

the world, we desperately need *real* learning and teaching in our homes, meetings, and gospel classes. I know that your quest to improve may seem overwhelming at times. Please do not become discouraged with your progress. I think back on my experience hiking with my children. We agreed that every time we stopped to catch our breath, rather than focusing exclusively on how much farther we needed to go, we would immediately turn around and look down the mountain. We would take in the scenery and say to each other, “Look how far we’ve come.” Then we would take a deep breath, quickly turn, face uphill, and start climbing again one step at a time. Brothers and sisters, you *can* parent, lead, and teach after the manner of the workings of the Spirit. I know you can do this. I testify you can do this, and lives will change.

My life has been blessed by *real teachers*, who have taught with the Spirit and especially by the Spirit. I invite you to align the manner of your teaching after the manner of the Holy Ghost in all you do. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that His gospel is restored. Because of this we must be *real* parents, *real* leaders, *real* teachers, and *real* learners. I testify God will help you in your efforts, in the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 50:14.
3. Moroni 6:9.
4. Moroni 10:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:14; *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 82.
5. 2 Nephi 28:30.
6. See David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 16–24; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 60–68.
7. See Luke 12:12.
8. See John 7:17.
9. See 2 Nephi 32:1–5.



By Elder Kazuhiko Yamashita
Of the Seventy

Missionaries Are a Treasure of the Church

I am thankful that missionaries are called by the Lord, that they respond to that call, and that they are serving throughout the world.

One night a number of years ago, a newly called missionary named Elder Swan and his Japanese senior companion came to visit our home. Fortunately I was home, so I invited them in. When I greeted them at the door, my eyes were drawn to the coat that Elder Swan was wearing. Without thinking, I said to him, “That sure is a nice coat you are wearing!” However, it wasn’t a new coat, and it was rather faded. I assumed that the coat was one that a previous missionary had left behind in the missionary apartment.

Elder Swan immediately responded to my words, and it was completely the opposite of what I had been thinking. In halting Japanese he replied, “Yes, this is a good coat. My father wore this coat when he served as a missionary in Japan over 20 years ago.”

His father had served in the Japan Okayama Mission. And when his son was leaving to serve a mission in Japan, he had given his coat to him. This picture shows that coat that two generations of Elder Swans wore in Japan.

I was touched when I heard Elder Swan’s words. And I now understood

why Elder Swan wore his father’s coat while he was proselyting. Elder Swan had embarked on his mission having inherited his father’s love for Japan and its people.

I am sure that some of you have experienced something similar to this. A number of missionaries serving in Japan have told me that their fathers, their mothers, their grandfathers, or their uncles have also served missions in Japan.

I would like to express my sincere love, respect, and feeling of thankfulness for all the returned missionaries who have served around the world. I am sure that those you helped convert have not forgotten you. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . !”¹

I am one of those converts. I was converted at 17, when I was a high school student. The missionary who performed my baptism was an Elder Rupp from Idaho. He was recently released as a stake president in Idaho. I have not seen him since I was newly baptized, but I have exchanged e-mails with him and talked to him by telephone. I have never forgotten him. His



kind, smiling face is etched into my memory. He was so happy when he learned that I was doing well.

When I was 17, I didn't really have a good understanding of the messages that the missionaries had been teaching me. However, I had a special feeling about the missionaries, and I wanted to become like them. And I felt their deep and abiding love.

Let me tell you about the day I was baptized. It was July 15, and it was a very hot day. A woman was also baptized that day. The baptismal font had been handmade by the missionaries, and it wasn't much to look at.

We were confirmed right after we were baptized. First, the sister was confirmed by Elder Lloyd. I sat down with the other members, closed my eyes, and quietly listened. Elder Lloyd confirmed her and then began to pronounce a blessing on her. However, Elder Lloyd stopped talking, so I

opened my eyes and looked at him with an intent gaze.

Even today I can clearly remember that scene. Elder Lloyd's eyes were overflowing with tears. And for the first time in my life, I experienced being enveloped in the Holy Spirit. And through the Holy Spirit I gained a sure knowledge that Elder Lloyd loved us and that God loved us.

Then it was my turn to be confirmed. Again it was Elder Lloyd. He placed his hands on top of my head and confirmed me a member of the Church, bestowed the gift of the Holy Ghost, and then began pronouncing a blessing. And again he stopped talking. However, I now understood what was happening. I truly knew through the Holy Ghost that the missionaries loved me and that God loved me.

I would now like to say a few words to the missionaries currently serving missions around the world.

Your attitudes and the love that you show toward others are very significant messages. Even though I didn't immediately grasp all the doctrines that the missionaries taught me, I felt of their great love, and their many acts of kindness taught me important lessons. Your message is a message of love, a message of hope, and a message of faith. Your attitude and your actions invite the Spirit, and the Spirit enables us to understand the things that are important. What I want to convey to you is that through your love, you are imparting the love of God. You are a treasure of this Church. I am so very thankful to all of you for your sacrifice and your dedication.

I also would like to talk to you future missionaries. In my own family, four of our children have served missions, and our fifth missionary will enter the Provo Missionary Training Center at the end of this month. Next

year our youngest is planning to serve a mission after graduating from high school.

So I speak to my sons and to all of you preparing to serve missions. It is necessary to bring three things with you on your mission:

1. A desire to preach the gospel. The Lord wants you to search for His sheep and seek them out.² People all over the world are waiting for you. Please go quickly to where they are. No one strives harder than missionaries to go to the rescue of others. I am one of those rescued.
2. Develop your testimony. The Lord requires your “heart and a willing mind.”³
3. Love others, just like Elder Swan, who brought his father’s coat and his father’s love for Japan and its people with him on his mission.

And for those of you who don’t know how to prepare to serve a mission, please go and see your bishop. I know that he will help you.

I am thankful that missionaries are called by the Lord, that they respond to that call, and that they are serving throughout the world. Let me say to all of you beloved returned missionaries: I am truly thankful for all your efforts. You are a treasure of this Church. And may you always continue to be missionaries and act like disciples of Christ.

I testify that we are our Father in Heaven’s children, that He loves us, and that He sent His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, so that we can again return to His presence. I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 52:7.
2. Ezekiel 34:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.



By Elder Randall K. Bennett
Of the Seventy

Choose Eternal Life

Your eternal destiny will not be the result of chance but of choice. It is never too late to begin to choose eternal life!

Years ago, while at the beach with my family, I noticed signs and flags warning us of a strong current flowing away from the shore into deep, turbulent water. Invisible to my untrained eyes but easily detected by lifeguards on a nearby watchtower, the powerful current posed a danger to all who left the safety of the shore and entered the water. I remember rationalizing, “I’m a strong swimmer. Swimming will be great exercise. I’ll be safe in the shallow water.”

Ignoring the warnings and feeling confident in my own judgment, I entered the water to enjoy a “refreshing” swim. After a few minutes I looked up to locate my family on the nearby beach, but the beach was no longer nearby! The deceptive current I had been warned of had captured me and was quickly pulling me away from my family.

Confidently at first and then desperately, I tried to swim toward shore, but the unforgiving current dragged me farther and farther into deeper, rougher water. I became exhausted and began choking on inhaled water. Drowning became a real possibility. My energy gone, I frantically and finally called out for help.

Miraculously, it seemed, a lifeguard was immediately at my side. I wasn’t

aware that he had watched me go into the water. He knew the current would capture me, and he knew where it would take me. Avoiding the current, he swam around and just beyond where I was struggling; then he patiently waited for me to call for help. Too weak to swim to shore alone, I was and still am grateful for his rescue. Without his help I never could have made it back to my family.

That day I made a poor choice that produced potentially serious consequences for me and for my family. As we now consider together the gift of choice, I pray that the Holy Ghost will help each of us individually evaluate the choices we are making.

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has taught: “I can’t stress too strongly that decisions determine destiny. You can’t make eternal decisions without eternal consequences.”¹

Each of you—as we have been taught this conference—is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents. You do have a divine nature and destiny.² During your premortal life you learned to love truth. You made correct eternal choices. You knew that here in mortality, there would be afflictions and adversity, sorrow and suffering, tests and trials to help you