

Four Talks, Four Lives Changed

Every April and October, millions of Latter-day Saints listen to the servants of the Lord. Here, four members of the Church share how general conference has influenced their lives over the years.

Good Things Do Come

Shortly after my husband received his master's degree, he considered returning to school for a Ph.D. This prospect daunted us since earning his master's degree had been so difficult. We had two small children and longed to have a good job and maybe even a house.

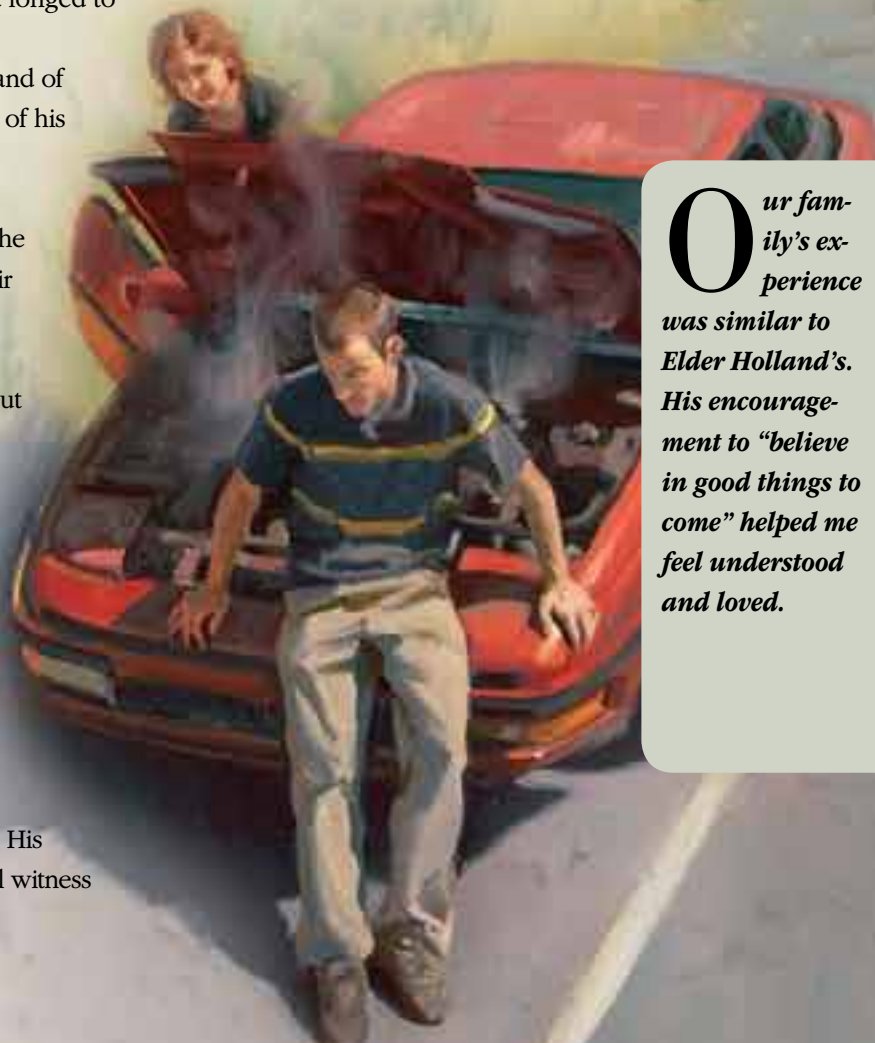
That October conference, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared some of his experiences related to moving his young family to Connecticut for graduate school. We had also moved to Connecticut for graduate school. Then he described how he and his family had fit all of their possessions into their little car—we had done the same. He explained that when the trip began, his car had overheated and broken down not once but twice! Our vehicle also broke down twice.

Finally, he described a more recent experience of driving a reliable car by the spot where his car had broken down 30 years earlier. In his mind's eye, he saw himself as a young father and said these words: "Don't give up, boy. Don't you quit. . . . There is help and happiness ahead—a lot of it. . . . You keep your chin up. It will be all right in the end. Trust God and believe in good things to come."¹ Elder Holland's experience helped me feel understood and loved. His example gave me the courage to seek the spiritual witness

that more education for my husband was the will of the Lord for our family. Five years and two babies later, my husband finished his dissertation. School was definitely challenging, but we were happy. We had followed the Lord's will, and He had blessed us physically, spiritually, and financially.

Since that conference, I have often thought of Elder Holland's talk. I have learned that as I strive to trust God through obeying the counsel of His prophets and apostles, good things really *do* come.

Melinda McLaughlin, Maryland, USA



Our family's experience was similar to Elder Holland's. His encouragement to "believe in good things to come" helped me feel understood and loved.

I Came to Appreciate Grandma

As a child, I enjoyed writing to my grandmother. She lived across the country, so I rarely saw her more than once a year. But as a teenager, I gradually became too busy to write, and our relationship slowly faded. When Grandma would come to visit for a few days, I would occasionally ask her a question or make a comment, but our conversations were seldom genuine or heartfelt. By the time I turned 16, I barely knew her, and I didn't know how to talk to her.

On the last day of one of her visits, I was alone in the kitchen preparing dinner when she came in and sat down. I greeted her, but afterward I found myself at a loss for words. I could tell that she wanted to talk to me and had probably been seeking an opportunity for some time, but how was I supposed to strike up a conversation with a 75-year-old woman with whom I thought I had nothing in common?

I commented on what I was cooking, but that subject didn't last long. Finally, I asked Grandma about what her life was like at my age. She told me stories about work and social activities, then talked about meeting my grandfather and falling in love. I realized that her life and desires as a teenager weren't that different from my own.

A few months later, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke about grandparents in general conference. In his talk, "The Golden Years," he spoke of the wisdom and guidance older members of the Church can provide. His theme made me reflect on my relationship with my grandmother, and I realized I was missing out on a valuable friendship.

I decided to write to Grandma again. I still wasn't quite sure what to say, so I just wrote about work, friends, family, and what I was doing. She responded to each of my letters and told me about other relatives, her garden, and her day-to-day activities. The next time we were together, talking to her was easy.

I'm grateful for the conference talk that came at a time when I was ready and willing to get to know my grandmother again. Through President Packer's words, I realized that I had overlooked the "priceless resource of experience,



MAKE CONFERENCE A PRIORITY

"Decide now to make general conference a priority in your life. Decide to listen carefully and follow the teachings that are given. Listen to or read the talks more than once to better understand and follow the counsel. By

doing these things, the gates of hell will not prevail against you, [and] the powers of darkness will be dispersed from before you [see D&C 21:6]."

Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy, "The Blessings of General Conference," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 52.

wisdom, and inspiration"² that my grandmother really is. Now I have come to appreciate this wonderful woman and have been blessed by her example and friendship.

Laura A. Austin, Utah, USA

I Learned for Myself

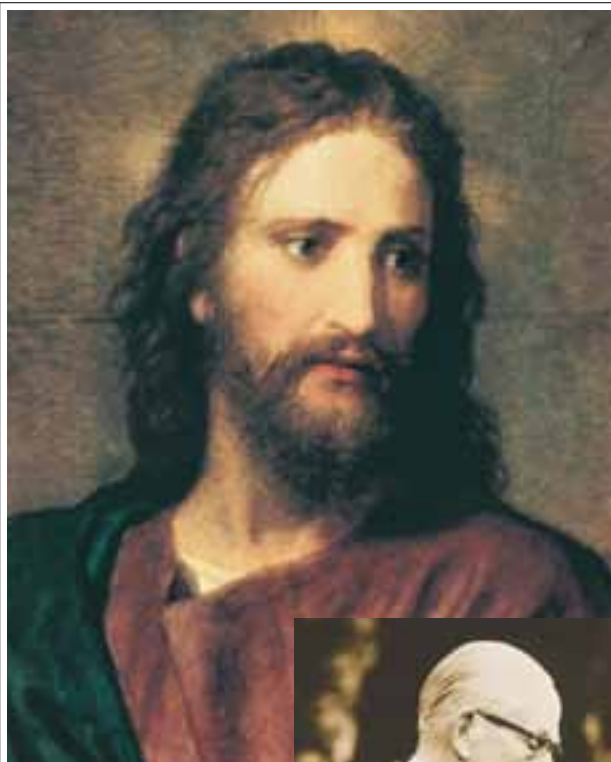
I confess that when I left on my mission, my testimony was limited to knowledge about the plan of salvation and the Book of Mormon. I recognized that my testimony lacked the depth I wanted it to have, and as a result, I felt inadequate as a missionary.

Like most French members of the Church at the time, I had never attended a broadcast of general conference. We had always attended rebroadcasts, where we listened to conference in French through an interpreter. Now, as a missionary serving in Wales and speaking English, I was going to hear the voice of the prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), firsthand.

When the session started, the local congregation sang with the members present in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. I also sang and was quickly taken aback by an overwhelming feeling of joy and belonging. These feelings testified that I was a member of Jesus Christ's Church.

While I was sitting there, an idea came to mind: "What if I asked the Lord to confirm to me that President Benson is His prophet?"

I knew that I could "ask God" (Moroni 10:4), but I was afraid that somehow I would offend Him with my questions.



I asked the Lord to testify to me that the man who was going to speak was His prophet.



After a minute of reflection, I decided to try anyway. I bowed my head and asked the Lord to testify to me that the man who was going to speak was His prophet, seer, and revelator. Before long an intense feeling of peace and happiness entered my heart. I raised my head, opened my eyes, and listened to President Benson testify of the Book of Mormon.

From that moment on, I knew for myself that the Lord leads the Church through a chosen prophet. As a result of that testimony, I left conference with new goals, and I knew that it was up to me to reach them. I changed the focus of my mission and looked forward to attending future general conferences. I also eagerly awaited the arrival of the Church magazines so that I could read the sacred words of the Lord's servants.

Thierry Hotz, France

Tell Them You Love Them

In the October 2007 general conference, Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Presidency of the Seventy talked about not waiting until tomorrow to do the things we can do today, especially when it comes to our families.³ At the end of his talk, he shared some lines based on a poem by Norma Cornett Marek. Elder Costa's message and the words of that poem touched me deeply and encouraged me to start regularly expressing my love to my parents, my sisters, and my friends.

Of course I loved my family and friends before I heard that conference talk, but I was not in the habit of telling them that I loved them, at least not every day. Maybe they *did* need to hear those special words from me more regularly. I wasn't sure at first how they would take it, but when I received a positive reaction, I decided to continue this practice. Over the next several months, I saw that my relationships were strengthened in part because I had heeded Elder Costa's words.

Now I am serving as a full-time missionary thousands of miles from my home in Costa Rica. I miss my family, but it's OK. I know they love me, and I also know that they know I love them. I feel peace because I took (and still take) opportunities to express my love.

I am grateful that we have the opportunity to regularly listen to leaders called by God. I know that as we follow them, our lives and the lives of those we love will be blessed. ■

Elder Hugo Lino Rivera Mena, Idaho Boise Mission

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," *Liahona*, Jan. 2000, 45; *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 38.
2. Boyd K. Packer, "The Golden Years," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 82.
3. See Claudio R. M. Costa, "Don't Leave for Tomorrow What You Can Do Today," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 73.

General conference will take place on October 3 and 4. What are you, your family, or your ward or branch doing to prepare to hear the counsel of prophets and apostles? The *Ensign* invites you to share your experiences with getting ready for and participating in conference. For submission instructions, see "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" on p. 2.