



Advancing the Work of the Lord

*God directs His work, and He calls upon every member
of the Church to participate in moving it forward.*

From the Life of George Albert Smith

When George Albert Smith was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1903, Church membership stood at just over 300,000. By the end of his service as President of the Church, it had surpassed 1 million. President Smith rejoiced in such growth because it meant that the message of salvation was reaching more and more people. “How happy we should be,” he said to a general conference audience in 1950, “not that we have increased in numbers in the organization that we belong to, but that more of our Father’s children, more of his sons and daughters, have been brought to an understanding of the truth, and are coming into his organization that he prepared to teach us the way of life and lead us along the pathway of eternal happiness.”¹

Between 1903 and President Smith’s death in 1951, the Church faced many challenges to its progress worldwide. Events such as World War I, World War II, and the Great Depression (a widespread economic crisis) severely limited the number of missionaries that could be sent abroad. Despite these difficulties, George Albert Smith remained confident that the Church would continue to grow and realize its destiny to “fill the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35). In 1917, at the height of World War I, he told the Saints: “I do not become discouraged because this truth does not find its way more rapidly. On the contrary I see in the events of today the hand-dealing of an all-wise Father to prepare the way for the spread of the gospel that he has restored to the earth in our day.”²



President Smith believed that advances in technology “can indeed become blessings if we utilize them in righteousness for the dissemination of truth and the furtherance of the work of the Lord among men.”

While the first half of the 20th century saw significant challenges, it also brought new technologies that President Smith believed would further the Lord's work. He was a strong proponent of the aviation industry and saw it as a way to fulfill his travel assignments as a General Authority more efficiently. He also supported the Church's use of radio and television to take the word of the Lord to a broader audience. "We ought to regard these [inventions] as blessings from the Lord," he said. "They greatly enlarge our abilities. They can indeed become blessings if we utilize them in righteousness for the dissemination of truth and the furtherance of the work of the Lord among men. The great challenge facing the world today lies in the use we make of many of these inventions. We can use them to destroy, as we have sometimes done in the past, or we can utilize them to enlighten and bless mankind, as our Heavenly Father would have us do."³

In a general conference address in 1946, President Smith prophesied about the use of such technologies: "It will not be long until, from this pulpit and other places that will be provided, the servants of the Lord will be able to deliver messages to isolated groups who are so far away they cannot be reached. In that way and other ways, the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, the only power of God unto salvation in preparation for the celestial kingdom, will be heard in all parts of the world, and many of you who are here will live to see that day."⁴ [See suggestions 1 and 4 on page 166.]

President Smith understood that the work of the Church is successful because it is the Lord's work, and he taught the Saints that the opportunity to participate in that work is a blessing the Lord offers each member of His Church. During the first general conference after he was set apart as President of the Church, he said: "I realize the great responsibility that is upon my shoulders. I know that without the help of our Heavenly Father, the organization with which we are identified cannot be successful. No man or group of men can make it successful, but if the members of this Church will continue to keep the commandments of God, live their religion, set an example to the world, [and] love their neighbor as themselves, we will go forward, and increasing happiness will flow to us."⁵

Teachings of George Albert Smith

There is ample opportunity for every member to participate in the work of the Lord.

The responsibility for the conduct of this work does not devolve alone upon [the President of the Church], nor upon his counselors, nor upon the quorum of the Apostles; but it devolves also upon every man and woman who has been baptized by the servants of God and become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . We cannot shift the responsibility if we would; our Father has placed it upon our shoulders, and we must round them up and help to carry it off triumphant.⁶

I believe in you, my brethren and sisters. I have confidence in your faith and in your integrity. . . . Each of you also [is] responsible to [the Lord] for the promotion of this work, as are those who preside over you. I cannot say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” I cannot shift the responsibility . . . , but standing in the ranks of the children of our Father I must bear my portion, I must carry that part of the load that the Lord places upon me, and if I shirk, then I realize that I forfeit the blessing that would come to me by obedience to the commandments of our Father.⁷

How anxious we should be to go about doing good. It is a slothful servant who waits until he is commanded in all things. [See D&C 58:26–27.] Our Heavenly Father expects us to magnify our calling, no matter where it may be, no matter how humble our lot in life may be.⁸

It is not necessary that a man should be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, or the Presidency of the Church, in order to obtain the greatest blessings in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. These are but offices required in the Church, and there are many faithful and devoted men worthy to fill these offices whose time and talents are needed throughout the Church. . . . Remember that in the ranks and throughout the Church there is ample opportunity for every man and for every woman to do something for the blessing of their fellows and for the advancement of the work of the Lord.⁹

There is a disposition on the part of some who hold the priesthood and of some who hold positions in the Church, to neglect sacrament meetings and other important duties, and to confine their labors to some special calling. They may be officers and teachers in the Sunday School, and when they perform their Sabbath school labor, consider that sufficient; or, they may be [Young Men or Young Women], or Primary, or genealogical, or welfare workers, or have some other such assignment, and if they discharge their obligations in that regard they consider their whole duty done.

Much as we love and bless all such for the great service they render, we are obliged to remind ourselves that it is required of all of us to live by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of our Father in heaven [see D&C 84:44]. Generally speaking, special assignments do not relieve us of our other obligations; and special meetings do not usually replace or supersede the general meetings of the Church. And quite beyond our special obligations and assignments, we are expected to conduct ourselves day by day as Latter-day Saints in the broadest meaning of the term, so that if we see distress or want, or need of advice and counsel on any occasion, we should forthwith act as servants of the Lord in very deed.

And then there are those who accept nominal membership in the Church but who seem to feel themselves exempt from rendering any kind of service. But sooner or later they find themselves uneasy in their hearts, and doubtful in their thoughts, as we all do when we fail to do what we know to be our full duty. A man who is living in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ is never in doubt about its success; but the man who neglects his duty, who fails to keep his covenants, loses the Spirit of the Lord, and then he begins to wonder what will become of Zion. . . .

Whenever you are doing your full duty, you will know, as you know that you live, that it is our Father's work, and that he will bring it off triumphant.¹⁰

Can you not see how a marvelous work and a wonder has been going forward? Can you not see how we as individuals have only contributed our mite, but the multitude has united, and the word of the Lord has been disseminated among the children of men; not



“Throughout the Church there is ample opportunity for every man and for every woman to do something for the blessing of their fellows and for the advancement of the work of the Lord.”

in a militant way, but in kindness and in love, with a desire to bless all mankind?¹¹ [See suggestion 2 on page 166.]

**Opposition will not stop the progress of the Church,
because it is the work of God, not of man.**

The Church began with only six members. It has grown day by day in spite of the opposition of the adversary. But for the powerful arm of righteousness, but for the watchcare of our Heavenly Father, this Church would have been crushed like a shell long ago. However, the Lord has said that he would safeguard us, and has promised us protection if we will honor him and keep his commandments.¹²

The growth of this Church has not come because it was popular. It has been in spite of the opposition of the wise men of the world; it has been in spite of the opposition of religious teachers, and it has

continued to gather here and there choice spirits who have lived in such a way that they could comprehend the truth.¹³

I have been reading a journal of my grandfather, George A. Smith. . . . I have read his personal experiences, some most painful and others miraculous. In his youth he was sent out to preach the Gospel of our Lord. His was the experience of other men who have been called to the ministry. Those of evil minds made false accusations against him and his associates but he continued faithful and the Lord vindicated them and magnified them in the eyes of the people and gave them a testimony of the divinity of this work that was so positive that no task was too difficult for them to undertake for the dissemination of truth.

Grandfather was among the group sent to England to preach the Gospel in 1839. There the adversary sought to discourage them in every way. Their journals written at the time disclose the fact that they were misrepresented by evil men and attacked by evil spirits, but the Lord preserved them and they performed a great labor. Eight of the Quorum of the Twelve were there at that time. Among those called to go to England were men without means to pay their way but they started from their homes on foot. Due to prolonged illness one of these men was too weak to walk two miles to take a stage coach but was helped that distance by a friend. They had faith in God; they knew that this was his Church and so they went their way and friends not of the Church were raised up to give them money and pay their passage across the ocean, where they delivered their message and many faithful people accepted the truth as a result of their ministry.¹⁴

This is God's work. It is not the work of any man. No man or set of men could have carried it forward and made it successful in the face of the opposition of the world. Many times they [who oppose the work] have felt that the end of the Church had come, and each time by the majesty of his power, the Lord has lifted it up, and it has gone forward from city to city, from village to village, from nation to nation.¹⁵

I know that there are many problems and there will be greater problems as the days come and go, but the same Father in heaven that led the Children of Israel, that saved Daniel and the three

Hebrew children from destruction, the same Heavenly Father that preserved our forebears that came into [the Salt Lake Valley] and established them here, and blessed them and made it possible in the poverty of the people to have this great [Salt Lake] temple and other great temples, . . . that same Father, your Father and mine, is ready to pour out his blessings upon us today.¹⁶

There is no occasion for discouragement. The gospel of Jesus Christ continues to roll forth. We have the promise from our Heavenly Father that it will continue to roll forth. No other dispensation has had the assurance that we have. In the dispensations of the past the Gospel has been taken from the earth. When it was restored in our day it was with the promise that it will never again be taken from the earth or given to another people. So I beg of you who have put your hand to the plow, do not turn back. Serve God and keep his commandments.¹⁷

We need not feel anxious about the progress of Zion, for the good old ship will sail proudly on, and those who are faithful and true will land with her safely in the harbor of God, crowned with glory, immortality and eternal life. I have no fear for these aged men and women that have kept the faith. I have no fear for the boys and girls who are walking in obedience to the commandments of the Lord. . . . But the Latter-day Saints who knowing the will of our Father have not done it, those who hear the teachings of the Lord from time to time and turn their backs upon them, I fear they will not reach the goal unless they turn and repent with all their hearts.¹⁸

His work is progressive, we must be active if we would keep pace with it. Every passing year, since the organization of the Church, has seen it grow stronger than the year before. Today the prospect of continual success is better than ever before. More people are learning the truth about us, and our attitude towards them. The prejudice due to ignorance is being overcome, as the light is disseminated among the masses. . . .

It should be evident to all, and it will be some day, that the opposition to this work would have overcome it long ago if it had not been divine. Let all the world know that it cannot be overthrown, for "it is the power of God unto salvation unto all those who believe." [See Romans 1:16.]¹⁹ [See suggestion 3 on page 166.]

**God adjusts conditions in the world so that His work
can spread throughout the earth.**

[God] has determined that the message that was proclaimed by his servants in ages past, renewed and promulgated by his servants in the latter days, shall be heard, and by the power of his might he will level the conditions of this world and humble the children of men until they are repentant and willing to listen. The truths that we are teaching, that is, the truths that God required us to teach in the world, are finding their way.²⁰

The Lord revealed to one of his prophets that at the coming forth of the Book of Mormon he would commence his work among the nations for the restoration of his people. [See 2 Nephi 30:3–8; 3 Nephi 21:1–14; 29:1–2.] When we realize with what speed the gospel of Jesus Christ may be disseminated now as compared with the year 1830, we can see that the Lord has set his hand and the opportunity to know is offered to men. It will not be long now, until in every part of this world the gospel may be heard through the servants of the Lord proclaiming it in power. Our Heavenly Father will adjust conditions in the world so that the gospel may be preached.²¹

The Savior said this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come! [See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31.] The Lord would not require an impossibility. He is removing the obstructions, and the gospel “shall be preached.”²²

Zion will be redeemed, and the world, which now misunderstands the work of “Mormonism,” will live to know that it is the power of God unto salvation to those who will keep the commandments of our Father. My testimony is that the work grows apace, and that the children of men are receiving “Mormonism” in their souls; that it is the work of our Father. We may be puny and weak of ourselves, but if we will be virtuous and pure in our lives, if we will do what we know to be right, men and women will be raised to continue the work of the Lord, until our Father’s work will have been done in the way that He desires. Those who misunderstand us now will know us better. Those who believe we have selfish

motives will be undeceived, and our brothers and sisters of the world, who desire the truth and wish to know what the Lord wants of them, will be pricked in their hearts and accept the Gospel. Zion will rise and shine, and will become the glory of the whole earth, the Lord God of Israel has so decreed.²³ [See suggestion 4 below.]

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. President Smith prophesied that “the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord . . . will be heard in all parts of the world” (page 159). What technologies are helping to make this possible? In what other ways are new technologies or scientific advancements contributing to the Lord’s work?
2. As you read the first section of teachings (pages 160–62), think about your current calling or assignment in the Church. How does fulfilling your calling allow you to participate in “the advancement of the work of the Lord”? How do your efforts as a home teacher or visiting teacher contribute to this work? In what ways can we all participate beyond our formal callings and assignments?
3. On pages 162–64, President Smith bears his testimony that the Lord directs the work of His Church. What experiences have you had to show you that this is true? How does teaching and living the gospel in our homes demonstrate our faith in the Lord’s work?
4. On pages 159 and 165–66, look for things that President Smith said the Lord will do to prepare the way for His gospel to be preached. What evidence do you see that these things have happened or are happening in the world today?

Related Scriptures: Daniel 2:44–45; Joel 2:27–28; Mosiah 27:13; Doctrine and Covenants 64:33–34; 65:1–6; 107:99–100; Moses 1:39

Teaching help: “There may . . . be times when you do not know the answer to a question. If this happens, simply say that you do not

know. You may want to say that you will try to find the answer. Or you may want to invite learners to find the answer, giving them time in another lesson to report on what they have learned” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, 64).

Notes

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 6.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1917, 37.
3. In *Deseret News*, May 10, 1947, Church section, 10.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1946, 6.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 173.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 1904, 64.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1911, 44.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1934, 30.
9. In Conference Report, June 1919, 42–43.
10. “Our Full Duty,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1946, 141.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1930, 68.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 170–71.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 47.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1931, 32–33.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1931, 122–23.
16. In Conference Report, Oct. 1945, 174.
17. In *Deseret News*, Aug. 20, 1921, Church section, 7.
18. In Conference Report, Oct. 1906, 49.
19. “New Year’s Greeting,” *Millennial Star*, Jan. 1, 1920, 3.
20. In Conference Report, Apr. 1917, 37.
21. In Conference Report, Apr. 1927, 82–83.
22. “New Year’s Greeting,” 2.
23. In Conference Report, Apr. 1906, 58.



*“Honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, Latter-day Saints,
and it will bring to you great joy.”*