



Sustaining Those Whom the Lord Sustains

Our leaders are chosen by the Lord, and He expects us to sustain them in word and action.

From the Life of George Albert Smith

George Albert Smith was sustained as President of the Church in general conference in October 1945. Near the end of the conference, President Smith expressed gratitude for the sustaining vote of the Saints: “I thank you for the confidence that has been manifested, my brothers and sisters, in hoping that I may succeed, and promising as some of you have, that you will help me to succeed, because I am only a man, one of the humblest among you, but I have been called to this service—and I would not be here if I did not know I had been called—by the authority of our Heavenly Father.”

He then added this request: “I will need the help of every man and every woman and every child, not for my blessing, but for your blessing, and for the blessing of the children of men wherever they may be. That is not *my* responsibility, that is *our* responsibility.”¹

As the teachings in this chapter demonstrate, George Albert Smith understood the heavy burdens carried by the First Presidency, even before he became President of the Church. He taught the Saints that their loyalty and faithfulness can help ease those burdens, and he exemplified this principle during his service in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

In 1946, while conducting a session of general conference, President Smith introduced the sustaining of Church officers by explaining that it is more than just a passive act: “We now have one order of business that is customary with these Conferences; that is,

the presentation of the Authorities of the Church to be sustained by the vote of the people. I hope that you will realize, all of you, that this is a sacred privilege. . . . It will not be just a symbol but it will be an indication that, with the help of the Lord, you will carry your part of the work.”² [See suggestion 1 on page 65.]

Teachings of George Albert Smith

Those who preside over the Church are prepared, chosen, and inspired by the Lord.

This great Church has been presided over by men who have been specially prepared, specially taught, specially equipped for that high honor that has been conferred upon each as he has taken his place. Our Heavenly Father in his wisdom has surrounded these leaders of Israel with others who like themselves have faith and who do not bow to the individual because of his personality or individuality as president of the Church, but who recognize him as the mouthpiece of our Heavenly Father and sustain him and uphold him and pray for him, and love him, in order that they, too, may receive the blessings of our Heavenly Father.

There is no other organization like this in the world. There are no other people [who are] led as this people are led. It is truly said that those who preside are just men. It is through them that our Heavenly Father will perform his work. It is through them that the gospel must be taught. . . . The man who presides over us today is not presiding because of his own native ability. He is not presiding because he is the son of some great potentate, but he is in the position he occupies because our Father in heaven knows the integrity of his soul. Realizing the determination he would have to carry this message to all the nations of the earth, he prepared him for the high calling that has been conferred upon him. He presides as a representative of our Heavenly Father.³

I have been thinking today of the humble but great men who have led this Church from its organization. . . . I have been well acquainted with [many of the] Presidents [of the Church] and believe that they were all men of God. It is inconceivable that our

Heavenly Father would choose any other kind to preside over his Church.⁴

What happened when [Joseph Smith] died? . . . [The Saints] didn't hold a conclave, choose a chairman and pick a new leader. The leader had already been chosen by the Lord. He was the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Brigham Young. . . . The Church as a body in all its sessions sustained him as President. When he died, his counselors did not say they were the President, but the Quorum of the Twelve presided for a long time, and then their senior member was sustained as President of the Church. Perfect order prevailed. . . .

I have traced some of these things in order that there may be no mistake. Joseph Smith did not choose himself to be President of the Church. Neither did any who followed him. . . . The appointment comes from our Heavenly Father through His inspiration, and men receive all the power that comes with an appointment.⁵

How grateful we ought to be to know that this work is not the work of man, but it is the work of the Lord; that this Church, that bears the name of Jesus Christ, is directed by him, and he will permit no man or group of men to destroy it. He will not permit the men who preside over his Church to lead the people into error, but he will sustain them with his almighty power. He will magnify them in the eyes of good and great men and women. He will bless their ministry and it will be fraught with success. Those who oppose and find fault will not find joy in their opposition. Those who criticize and seek to destroy the influence of the leaders of the Church will suffer the result of their wrong-doing.⁶

There is need for us to have thanksgiving in our hearts that we are led by holy men who are inspired by our Father in heaven to teach us day by day.⁷ [See suggestion 2 on pages 65–66.]

**Through His servants, the Lord teaches us
the pathway to happiness and safety.**

From the time of Father Adam until the present the Lord has admonished the people through his servants. He has inspired them to

better living when they have listened to him, and from age to age, as his children have required it, he has sent holy men into the world, to impart instruction tending to happiness, has inspired them to teach the glorious truths that ennoble and enrich mankind.⁸

I know of nothing of great importance that has happened in the world that the Lord through his prophets has not advised the people of beforehand, so that they have not been left in ignorance of what was to develop, but could plan their lives, if they would, to their advantage. . . .

The case of Noah is in point. He was commanded of the Lord to build an ark in which the righteous might be preserved from the flood which was to come. Noah built the ark and preached repentance to his generation for a period of one hundred and twenty years, thus fully warning them. The people, however, were so wicked that they failed to heed the warning. Having their agency, they chose evil rather than righteousness. The rains descended, and the floods came, and only Noah and his family of eight souls were saved. All had been fully warned, but because of their wilfulness and their refusal to repent they were drowned. [See Moses 8:13–30.]⁹

The Lord wants us to be happy. That is why he gave us the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why he conferred the priesthood upon us. He wants us to have joy. That is why he organized this church and set in it the various offices, and all these things are in order. . . . If you will follow the leadership of the Lord, and those whom the Lord sustains, you will not fall away into darkness, lose the light, transgress the laws of God, and forfeit your privileges that he is so anxious that all of us should enjoy.¹⁰

There is only one pathway of safety for me in this day and that is to follow those whom the Lord has appointed to lead. I may have my own ideas and opinions, I may set up my own judgment with reference to things, but I know that when my judgment conflicts with the teachings of those that the Lord has given to us to point the way, I should change my course. If I desire salvation I will follow the leaders that our Heavenly Father has given to us, as long as he sustains them.¹¹ [See suggestion 3 on page 66.]

**Those who are humble and faithful sustain
and defend the Lord's servants.**

I have known thousands of the rank and file of this great Church, men and women of many nations who in humility and faithfulness have accepted the gospel to become identified with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . [They] have prayed for and sustained their leaders . . . , and during my experience in the Church I have yet to know of one person who has been observing the commandments of the Lord who has raised his or her voice against those who were called to preside over this Church. That is really remarkable. . . .

One of the greatest testimonies to me of the divinity of this work is that a multitude of people . . . having the opportunity in Stake Conference . . . to express themselves by voting either to sustain or refuse to sustain those who preside over them (every one exercising free agency) continue to uphold their leaders. Surely the Spirit of the Lord prompts the faithful, humble people to sustain his chosen servants.¹²

When Moses led Israel from Egypt through the wilderness and into the promised land, Amalek attacked Israel at Rephidim. Moses directed Joshua to choose fighting men to protect Israel. Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of a hill overlooking the battlefield. While Moses held the rod of God above his head, Israel prevailed, but when he let his hands down because of weakness, Amalek prevailed. A stone seat was provided and Aaron and Hur held up his hands in order that the blessings of God could flow to Israel that their warriors might prevail and the battle was won. The power of God was upon Moses and remained with him until he had finished his work. [See Exodus 17:8–13.] When he had the support of the people they too were blessed, and so it has been with every servant of the Lord who has presided over Israel. . . .

. . . Just as long as [the President] presides over this Church, it matters not how many years it will be, our Heavenly Father will give him strength, power, wisdom, judgment, and inspiration to talk to Israel as they need to be talked to. We, in following his leadership,



*“We . . . must be like Aaron and Hur of ancient times;
we must uphold [the prophet’s] hands.”*

must be like Aaron and Hur of ancient times; we must uphold his hands, that through him the Lord will let the blessings of heaven descend on us and this people.¹³

I know that these men [the General Authorities] are servants of the Lord, and I know they are seeking to bless mankind. I hope that not any of you . . . will fail to sustain them, not only by your faith and prayers but if they are misrepresented and their attitude misrepresented, that you may be willing and anxious to defend them, if need be, because there is a time coming when they will need your defense. The Adversary has not forgotten them, and one of the evidences to me of the divinity of the calling of these men is that evil men speak evil of them, and good men and good women speak well of them.¹⁴ [See suggestion 4 on page 66.]

**When we criticize our leaders or disregard their counsel,
we allow the adversary to lead us astray.**

There are those among us . . . who have been blinded by the philosophies and foolishness of men. There are those who reject the advice and counsel of the man that God has placed at the head of this Church. . . .

People who haven't very much information suddenly come along with a bright idea, and they suggest "this is the way" or "that is the way," and although it is in conflict with the advice of the Lord some are persuaded to try it. The Lord has given safe advice and appointed the President of his Church to interpret that advice. If we ignore what he advises, as the President of the Church, we may discover that we have made a serious mistake.¹⁵

The Presidency of the Church . . . are the representatives of our Heavenly Father, not only to this people, but they represent him to all the people of the earth. We would do well if we would magnify and honor these men he has placed at our head. They are men with human frailties, they will make mistakes, but if we will be as charitable to the mistakes that they make as we are to our own failures and mistakes, we will see their virtues as we see our own.

I stand here to plead with you, my brethren and sisters, not to permit words of criticism or of unkindness to pass your lips about those whom the Lord has called to lead us. Do not be found in the companionship of those who would belittle them or weaken their influence among the children of men. If you do, I can say to you that you will find yourselves in the power of the adversary. You will be influenced by him to go as far as possible from the pathway of truth, and if you do not repent you may find when it is too late that you have lost the "pearl of great price." Because of your selfishness and your blindness you will have been led away, and your loved ones . . . will be sorrowing on the other side of the veil because of your weakness and your folly.¹⁶ [See suggestion 5 on page 66.]

The adversary is not asleep. He is deceiving many and leading them to sin. . . . There are some who are teaching false doctrine; and some who are seeking to persuade men and women to violate the commandments of our Heavenly Father. . . . If the members of this

Church who find fault with the leaders of the Church and criticise those who are giving their very lives to bless and benefit us would only pause long enough to ask prayerfully, “Which of these teachers is it safe to follow?” they would have no difficulty in finding their right course and would sustain those whom the Lord sustains.¹⁷

**When we sustain our leaders, we commit to follow
their counsel and magnify our own callings.**

It must be a source of strength to the President of this Church to look into the faces of thousands of honest men and women and observe them raise their hand in covenant with our Father in heaven, and sustain him in the office to which he has been called as president of this great Church. The obligation that we make when we raise our hands under such circumstances, is a most sacred one. It does not mean that we will go quietly on our way and be willing that the prophet of the Lord shall direct this work, but it means,—if I understand the obligation I assumed when I raised my hand—that we will stand behind him; we will pray for him; we will defend his good name, and we will strive to carry out his instructions as the Lord shall direct him to offer them to us while he remains in that position.¹⁸

When I think of the burdens that are carried by the President of this Church and his counselors, and realize the responsibilities that are placed upon their shoulders, with all my heart I desire to help them, that I may not be an encumbrance, but that in the position to which I have been called, with you, my brethren and my sisters, we may each take our place and carry our portion of the load and magnify our calling to the honor and glory of God.¹⁹ [See suggestion 4 on page 66.]

God grant that we who have been so bountifully blessed may hold up the hands of the servant of the Lord who presides over us; that we may help him not only by our faith and prayers but by loving kindness as opportunity offers; that we may march under the banner that he shall hold aloft as God continues to sustain him as President of the Church, as the prophet of the Lord in these latter days.²⁰

Let us sustain these men whom God has raised up to preside over us. Let us bless them, not only by our lips, but by assisting in



We sustain our leaders when we “carry our portion of the load and magnify our calling to the honor and glory of God.”

every possible way to carry this burden that rests so heavily upon their shoulders. . . . Pray for and bless them and help them.²¹

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Consider these ideas as you study the chapter or as you prepare to teach. For additional help, see pages v–vii.

1. Read the last paragraph of “From the Life of George Albert Smith” (pages 57–58). What is “your part of the work”? As you study this chapter, consider ways you can show by your words and actions that you sustain the leaders of the Church.
2. Review the first section of teachings (pages 58–59), particularly the second and fourth paragraphs. How is the Lord’s way of choosing leaders different from the world’s way? What

experiences have you had that strengthened your faith that our leaders are chosen by the Lord?

3. Study the section that begins on page 59 and read Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–7. What specific counsel has the Lord given through the current President of the Church? through your stake or district president? through your bishop or branch president? What blessings have you received as you have followed this counsel?
4. Review the section that begins on page 61 and read the first two full paragraphs on page 64. What does it mean to you to sustain Church leaders? How does sustaining Church leaders strengthen our families and homes?
5. Read the last full paragraph on page 63. Why is it dangerous to criticize the leaders of the Church? What would be an appropriate way to respond if someone were to point out a fault in one of your local leaders?

Related Scriptures: Amos 3:7; Ephesians 4:11–14; Hebrews 5:4; Doctrine and Covenants 84:109–10; 107:22; 112:20

Teaching help: One way to encourage diligent learning is to listen carefully when someone asks a question or makes a comment. “Listening is an expression of love. It often requires sacrifice. When we truly listen to others, we often give up what we want to say so they can express themselves” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 66).

Notes

1. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 174–75.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1946, 153–54.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1927, 86–87.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1931, 31.
5. “The Church with Divine Authority,” *Deseret News*, Sept. 28, 1946, Church section, 6, 9.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1934, 29.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 45.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 40.
9. In Conference Report, Apr. 1945, 136.
10. In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, 192.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 33.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1931, 32.
13. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1933, 29.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 75.
16. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 34.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 33.
18. In Conference Report, June 1919, 40.
19. In Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 24.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 68–69.
21. In Conference Report, Oct. 1930, 69.