visiting teaching is not to see 100 percent on the monthly report; the beauty of visiting teaching is seeing lives changed, tears wiped away, testimonies growing, people loved, families strengthened, people cheered, the hungry fed, the sick visited, and those who are mourning comforted. Actually, visiting teaching is never *done* because we watch over and strengthen always.

Another blessing of visiting teaching is to increase in unity and love. The scriptures counsel us on how to achieve this: "And he commanded them that . . . they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."<sup>11</sup>

Many women have reported that the reason they came back into Church activity was because a faithful visiting teacher came month after month and ministered to them, rescuing them, loving them, blessing them.

Sometimes the message will be the most important thing you share on a particular visit. Some women have little spiritual enrichment in their lives except for the message you will bring. The Visiting Teaching Messages in the *Liahona* and *Ensign* are gospel messages which help each woman increase her faith, strengthen her family, and emphasize charitable relief.

At times the most important blessing about your visit will be to just listen. Listening brings comfort, understanding, and healing. Still another time you may need to roll up your sleeves and go to work in the home or help to calm a crying child.

### **The Blessings You Receive as You Serve Others**

The blessings you receive as you serve others are many. I have sometimes said, "Oh, I've got to get my visiting teaching done!" (Those were the times I forgot I was visiting and teaching women. Those were the times I was looking at it as a burden rather than a blessing.) I can honestly say that when I went visiting teaching, I always felt better. I was lifted, loved, and blessed, usually much more than the sister I was visiting. My love increased. My desire to serve increased. And I could see what a beautiful way Heavenly Father has planned for us to watch over and care for one another.

Other blessings of being a visiting teacher are that we get to know and become friends with those we may not have known well otherwise. At times it allows us to be an answer to someone's prayers. Also, personal revelation and spiritual experiences are closely connected with visiting teaching.

I have experienced some of the most humbling, joyful, and spiritual experiences of my life as I have sat in the homes of women in my own ward and around the world. We have taught one another the gospel. We have cried together, laughed together, solved problems together, and I have been lifted and blessed.

One evening near the end of the month, I was preparing to leave town and still hadn't visited one of my sisters. It was later in the evening. I had no appointment. I didn't call. I had no partner. But I decided it was important to visit my friend Julie. Julie's daughter Ashley was born with a brittle-bone disease. Although Ashley was almost six years old, she was very small and unable to do much of anything besides move her arms and speak. She



lay on a sheepskin rug all day, every day. Ashley was a happy, cheerful child, and I loved being around her.

On this particular night when I got to the home, Julie invited me in and Ashley called out that she wanted to show me something. I went in and knelt down on the floor on one side of Ashley, and her mother was on the other side. Ashley said, “Look what I can do!” Then with a little assistance from her mother, Ashley was able to turn on her side and back again. It had taken her almost six years to accomplish this wonderful goal. As we clapped and cheered and laughed and cried together on this special occasion, I thanked Heavenly Father that I had gone visiting teaching and had not missed this great event. Even though that visit was many years ago and sweet Ashley has since passed away, I will be forever grateful that I had that special experience with her.

My own dear mother was a wonderful and dedicated visiting teacher for many years. She was continually thinking of ways she could bless the families she visited. She paid particular attention to the children of the women she visited, hoping to strengthen

families. I can remember one five-year-old running up to my mother at church and declaring, “You are my visiting teacher. I love you!” Being part of the lives of wonderful women and their families was a blessing to my mother.

Not all experiences related to visiting teaching are warm and wonderful. Sometimes it is hard, such as visiting a home where you really aren’t welcome or when it is difficult to meet with a sister with a very busy schedule. It may take longer to build a good relationship with some sisters. But when we truly seek to love, care for, and pray for the sister, the Holy Ghost will help us find a way to watch over and strengthen her.

President Thomas S. Monson is a master at ministering as the Savior did. He is constantly found visiting and helping others. He has said: “We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness. . . . We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”<sup>12</sup>

“And no one can assist in this

work except [she] shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to [her] care.”<sup>13</sup>

The women we visit teach have been entrusted to our care. Let us have love and compassion and thus make a difference in the lives of those who have been entrusted to our care.

Sisters, I love you. I pray that you will feel the love of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ. I testify to you that the Savior lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (1992), 32–33.
2. Jude 1:22.
3. Matthew 9:36; 14:14.
4. See John 13:15.
5. See Mosiah 18:8–9.
6. See Mosiah 4:26.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
10. Julie B. Beck, “Relief Society: A Sacred Work,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 113.
11. Mosiah 18:21.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.



By President Thomas S. Monson

# Charity Never Faileth

*Rather than being judgmental and critical of each other, may we have the pure love of Christ for our fellow travelers in this journey through life.*

Our souls have rejoiced tonight and reached toward heaven. We have been blessed with beautiful music and inspired messages. The Spirit of the Lord is here. I pray for His inspiration to be with me now as I share with you some of my thoughts and feelings.

I begin with a short anecdote which illustrates a point I should like to make.

A young couple, Lisa and John, moved into a new neighborhood. One morning while they were eating breakfast, Lisa looked out the window and watched her next-door neighbor hanging out her wash.

“That laundry’s not clean!” Lisa exclaimed. “Our neighbor doesn’t know how to get clothes clean!”

John looked on but remained silent.

Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, Lisa would make the same comments.

A few weeks later Lisa was surprised to glance out her window and see a nice, clean wash hanging in her neighbor’s yard. She said to her husband, “Look, John—she’s finally learned how to wash correctly! I wonder how she did it.”

John replied, “Well, dear, I have the answer for you. You’ll be interested to know that I got up early this morning and washed our windows!”

Tonight I’d like to share with you a few thoughts concerning how we view each other. Are we looking through a window which needs cleaning? Are we making judgments when we don’t have all the facts? What do we see when we look at others? What judgments do we make about them?

Said the Savior, “Judge not.”<sup>1</sup> He continued, “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”<sup>2</sup> Or, to paraphrase, why beholdest thou what you think is dirty laundry at your neighbor’s house but considerest not the soiled window in your own house?

None of us is perfect. I know of no one who would profess to be so. And yet for some reason, despite our own imperfections, we have a tendency to point out those of others. We make judgments concerning their actions or inactions.

There is really no way we can know the heart, the intentions, or the circumstances of someone who might say or do something we find reason

to criticize. Thus the commandment: “Judge not.”

Forty-seven years ago this general conference, I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. At the time, I had been serving on one of the general priesthood committees of the Church, and so before my name was presented, I sat with my fellow members of that priesthood committee, as was expected of me. My wife, however, had no idea where to go and no one with whom she could sit and, in fact, was unable to find a seat anywhere in the Tabernacle. A dear friend of ours, who was a member of one of the general auxiliary boards and who was sitting in the area designated for the board members, asked Sister Monson to sit with her. This woman knew nothing of my call—which would be announced shortly—but she spotted Sister Monson, recognized her consternation, and graciously offered her a seat. My dear wife was relieved and grateful for this kind gesture. Sitting down, however, she heard loud whispering behind her as one of the board members expressed her annoyance to those around her that one of her fellow board members would have the audacity to invite an “outsider” to sit in this area reserved only for them. There was no excuse for her unkind behavior, regardless of *who* might have been invited to sit there. However, I can only imagine how that woman felt when she learned that the “intruder” was the wife of the newest Apostle.

Not only are we inclined to judge the actions and words of others, but many of us judge appearances: clothing, hairstyles, size. The list could go on and on.

A classic account of judging by appearance was printed in a national



magazine many years ago. It is a true account—one which you may have heard but which bears repeating.

A woman by the name of Mary Bartels had a home directly across the street from the entrance to a hospital clinic. Her family lived on the main floor and rented the upstairs rooms to outpatients at the clinic.

One evening a truly awful-looking old man came to the door asking if there was room for him to stay the night. He was stooped and shriveled, and his face was lopsided from swelling—red and raw. He said he'd been hunting for a room since noon but with no success. "I guess it's my face," he said. "I know it looks terrible, but my doctor says it could possibly improve after more treatments." He indicated he'd be happy to sleep in the rocking chair on the porch. As she talked with him, Mary realized this little old man had an oversized heart crowded into that tiny body. Although her rooms were filled, she told him to wait in the chair and she'd find him a place to sleep.

At bedtime Mary's husband set up a camp cot for the man. When she checked in the morning, the bed

linens were neatly folded and he was out on the porch. He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, he asked if he could return the next time he had a treatment. "I won't put you out a bit," he promised. "I can sleep fine in a chair." Mary assured him he was welcome to come again.

In the several years he went for treatments and stayed in Mary's home, the old man, who was a fisherman by trade, always had gifts of seafood or vegetables from his garden. Other times he sent packages in the mail.

When Mary received these thoughtful gifts, she often thought of a comment her next-door neighbor made after the disfigured, stooped old man had left Mary's home that first morning. "Did you keep that awful-looking man last night? I turned him away. You can lose customers by putting up such people."

Mary knew that maybe they *had* lost customers once or twice, but she thought, "Oh, if only they could have known him, perhaps their illnesses would have been easier to bear."

After the man passed away, Mary was visiting with a friend who had a greenhouse. As she looked at her

friend's flowers, she noticed a beautiful golden chrysanthemum but was puzzled that it was growing in a dented, old, rusty bucket. Her friend explained, "I ran short of pots, and knowing how beautiful this one would be, I thought it wouldn't mind starting in this old pail. It's just for a little while, until I can put it out in the garden."

Mary smiled as she imagined just such a scene in heaven. "Here's an especially beautiful one," God might have said when He came to the soul of the little old man. "He won't mind starting in this small, misshapen body." But that was long ago, and in God's garden how tall this lovely soul must stand!<sup>3</sup>

Appearances can be so deceiving, such a poor measure of a person. Admonished the Savior, "Judge not according to the appearance."<sup>4</sup>

A member of a women's organization once complained when a certain woman was selected to represent the organization. She had never met the woman, but she had seen a photograph of her and didn't like what she saw, considering her to be overweight. She commented, "Of the thousands of women in this organization, surely a better representative



could have been chosen.”

True, the woman who was chosen was not “model slim.” But those who knew her and knew her qualities saw in her far more than was reflected in the photograph. The photograph *did* show that she had a friendly smile and a look of confidence. What the photograph *didn't* show was that she was a loyal and compassionate friend, a woman of intelligence who loved the Lord and who loved and served His children. It didn't show that she volunteered in the community and was a considerate and concerned neighbor. In short, the photograph did not reflect who she really was.

I ask: if attitudes, deeds, and spiritual inclinations were reflected in *physical features*, would the countenance of the woman who complained be as lovely as that of the woman she criticized?

My dear sisters, each of you is unique. You are different from each other in many ways. There are those of you who are married. Some of you stay at home with your children, while others of you work outside your homes. Some of you are empty nesters. There are those of you who are married but do not have children. There are those who are divorced, those who are widowed. Many of you are single women. Some of you

have college degrees; some of you do not. There are those who can afford the latest fashions and those who are lucky to have one appropriate Sunday outfit. Such differences are almost endless. Do these differences tempt us to judge one another?

Mother Teresa, a Catholic nun who worked among the poor in India most of her life, spoke this profound truth: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”<sup>5</sup> The Savior has admonished, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”<sup>6</sup> I ask: *can we love one another, as the Savior has commanded, if we judge each other?* And I answer—with Mother Teresa: no, we cannot.

The Apostle James taught, “If any . . . among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's [or woman's] religion is vain.”<sup>7</sup>

I have always loved your Relief Society motto: “Charity never faileth.”<sup>8</sup> What is charity? The prophet Mormon teaches us that “charity is the pure love of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> In his farewell message to the Lamanites, Moroni declared, “Except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God.”<sup>10</sup>

I consider charity—or “the pure love of Christ”—to be the opposite of criticism and judging. In speaking

of charity, I do not at this moment have in mind the relief of the suffering through the giving of our substance. That, of course, is necessary and proper. Tonight, however, I have in mind the charity that manifests itself when we are tolerant of others and lenient toward their actions, the kind of charity that forgives, the kind of charity that is patient.

I have in mind the charity that impels us to be sympathetic, compassionate, and merciful, not only in times of sickness and affliction and distress but also in times of weakness or error on the part of others.

There is a serious need for the charity that gives attention to those who are unnoticed, hope to those who are discouraged, aid to those who are afflicted. True charity is love in action. The need for charity is everywhere.

Needed is the charity which refuses to find satisfaction in hearing or in repeating the reports of misfortunes that come to others, unless by so doing, the unfortunate one may be benefited. The American educator and politician Horace Mann once said, “To pity distress is but human; to relieve it is godlike.”<sup>11</sup>

Charity is having patience with someone who has let us down. It is resisting the impulse to become offended easily. It is accepting weaknesses and shortcomings. It is accepting people as they truly are. It is looking beyond physical appearances to attributes that will not dim through time. It is resisting the impulse to categorize others.

Charity, that pure love of Christ, is manifest when a group of young women from a singles ward travels hundreds of miles to attend the funeral services for the mother of one of their Relief Society sisters. Charity is shown when devoted visiting teachers return

month after month, year after year to the same uninterested, somewhat critical sister. It is evident when an elderly widow is remembered and taken to ward functions and to Relief Society activities. It is felt when the sister sitting alone in Relief Society receives the invitation, “Come—sit by us.”

In a hundred small ways, all of you wear the mantle of charity. Life is perfect for none of us. Rather than being judgmental and critical of each other, may we have the pure love of Christ for our fellow travelers in this journey through life. May we recognize that each one is doing her best to deal with the challenges which come her way, and may we strive to do *our* best to help out.

Charity has been defined as “the highest, noblest, strongest kind of love,”<sup>12</sup> the “pure love of Christ . . . ; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with [her].”<sup>13</sup>

“Charity never faileth.” May this long-enduring Relief Society motto, this timeless truth, guide you in everything you do. May it permeate your very souls and find expression in all your thoughts and actions.

I express my love to you, my sisters, and pray that heaven’s blessings may ever be yours. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 7:1.
2. Matthew 7:3.
3. Adapted from Mary Bartels, “The Old Fisherman,” *Guideposts*, June 1965, 24–25.
4. John 7:24.
5. Mother Teresa, in R. M. Lala, *A Touch of Greatness: Encounters with the Eminent* (2001), x.
6. John 15:12.
7. James 1:26.
8. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
9. Moroni 7:47.
10. Moroni 10:21.
11. Horace Mann, *Lectures on Education* (1845), 297.
12. Bible Dictionary, “Charity.”
13. Moroni 7:47.

## Conference Story Index

The following is a list of selected experiences from general conference addresses for use in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

Speaker	Story
<b>Elder Jeffrey R. Holland</b>	Jeffrey R. Holland’s parents pay for his mission (6).
<b>Rosemary M. Wixom</b>	Children pray while their mother drives through a blizzard (9).
<b>Elder D. Todd Christofferson</b>	D. Todd Christofferson’s grandfather shears sheep and pays for a mission (16). A business partner divides assets unequally (16).
<b>Elder Robert D. Hales</b>	Robert D. Hales varnishes a floor until he gets himself stuck in a corner (24).
<b>Elder Quentin L. Cook</b>	A bishop helps a man repent of dishonesty (27).
<b>Elder Russell M. Nelson</b>	Russell M. Nelson shares the Book of Mormon with friends (47). A young man joins the Church after exploring mormon.org (47).
<b>Elder Patrick Kearon</b>	Patrick Kearon is stung by a scorpion (50).
<b>Elder Juan A. Uceda</b>	A father gets angry with his daughter during family scripture study (53).
<b>President Henry B. Eyring</b>	Spencer W. Kimball visits Henry B. Eyring’s father in the hospital (59).
<b>President Thomas S. Monson</b>	Clayton M. Christensen refuses to play basketball on Sunday (67).
<b>President Henry B. Eyring</b>	A Relief Society president collects clothing to give to the poor (70).
<b>President Boyd K. Packer</b>	A repentant woman is urged not to look back (74).
<b>Elder Jay E. Jensen</b>	Jay E. Jensen prays and receives a testimony through the Holy Ghost (77).
<b>President Thomas S. Monson</b>	A family learns to give thanks even during hard times (87).
<b>Elder L. Tom Perry</b>	A young priest helps a man with disabilities take the sacrament (91).
<b>Elder Larry R. Lawrence</b>	Parents ask a son to stay home because they have a bad feeling about an activity (98).
<b>Elder Mervyn B. Arnold</b>	A cow dies after eating too much wheat (105).
<b>Elder M. Russell Ballard</b>	A woman begins the descent into addiction through prescription drugs (108).
<b>Silvia H. Allred</b>	Tragedy strikes a family as they return from being sealed in the temple (116).
<b>Barbara Thompson</b>	Barbara Thompson is blessed through visiting teaching Ashley’s mother (119).
<b>President Thomas S. Monson</b>	A couple who run a boarding house allow a disfigured man to stay in their home (122).

# General Auxiliary Presidencies

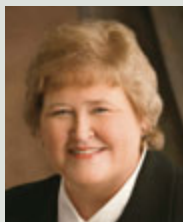
## RELIEF SOCIETY



Silvia H. Allred  
First Counselor



Julie B. Beck  
President



Barbara Thompson  
Second Counselor

## YOUNG WOMEN



Mary N. Cook  
First Counselor



Elaine S. Dalton  
President



Ann M. Dibb  
Second Counselor

## PRIMARY



Jean A. Stevens  
First Counselor



Rosemary M. Wixom  
President



Cheryl A. Esplin  
Second Counselor

## YOUNG MEN



Larry M. Gibson  
First Counselor



David L. Beck  
President



Adrián Ochoa  
Second Counselor

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



David M. McConkie  
First Counselor



Russell T. Osguthorpe  
President



Matthew O. Richardson  
Second Counselor

# Teachings for Our Time

Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays will be devoted to “Teachings for Our Time.” Each lesson can be prepared from one or more talks given in the most recent general conference. Stake and district presidents may choose which talks should be used, or they may assign this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents. Leaders should stress the value of Melchizedek Priesthood brethren and Relief Society sisters studying the same talks on the same Sundays.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study and bring to class the latest general conference issue of the magazine.

### Suggestions for Preparing a Lesson from Talks

Pray that the Holy Spirit will be with you as you study and teach the talk(s). You may be tempted to prepare

the lesson using other materials, but the conference talks are the approved curriculum. Your assignment is to help others learn and live the gospel as taught in the most recent general conference of the Church.

Review the talk(s), looking for principles and doctrines that meet the needs of class members. Also look for stories, scripture references, and statements from the talk(s) that will help you teach these truths.

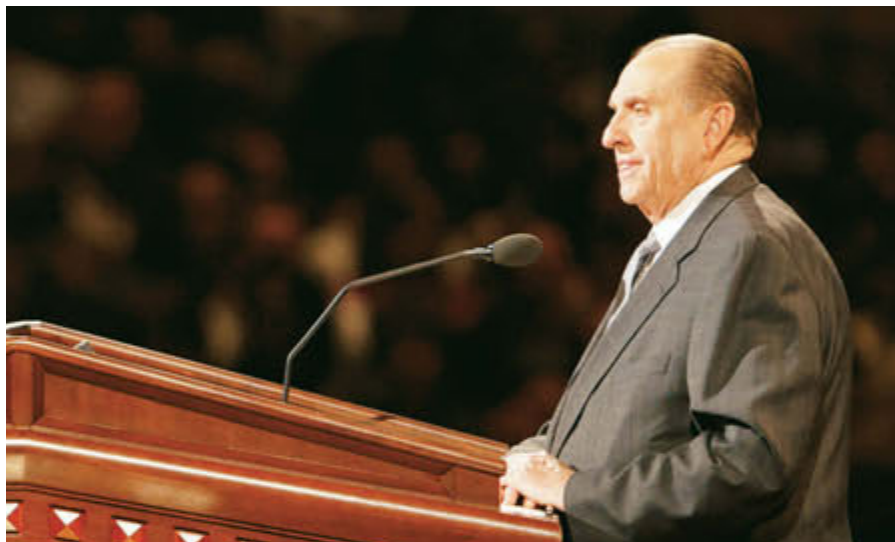
Make an outline of how to teach the principles and doctrines. Your outline should include questions that help class members:

- Look for principles and doctrines in the talk(s).
- Think about their meaning.
- Share understanding, ideas, experiences, and testimonies.
- Apply these principles and doctrines in their lives. ■

MONTHS	FOURTH-SUNDAY LESSON MATERIALS
November 2010–April 2011	Talks published in the November 2010 <i>Liahona</i> and <i>Ensign</i> *
May 2011–October 2011	Talks published in the May 2011 <i>Liahona</i> and <i>Ensign</i> *

\* These talks are available (in many languages) at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).





## President Monson Calls for Missionaries, Announces Five New Temples

President Thomas S. Monson opened the Church's 180th Semiannual General Conference, held on Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3, 2010, by calling for more members to serve missions and announcing five new temples.

President Monson repeated the call for "every worthy, able young man" to prepare to serve; welcomed young women who desire to serve; and expressed the Church's need for "many, many more senior couples" to serve.

"Missionary service is a priesthood duty," he said, "an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much."

President Monson announced that five new temples are planned for construction in Hartford, Connecticut, USA; Indianapolis, Indiana, USA; Lisbon, Portugal; Tijuana, Mexico; and Urdaneta, Philippines.

The new temples bring to 23 the number of temples that are announced or are under construction. Once

completed, these 23 temples will bring the Church's worldwide total to 157.

"We continue to build temples," said President Monson. "... May we continue faithful in attending the temples, which are being built closer and closer to our members" ("As We Meet Together Again," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 4).

The new temples will be the first for the Church in Portugal, Indiana, and Connecticut. The Urdaneta Temple will be the Church's third in the Philippines and the Tijuana Temple will be Mexico's thirteenth temple.

In the six months between April and October general conferences, the Church dedicated four new temples: The Gila Valley Arizona, Vancouver British Columbia, Cebu City Philippines, and Kyiv Ukraine Temples. The Laie Hawaii Temple is scheduled to be rededicated on November 21, 2010, after undergoing extensive renovations. ■

## Worldwide Leadership Training Set

A worldwide leadership training broadcast will be held on November 13, 2010. This broadcast will provide instruction about the new Church handbooks (*Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* and *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*).

The following members are invited to attend the broadcast: General Authorities; Area Seventies; stake, mission, temple, and district presidencies; stake and district clerks; stake and district executive secretaries; high councilors; stake and district Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies; bishoprics; branch presidencies; ward and branch clerks; ward and branch executive secretaries; high priests group leaders and assistants; elders quorum presidencies; ward and branch Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies; ward mission leaders.

The training will be broadcast in more than 30 languages. See local priesthood leaders for more information on broadcast availability. ■

## Members Keep Conference Alive in Everyday Life

You've heard the messages; you've felt the Spirit; you've committed to follow the counsel. But now that general conference is over, how will you make it part of your life for the next six months?

Church members around the world shared what helps them remember and implement the messages of general conference.

### **Include General Conference in Your Day-to-Day Life**

Listen to the addresses while you exercise, drive, do chores, or get ready for the day.

—James, Ontario, Canada

Have family members take turns choosing talks to listen to during breakfast.

—Ashlee, Washington, USA

Watch parts of general conference as a family on Sundays.

—Grant, California, USA

### **Make the Addresses Part of Family Home Evening**

Select messages that you want to review as a family and assign them to family members to teach in upcoming family home evenings.

—Vern and Jennifer, Utah, USA



Read or watch an address and look for goals you can work on as a family.

—Tony, Arizona, USA

### **Use the Addresses for Scripture Study**

Alternate between reading scriptures in the morning and reading a general conference address in the evening.

—Diane, Washington, USA

Read an address to your children each night as a bedtime story.

—Heather, Utah, USA

Look up the scripture references in each address after you have read the address.

—Becky, Utah, USA

Highlight everything that the speakers specifically ask us to do and focus on following their counsel.

—Helen, Australia

### **Study by Topic**

Make a list of topics covered in general conference that matches what you want to improve in your life. Study the topics one at a time as you try to improve before the next general conference.

—Rebecca, Texas, USA

Focus on a particular topic during your scripture study for a few days or in family home evening for a few weeks.

—Francis, Nigeria

### **Share the Messages with Others**

Include general conference quotes on Church bulletins and handouts.

—Todd, West Virginia, USA

Host or join a general conference book club, either online or in person. Each week, study one address and come to the book club prepared to share insights.

—Stephanie, Utah, USA



## Corrections

**O**n the inside cover of the May 2010 conference issue, the third sentence in the caption for *Harmony, Pennsylvania*, by Al Rounds, should have read: “Here the Prophet Joseph translated much of the Book of Mormon.”

In the October 2010 *Ensign* and

*Liahona, Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, the photograph of the Washington D.C. Temple on pages four and five and the photograph of the Portland Oregon Temple on the temple booklet’s back cover were taken by Robert A. Boyd. ■

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# THE FAMILY

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## A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

### THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**W**E, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

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*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

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*“Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. Keep yourselves clean and pure and worthy to represent the Lord. Maintain your health and strength . . . ,”* said President Thomas S. Monson during the opening session of the 180th Semiannual General Conference. *“A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service. And now to you mature brothers and sisters: we need many, many more senior couples. . . . There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from giving full-time service together in the work of the Master.”*