

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2015

Liahona



General Conference Addresses

New Seventies, Young Men
General Presidency, and
Counselor in the Primary
General Presidency Called

Three New Temples
Announced



© GREG OLSEN, MAY NOT BE COPIED

Road to Emmaus, by Greg Olsen

“And, behold, two [disciples] went that same day to a village called Emmaus. . . .

*“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near,
and went with them. . . .*

“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

*“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way,
and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:13, 15, 30–32).*

General Women's Session

- 8 **Filling Our Homes with Light and Truth**
Cheryl A. Esplin
- 11 **The Family Is of God**
Carole M. Stephens
- 14 **Defenders of the Family Proclamation**
Bonnie L. Oscarson
- 17 **The Comforter**
President Henry B. Eyring

Saturday Morning Session

- 22 **"Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?"**
President Henry B. Eyring
- 26 **The Plan of Happiness**
President Boyd K. Packer
- 29 **We'll Ascend Together**
Linda K. Burton
- 32 **The Parable of the Sower**
Elder Dallin H. Oaks
- 36 **Choose to Believe**
Elder L. Whitney Clayton
- 39 **Why Marriage and Family Matter—Everywhere in the World**
Elder L. Tom Perry

Saturday Afternoon Session

- 43 **The Sustaining of Church Officers**
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
- 45 **Church Auditing Department Report, 2014**
Kevin R. Jergensen
- 45 **Statistical Report, 2014**
Brook P. Hales
- 46 **Therefore They Hushed Their Fears**
Elder David A. Bednar
- 50 **Why Marriage, Why Family**
Elder D. Todd Christofferson
- 54 **The Music of the Gospel**
Elder Wilford W. Andersen
- 56 **Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying**
Elder Dale G. Renlund
- 59 **Truly Good and without Guile**
Elder Michael T. Ringwood
- 62 **The Lord Is My Light**
Elder Quentin L. Cook

General Priesthood Session

- 67 **The Greatest Generation of Young Adults**
Elder M. Russell Ballard
- 70 **Yes, We Can and Will Win!**
Elder Ulisses Soares
- 77 **Fatherhood—Our Eternal Destiny**
Larry M. Gibson
- 80 **On Being Genuine**
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
- 84 **Priesthood and Personal Prayer**
President Henry B. Eyring
- 88 **The Priesthood—a Sacred Gift**
President Thomas S. Monson

Sunday Morning Session

- 91 **Blessings of the Temple**
President Thomas S. Monson
- 93 **Returning to Faith**
Rosemary M. Wixom
- 96 **Seeking the Lord**
Elder José A. Teixeira
- 98 **Is It Still Wonderful to You?**
Bishop Gérald Caussé
- 101 **Waiting for the Prodigal**
Elder Brent H. Nielson
- 104 **Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet**
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
- 107 **The Gift of Grace**
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Sunday Afternoon Session

- 111 **Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom**
Elder Robert D. Hales
- 114 **Stay by the Tree**
Elder Kevin W. Pearson
- 117 **The Eternal Perspective of the Gospel**
Elder Rafael E. Pino
- 119 **Thy Kingdom Come**
Elder Neil L. Andersen
- 123 **If You Will Be Responsible**
Elder Jorge F. Zeballos
- 126 **Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Subdue the Earth**
Elder Joseph W. Sitati
- 129 **The Sabbath Is a Delight**
Elder Russell M. Nelson
- 72 **General Authorities and General Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**
- 133 **Conference Story Index**
- 134 **They Spoke to Us: Making Conference Part of Our Lives**
- 136 **News of the Church**



Find Answers to Your Questions

Studying this issue with questions in mind will help you receive personal inspiration. Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/answers515 to see some important questions answered by speakers this conference.



The 185th Annual General Conference

Saturday Evening, March 28, 2015, General Women's Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: Linda K. Burton.
Invocation: Beverly Tingey.
Benediction: Reyna I. Aburto.
Music by a combined Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake, Murray, Kamas, and Park City, Utah; Erin Pike Tall, director; Linda Margetts, organist: "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85; musical presentation, "The Family Is of God," Neeley, arr. Zabriskie, unpublished; "From Homes of Saints Glad Songs Arise," *Hymns*, no. 297, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; Medley: "Love at Home," *Hymns*, no. 294; "Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words," *Hymns*, no. 232; "Our Savior's Love," *Hymns*, no. 113, arr. Tall/Margetts, unpublished.

Saturday Morning, April 4, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Timothy J. Dyches.
Benediction: Elder Larry J. Echo Hawk.
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; "Glory to God on High," *Hymns*, no. 67; "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223, arr. Zabriskie © HolySheetMusic.com; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5; "Come unto Jesus," *Hymns*, no. 117, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "I Believe in Christ," *Hymns*, no. 134, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Jackman.

Saturday Afternoon, April 4, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Jean A. Stevens.
Benediction: Elder Randy D. Funk.
Music by a combined choir from young single adult stakes in Davis and Weber Counties, Utah; Sonja Sperling, director; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford; "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19; "Let Us All Press

On," *Hymns*, no. 243, arr. Elliott, pub. by Jackman.

Saturday Evening, April 4, 2015, General Priesthood Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: David L. Beck.
Benediction: Elder Robert C. Gay.
Music by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University; Ronald Staheli, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35, arr. Tom Durham, pub. by Jackman; "On This Day of Joy and Gladness," *Hymns*, no. 64, arr. Staheli, unpublished; "Hark, All Ye Nations!" *Hymns*, no. 264; "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," *Hymns*, no. 105, arr. Staheli, unpublished.

Sunday Morning, April 5, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Linda S. Reeves.
Benediction: Elder Kevin S. Hamilton.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66; "He Is Risen!" *Hymns*, no. 199, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Consider the Lilies," Hoffman, arr. Lyon, pub. by Jackman; "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 136; "Jesus Has Risen," *Children's Songbook*, 70, arr. Murphy, unpublished; "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," *Hymns*, no. 200, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

Sunday Afternoon, April 5, 2015, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder S. Gifford Nielsen.
Benediction: Elder Koichi Aoyagi.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "He Sent His Son," *Children's Songbook*, 34, arr. Hofheins, unpublished; "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59; "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 57, arr. Murphy,

unpublished; "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220, arr. Murphy, unpublished.

Conference Talks Available

To access general conference talks on the Internet in many languages, visit conference.lds.org and select a language. Talks are also available on the Gospel Library mobile app. Generally within six weeks following general conference, English video and audio recordings are available at distribution centers. Information on general conference in accessible formats for members with disabilities is available at disability.lds.org.

Home and Visiting Teaching Messages

For home and visiting teaching messages, please select an address that best meets the needs of those you visit.

On the Cover

Front: Photograph by Cody Bell.

Back: Photograph by Leslie Nilsson.

Conference Photography

Photographs in Salt Lake City were taken by Welden C. Andersen, Cody Bell, Janae Bingham, Ale Borges, Randy Collier, Weston Colton, Mark Davis, Craig Dimond, Nathaniel Ray Edwards, Brandon Flint, Ashlee Larsen, August Miller, Leslie Nilsson, Brad Slade, and Christina Smith; of sunflowers, courtesy of Quentin L. Cook family; in aircraft, by Craig Marshall Jacobsen; in Woodbury, Minnesota, USA, by Sandra Wahlquist; in McMinnville, Oregon, USA, by Jade West; in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, courtesy of Lucien and Agathe Affoue and Philippe and Annelies Assard; in Perpignan, France, by Renee Castagno; in Helsinki, Finland, by Kukka Fristrom; in Johannesburg, South Africa, courtesy of Christoffel Golden family; in Vatican City, by Humanum; in Bangkok, Thailand, courtesy of Sathit Kaivaivatana; in Mumbai, India, by Wendy Keeler; in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, by Laurent Lucuix; in Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, Mexico, by Hector Manuel Hernandez Martinez; in San Martín de los Andes, Neuquén, Argentina, by Colton Mondragon; in Hong Kong, by Brian Yan, National Geographic contest photo; in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, by Clebher Tex; and in London, England, by Kami Weddick. Page 77: Illustration by Brian Call.



International magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson,
Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: 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, Neil L. Andersen

Editor: Craig A. Cardon

Advisers: Mervyn B. Arnold, Christoffel Golden,
Larry R. Lawrence, James B. Martino, Joseph W. Sitati

Managing Director: David T. Warner

Director of Operations: Vincent A. Vaughn

Director of Church Magazines: Allan R. Loyborg

Business Manager: Garff Cannon

Managing Editor: R. Val Johnson

Assistant Managing Editor: Ryan Carr

Publication Assistant: Lisa Carolina López

Writing and Editing: Brittany Beattie, David Dickson, David A. Edwards, Matthew D. Flitton, Lori Fuller, Garrett H. Garff, LaRene Porter Gaunt, Jill Hacking, Charlotte Larcabal, Mindy Anne Leavitt, Michael R. Morris, Sally Johnson Odekirk, Joshua J. Perkey, Jan Pinborough, Richard M. Romney, Paul VanDenBerghe, Marissa Widdison

Editorial Intern: Ellice Tan

Managing Art Director: J. Scott Knudsen

Art Director: Tadd R. Peterson

Design: Jeanette Andrews, Fay P. Andrus, Mandie Bentley,
C. Kimball Bott, Thomas Child, Nate Gines, Colleen Hinckley, Eric P. Johnsen, Susan Lofgren, Scott M. Mooy, Mark W. Robison, Brad Teare, K. Nicole Walkenhorst

Intellectual Property Coordinator: Collette Nebeker Aune

Production Manager: Jane Ann Peters

Production: Connie Bowthorpe Bridge, Julie Burdett, Katie Duncan, Bryan W. Gygi, Denise Kirby, Ginny J. Nilson, Gayle Tate Rafferty

Prepress: Jeff L. Martin

Printing Director: Craig K. Sedgwick

Distribution Director: Stephen R. Christiansen

For subscriptions and prices outside the United States and Canada, go to store.lds.org or contact your local Church distribution center or ward or branch leader.

The *Liahona* (a Book of Mormon term meaning "compass" or "director") is published in Albanian, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (simplified), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Fijian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kiribati, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Malagasy, Marshallese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese. (Frequency varies by language.)

© 2015 by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

Text and visual material in the *Liahona* may be copied for incidental, noncommercial church or home use. Visual material may not be copied if restrictions are indicated in the credit line with the artwork. Copyright questions should be addressed to Intellectual Property Office, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150, USA; email: cor-intellectualproperty@ldschurch.org.

For Readers in the United States and Canada:

May 2015 Vol. 39 No. 5. LIAHONA (USPS 311-480) English (ISSN 1080-9554) is published monthly by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 50 E. North Temple St., Salt Lake City, UT 84150. USA subscription price is \$10.00 per year; Canada, \$12.00 plus applicable taxes. Periodicals Postage Paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Sixty days' notice required for change of address. Include address label from a recent issue; old and new address must be included. Send USA and Canadian subscriptions to Salt Lake Distribution Center at address below. Subscription help line: 1-800-537-5971. Credit card orders (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa) may be taken by phone or at store.lds.org. (Canada Post Information: Publication Agreement #40017431)

POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 707.4.12.5).

NONPOSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to Distribution Services, Church Magazines, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA.



Speaker Index

Andersen, Neil L., 119
Andersen, Wilford W., 54
Ballard, M. Russell, 67
Bednar, David A., 46
Burton, Linda K., 29
Caussé, Gérard, 98
Christofferson, D. Todd, 50
Clayton, L. Whitney, 36
Cook, Quentin L., 62
Esplin, Cheryl A., 8
Eyring, Henry B., 17, 22, 84
Gibson, Larry M., 77
Hales, Brook P., 45
Hales, Robert D., 111
Holland, Jeffrey R., 104
Jergensen, Kevin R., 45
Monson, Thomas S., 88, 91
Nelson, Russell M., 129
Nielson, Brent H., 101
Oaks, Dallin H., 32
Oscarson, Bonnie L., 14
Packer, Boyd K., 26
Pearson, Kevin W., 114
Perry, L. Tom, 39
Pino, Rafael E., 117
Renlund, Dale G., 56
Ringwood, Michael T., 59
Sitati, Joseph W., 126
Soares, Ulisses, 70
Stephens, Carole M., 11
Teixeira, José A., 96
Uchtdorf, Dieter F., 43, 80, 107
Wixom, Rosemary M., 93
Zeballos, Jorge F., 123

Topic Index

Activation, 93, 101
Adam and Eve, 26, 46, 50,
104, 117
Adversity, 11, 17, 36, 62, 91,
96, 117, 119
Agency, 36, 70, 111, 123
Atonement, 17, 46, 50, 56,
62, 70, 96, 104, 107, 123
Blessings, 22, 36, 88, 91
Book of Mormon, 8, 114
Church callings, 59, 88
Church growth, 45, 119
Compassion, 11, 17
Conversion, 32, 56, 93
Covenants, 11, 17, 29, 46,
59, 114, 129
Dating, 67
Discipleship, 32, 59, 67, 80,
114, 123
Divine nature, 11, 126
Doubt, 36, 93, 101
Duty, 88, 123
Easter, 91, 104, 107
Endurance, 114
Eternal life, 114, 117
Faith, 36, 46, 62, 84, 93, 98,
101, 114
Family, 8, 11, 14, 26, 39, 50,
62, 101, 126, 129
Family history, 129
Fasting, 22, 67, 84, 129
Fatherhood, 14, 29, 77
Fear, 46
Fellowshipping, 93
God the Father, 11, 77
Grace, 36, 46, 50, 59, 80,
104, 107
Holy Ghost, 8, 17, 54, 84,
98, 111
Home, 8, 14, 54, 62
Home teaching, 84
Hope, 36, 101, 117
Humility, 59, 84
Institute, 67

Jesus Christ, 17, 36, 46, 50,
62, 67, 77, 80, 91, 93, 96,
101, 104, 107, 111, 114,
119
Joseph Smith, 8, 111
Joy, 26, 93, 96
Kindness, 29
Light, 8, 36
Love, 11, 26, 29, 50, 62, 80,
96, 101, 104
Marriage, 14, 26, 29, 39, 50,
67, 126
Miracles, 98, 119
Missionary work, 91, 111, 126
Morality, 26
Motherhood, 14
Parenthood, 14, 39, 50, 54,
126, 129
Patience, 54, 101, 129
Peace, 17, 46, 91
Perspective, 117, 119
Plan of salvation, 14, 26, 50,
111, 117, 126
Pornography, 67, 70
Prayer, 22, 84, 91, 114
Priesthood, 77, 84, 88
Priorities, 32
Religious freedom, 111
Repentance, 26, 56, 107
Resurrection, 104, 107
Revelation, 84
Sabbath day, 36, 62, 67, 129
Scripture study, 98, 129
Second Coming, 119
Seminary, 67
Service, 22, 59, 80, 84, 129
Technology, 67, 96
Temples, 26, 91
Temptation, 70
Testimony, 36, 67, 70, 80,
93, 101
Tolerance, 111
Truth, 8
Unity, 11, 62
Young adults, 67



Highlights from the 185th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Subjects for general conference talks are assigned—not by mortal authority but by the impressions of the Spirit,” explained Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 32). In an inspiring general conference that began with the general women’s session and concluded on Easter Sunday, speakers taught about family, fasting, temple work, discipleship, the Sabbath, and the Savior’s Atonement, among many other gospel principles (see page 3).

The following are some highlights:

- President Thomas S. Monson announced new temples to be

built in Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Bangkok, Thailand. Of these, he said, “What marvelous blessings are in store for our faithful members in these areas and, indeed, wherever temples are located throughout the world” (page 91).

- Church members sustained five new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, a new Young Men general presidency, and a new counselor in the Primary general presidency.
- The annual statistical report noted 15.3 million Church members in 3,114 stakes and 561 districts. Three

new temples were dedicated last year, making a total of 144 temples in operation.

- The conference was interpreted in 95 languages. Following an innovation begun last October, three speakers delivered their talks in languages other than English. Speaking on Easter weekend, several speakers testified of the Savior’s Resurrection. “He is the Son of God,” testified President Thomas S. Monson. “He it is who came forth from the grave that first Easter morning, bringing with Him the gift of everlasting life for all of God’s children” (page 93). ■









By Cheryl A. Esplin
Second Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

Filling Our Homes with Light and Truth

In order for us and our families to withstand the pressures of the world, we must be filled with light and gospel truth.

My heart filled with the Spirit as I listened to these families teach that sacred truth: “The family is of God.”¹ Inspiring music is just one of the many ways we can feel the Spirit whisper to us, filling us with light and truth.

The concept of being filled with light and truth became particularly important to me because of an experience I had many years ago. I attended a meeting where members of the Young Women general board taught about creating spiritually strong families and homes. To visually demonstrate this, a Young Women leader held up two soda cans. In one hand she held a can that was empty and in the other hand a can that was unopened and full of soda. First, she squeezed the empty can; it began to bend and then collapsed under the pressure. Next, with her other hand, she squeezed the unopened can. It held firm. It didn't bend or collapse like the empty can—because it was filled.

We likened this demonstration to our individual lives and to our homes and families. When filled with the Spirit and with gospel truth, we have the

power to withstand the outside forces of the world that surround and push against us. However, if we are not filled spiritually, we don't have the inner strength to resist the outside pressures and can collapse when forces push against us.

Satan knows that in order for us and our families to withstand the pressures of the world, we must be filled with light and gospel truth. So he does everything in his power to dilute, distort, and destroy the truth of the gospel and to keep us separated from that truth.

Many of us have been baptized and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, whose role it is to reveal and teach the truth of all things.² With the privilege of that gift comes the responsibility to seek truth, to live the truth we know, and to share and defend the truth.

One place where we best seek to be filled with light and truth is in our own homes. The words in the chorus of the song we heard remind us, “God gave us families to help us become what He wants us to be.”³ Families are the Lord's workshop on earth to help us learn and live the gospel. We come into



our families with a sacred duty to help strengthen each other spiritually.

Strong eternal families and Spirit-filled homes do not just happen. They take great effort, they take time, and they take each member of the family doing his or her part. Every home is different, but every home where even one individual seeks for truth can make a difference.

We are continually counseled to increase our spiritual knowledge through prayer and through studying and pondering the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. In his



general conference talk about receiving a testimony of light and truth, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said:

“The Everlasting and Almighty God . . . will speak to those who approach Him with a sincere heart and real intent.

“He will speak to them in dreams, visions, thoughts, and feelings.”

President Uchtdorf continued: “God cares about you. He will listen, and He will answer your personal questions. The answers to your prayers will come in His own way and in His own time, and therefore, you need to learn to listen to His voice.”⁴

A short family history story illustrates this counsel.

Several months ago I read the testimony of my great-grandfather’s sister Elizabeth Staheli Walker. As a child, Elizabeth immigrated to America from Switzerland with her family.

After Elizabeth married, she and her husband and children lived in Utah near the Nevada border, where they ran a mail station. Their home was a stopping place for travelers. All day and all night they had to be ready to cook and serve meals for travelers. It was hard, exhausting work, and they had

little rest. But the greatest thing that concerned Elizabeth was the conversation of the people they associated with.

Elizabeth said that up to this time she had always taken for granted that the Book of Mormon was true, that the Prophet Joseph Smith had been authorized of God to do what he did, and that his message was the plan of life and salvation. But the life she was experiencing was anything but what would strengthen such a belief.

Some of the travelers who stopped were well-read, educated, smart men, and always the talk around her table



a picture of the angel Moroni giving Joseph Smith the [gold] plates.”

Many years after having this dream and several months before she died at nearly age 88, Elizabeth received a powerful impression. She said, “The thought came to me as plain . . . as if someone had said to me, . . . ‘Do not bury your testimony in the ground.’”⁵

Generations later, Elizabeth’s posterity continues to draw strength from her testimony. Like Elizabeth, we live in a world of many doubters and critics who ridicule and oppose the truths we hold dear. We may hear confusing stories and conflicting messages. Also like Elizabeth, we will have to do our best to hold on to whatever light and truth we currently have, especially in difficult circumstances. The answers to our prayers may not come dramatically, but we must find quiet moments to seek greater light and truth. And when we receive it, it is our responsibility to live it, to share it, and to defend it.

I leave you with my testimony that I know as we fill our hearts and homes with the Savior’s light and truth, we will have the inner strength to withstand in every circumstance. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Note: On April 4, 2015, Sister Esplin was released as second counselor in the Primary general presidency and sustained as first counselor.

NOTES

1. “The Family Is of God,” in *Families Are Forever: 2014 Outline for Sharing Time* (2013), 28–29.
2. See Moroni 10:5.
3. “The Family Is of God.”
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Receiving a Testimony of Light and Truth,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 21.
5. See Elizabeth Staheli Walker, “My Testimony, Written for My Children and Their Children after I Am Gone,” 1939, 22–26, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Special Collections; punctuation, capitalization, and spelling standardized.

was that Joseph Smith was “a sly fraud” who had written the Book of Mormon himself and then distributed it to make money. They acted as if to think anything else was absurd, claiming “that Mormonism was bunk.”

All this talk made Elizabeth feel isolated and alone. There was no one to talk to, no time to even say her prayers—although she did pray as she worked. She was too frightened to say anything to those who ridiculed her religion. She said she didn’t know but what they were telling the truth, and she felt she could not have defended her belief if she had tried.

Later, Elizabeth and her family moved. Elizabeth said she had more time to think and was not so distracted all the time. She often went down in the cellar and prayed to Heavenly Father about what was troubling her—about the stories those seemingly smart men had told about the gospel being bunk and about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.

One night Elizabeth had a dream. She said: “It seemed I was standing by a narrow wagon road, which led around

by the foot of a low rolling hill; halfway up the hill I saw a man looking down and speaking, or seemed to be speaking, to a young man who was kneeling and leaning over a hole in the earth. His arms were stretched out, and it looked as if he was reaching for something from in the hole. I could see the lid of stone that seemed to have been taken off from the hole over which the boy was bending. On the road were many people, but none of them seemed to be at all interested in the two men on the hillside. There was something that came along with the dream that impressed me so strangely that I woke right up; . . . I could not tell my dream to anyone, but I seemed to be satisfied that it meant the angel Moroni [instructed] the boy Joseph at the time he got the plates.”

In the spring of 1893, Elizabeth went to Salt Lake City to the dedication of the temple. She described her experience: “In there I saw the same picture [that] I had seen in my dream; I think it was [a] colored-glass window. I feel satisfied that if I saw the Hill Cumorah itself, it would not look more real. I feel satisfied that I was shown in a dream



By Carole M. Stephens
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The Family Is of God

We each belong to and are needed in the family of God.

Is anything more beautiful and profound than the simple and pure truths of the gospel taught in a Primary song? And all of you Primary girls here tonight know the song I am going to talk about. You learned it for your Primary program last year.

In the words of “The Family Is of God”¹—sung earlier in this meeting—we are reminded of pure doctrine. We learn not only that the family is of God but also that we are each part of God’s family.

The first line of the song teaches: **“Our Father has a family. It’s me! It’s you, all others too: we are His children.”** From the family proclamation, we learn, “In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father.” In that realm, we learned about our eternal female identity. We knew that we were each “a beloved . . . daughter of heavenly parents.”²

Our mortal journey to earth did not change those truths. We each belong to and are needed in the family of God. Earthly families all look different. And while we do the best we can to create strong traditional families, membership in the family of God is not contingent upon any kind of status—marital status, parental status, financial status, social status, or even the kind of status we post on social media.

We belong. “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him.”³

The second line of the song expands on the first. **“He sent each one of us to earth, through birth, to live and learn here in families.”**

In the premortal life, we learned that we would need a period of mortality. We “accepted [Heavenly Father’s] plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”⁴

Elder Richard G. Scott explained that “we were taught in the premortal world that our purpose in coming here is to be tested, tried, and stretched.”⁵ That stretching comes in as many forms as there are individuals experiencing it. I’ve never had to live through divorce, the pain and insecurity that comes from abandonment, or the responsibility associated with being a single mother. I haven’t experienced the death of a child, infertility, or same-gender attraction. I haven’t had to endure abuse, chronic illness, or addiction. These have not been my stretching opportunities.

So right now some of you are thinking, “Well then, Sister Stephens, you just don’t understand!” And I answer that you may be right. I don’t completely understand your challenges. But through *my* personal tests and trials—the ones that have brought me to *my* knees—I have become well acquainted with the One who does understand, He who was “acquainted with grief,”⁶ who experienced all and understands all.



And in addition, I have experienced all of the mortal tests that I just mentioned through the lens of a daughter, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend.

Our opportunity as covenant-keeping daughters of God is not just to learn from our own challenges; it is to unite in empathy and compassion as we support other members of the family of God in their struggles, as we have covenanted to do.

When we do so, we also come to understand and trust that the Savior knows the difficulties of the way and can guide us through whatever sorrows and disappointments may come. He is true charity, and His love “endureth forever”⁷—in part through us as we follow Him.

As daughters of God and disciples of Jesus Christ, we then “act according to those sympathies which God has

planted” in our hearts.⁸ Our sphere of influence isn’t limited to our own family members.

I recently had the opportunity to visit with Sister Yazzie of the Chinle Arizona Stake in her hogan. When she welcomed me into her home, the first thing I noticed was the variety of framed family and missionary photos on her walls and tables. So I asked, “Sister Yazzie, how many grandchildren do you have?”

Surprised by my question, she shrugged her shoulders. Confused by her response, I looked at her daughter, Sister Yellowhair, who answered, “She doesn’t know how many grandchildren she has. We don’t count. All children call her Grandmother—she is Grandmother to everyone.”

Sister Yazzie doesn’t limit her love and influence to her biological family.

She understands what it means to expand her sphere of influence as she goes about doing good, blessing, nurturing, and defending the family of God. She understands that “whenever a woman strengthens the faith of a child, she contributes to the strength of a family—now and in the future.”⁹

The third line of the song further explains the purpose of our mortality: **“God gave us families to help us become what He wants us to be.”** The Savior taught, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.”¹⁰ The family proclamation teaches that as beloved spirit daughters of heavenly parents, we have a divine nature, eternal identity, and purpose. God wants us to be one. God needs us to be one—covenant-keeping daughters, united in the diversities of our individual lives,¹¹ who desire to learn all



that is needed to be back in His presence, sealed to Him as part of His eternal family.

“Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for [us] to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”¹² The ordinances we receive and the covenants we make at baptism and in holy temples connect the family of God on both sides of the veil—connecting us to our Father through His Son, who prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”¹³

As we use our time in mortality to study and apply the Savior’s teachings, we become more like Him. We come to understand that He is the way—the only way—we can overcome mortal challenges, be healed, and return back to our heavenly home.

The final line of the song returns to where it began: **“This is how He shares His love, for the family is of God.”** The Father’s plan for His children is a plan of love. It is a plan to unite His children—His family—with Him. Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, “Heavenly Father has but two desires for His children . . . : immortality and eternal life, ‘which means life with Him back home.’”¹⁴ Those desires can be realized only as we also share the love that Heavenly Father has for His family by reaching out and sharing His plan with others.

Twenty years ago, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reached out to the entire world when issuing a proclamation on the family. Since then, attacks on the family have increased.

If we are to be successful in our sacred responsibilities as daughters of God, we must understand the eternal



significance of and our individual responsibility to teach truths about our Heavenly Father’s plan for His family. President Howard W. Hunter explained:

“There is a great need to rally the women of the Church to stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior. . . .

“ . . . So we entreat you to minister with your powerful influence for good in strengthening our families, our church, and our communities.”¹⁵

Sisters, we belong. We are loved. We are needed. We have a divine purpose, work, place, and role in the Church and kingdom of God and in His eternal family. Do you know deep in your heart that your Heavenly Father loves you and desires you and those you love to be with Him? Just as “Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ are perfect . . . , Their hopes for us are perfect.”¹⁶ Their plan for us is perfect, and Their promises are sure. Of these truths I gratefully testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “The Family Is of God,” in *Families Are Forever: 2014 Outline for Sharing Time* (2013), 28–29.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. “Young Women Theme,” in *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 3.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
5. Richard G. Scott, “Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 92.
6. Isaiah 53:3.
7. Moroni 7:47.
8. Joseph Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 16.
9. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 159.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
11. See Patricia T. Holland, “‘One Thing Needful’: Becoming Women of Greater Faith in Christ,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 26–33.
12. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”
13. John 17:21.
14. R. Scott Lloyd, “God Wants His Children to Return to Him, Elder Nelson Teaches,” Church News section of LDS.org, Jan. 28, 2014, lds.org/church/news/god-wants-his-children-to-return-to-him-elder-nelson-teaches.
15. Howard W. Hunter, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 157; see also “To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96.
16. M. Russell Ballard, “Let Us Think Straight” (Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 20, 2013); speeches.byu.edu.



By **Bonnie L. Oscarson**
Young Women General President

Defenders of the Family Proclamation

Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home.

What a privilege and joy to be a part of this marvelous assembly of girls and women. How blessed we are as women to be joined together this evening in unity and in love.

I recently read the story of Marie Madeline Cardon, who, with her family, received the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ from the first missionaries called to serve in Italy in 1850. She was a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age when they

were baptized. One Sunday, while the family was holding a worship service in their home high in the Alps of northern Italy, an angry mob of men, including some of the local ministers, gathered around the house and began shouting, yelling, and calling for the missionaries to be brought outside. I don't think they were anxious to be taught the gospel—they intended bodily harm. It was young Marie who marched out of the house to confront the mob.

They continued their vicious yells and demands for the missionaries to be brought out. Marie raised her Bible up in her hand and commanded them to depart. She told them that the elders were under her protection and that they could not harm one hair of their heads. Listen to her own words: "All stood aghast. . . . God was with me. He placed those words in my mouth, or I could not have spoken them. All was calm, instantly. That strong ferocious body of men stood helpless before a weak, trembling, yet fearless girl." The ministers asked the mob to leave, which they did quietly in shame, fear, and remorse. The small flock completed their meeting in peace.¹

Can't you just picture that brave young woman, the same age as many of you, standing up to a mob and defending her newly found beliefs with courage and conviction?

Sisters, few of us will ever have to face an angry mob, but there is a war going on in this world in which our most cherished and basic doctrines are under attack. I am speaking specifically of the doctrine of the family. The sanctity of the home and the essential purposes of the family are being questioned, criticized, and assaulted on every front.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley first read "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 20 years ago this year, we were grateful for and valued the clarity, simplicity, and truth of this revelatory document. Little did we realize then how very desperately we would need these basic declarations in today's world as the criteria by which we could judge each new wind of worldly dogma coming at us from the media, the Internet, scholars, TV and films, and even legislators. The proclamation on the family has become our benchmark





for judging the philosophies of the world, and I testify that the principles set forth within this statement are as true today as they were when they were given to us by a prophet of God nearly 20 years ago.

May I point out something obvious? Life rarely goes exactly according to plan for anyone, and we are very aware that not all women are experiencing what the proclamation describes. It is still important to understand and teach the Lord's pattern and strive for the realization of that pattern the best we can.

Each of us has a part to play in the plan, and each of us is equally valued in the eyes of the Lord. We should remember that a loving Heavenly Father is aware of our righteous desires and will honor His promises that nothing will be withheld from those who faithfully keep their covenants. Heavenly Father has a mission and plan for each of us, but He also has His own timetable. One of the hardest challenges in this life is to have faith in the Lord's timing. It's a good idea to have an alternative plan in mind, which

helps us to be covenant-keeping, charitable, and righteous women who build the kingdom of God no matter which way our lives go. We need to teach our daughters to aim for the ideal but plan for contingencies.

During this 20th anniversary year of the family proclamation, I would like to issue a challenge for all of us as women of the Church to be defenders of "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Just as Marie Madeline Cardon courageously defended the missionaries and her newly found beliefs, we need to boldly defend the Lord's revealed doctrines describing marriage, families, the divine roles of men and women, and the importance of homes as sacred places—even when the world is shouting in our ears that these principles are outdated, limiting, or no longer relevant. Everyone, no matter what their marital circumstance or number of children, can be defenders of the Lord's plan described in the family proclamation. If it is the Lord's plan, it should also be our plan!

There are three principles taught in the proclamation which I think are

especially in need of steadfast defenders. The first is marriage between a man and a woman. We are taught in the scriptures, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."² For anyone to attain the fulness of priesthood blessings, there must be a husband and a wife sealed in the house of the Lord, working together in righteousness and remaining faithful to their covenants. This is the Lord's plan for His children, and no amount of public discourse or criticism will change what the Lord has declared. We need to continue to model righteous marriages, seek for that blessing in our lives, and have faith if it is slow in coming. Let us be defenders of marriage as the Lord has ordained it while continuing to show love and compassion for those with differing views.

The next principle which calls for our defending voices is elevating the divine roles of mothers and fathers. We eagerly teach our children to aim high in this life. We want to make sure that our daughters know that they have the potential to achieve and be whatever

they can imagine. We hope they will love learning, be educated, talented, and maybe even become the next Marie Curie or Eliza R. Snow.

Do we also teach our sons and daughters there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father? I would hope that as we encourage our children to reach for the very best in this life that we also teach them to honor and exalt the roles that mothers and fathers play in Heavenly Father's plan.

Our youngest daughter, Abby, saw a unique opportunity to stand as a defender of the role of mother. One day she got a notice from her children's school that they were having Career Day presentations at the school. Parents were invited to send in an application if they wanted to come to school to teach the children about their jobs, and Abby felt impressed to apply to come and speak about motherhood. She didn't hear back from the school, and when Career Day was getting close, she finally called the school, thinking they may have lost her application. The organizers scrambled around and found two teachers who agreed to have Abby come talk to their classes at the end of Career Day.

In her very fun presentation to the children, Abby taught them, among other things, that as a mother she needed to be somewhat of an expert in medicine, psychology, religion, teaching, music, literature, art, finance, decorating, hair styling, chauffeuring, sports, culinary arts, and so much more. The children were impressed. She finished by having the children remember their mothers by writing thank-you notes expressing gratitude for the many loving acts of service



they received daily. Abby felt that the children saw their mothers in a whole new light and that being a mother or father was something of great worth. She applied to share again this year at Career Day and was invited to present to six classes.

Abby has said of her experience: "I feel like it could be easy in this world for a child to get the sense that being a parent is a secondary job or even sometimes a necessary inconvenience. I want every child to feel like they are the most important priority to their parent, and maybe telling them how important being a parent is to me will

help them realize all that their parents do for them and why."

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is a wonderful example of honoring women and motherhood, especially his own mother. In reference to our earthly mothers, he has said: "May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and [our earthly] mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one."³



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

The last principle we need to stand and defend is the sanctity of the home. We need to take a term which is sometimes spoken of with derision and elevate it. It is the term *homemaker*. All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers. We should “make our homes” places of order, refuge, holiness, and safety. Our homes should be places where the Spirit of the Lord is felt in rich abundance and where the scriptures and the gospel are studied, taught, and lived. What a difference it would make in the world if all people would see themselves as makers of righteous homes. Let us defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness.

Sisters, I am grateful to be a woman in these latter days. We have opportunities and possibilities which no other generation of women has had in the world. Let us help build the kingdom of God by standing up boldly and being defenders of marriage, parenthood, and the home. The Lord needs us to be brave, steadfast, and immovable warriors who will defend His plan and teach the upcoming generations His truths.

I bear witness that Heavenly Father lives and loves each of us. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Marie Madeline Cardon Guild, “Marie Madeline Cardon Guild: An Autobiography,” cardonfamilies.org/Histories/MarieMadelineCardonGuild.html; see also Marie C. Guild autobiography, circa 1909, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Behold Thy Mother,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 32.

The Comforter

I give my witness that the living Christ sends the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to those we are pledged to help Him comfort.

My beloved sisters, it has been a joy for me to be with you. I’ve thought of my mother, my wife, my daughters, my daughters-in-law, my granddaughters—a number of whom are here. This wonderful program has made me appreciate them more. I recognize that having had such a family and such a wonderful family life comes from their having the Savior at the center of each of their lives. We have remembered Him tonight in music, in prayers, and through inspired sermons. One of the

attributes of the Savior we most appreciate is His infinite compassion.

Tonight you have felt He knows you and loves you. You have felt His love for those seated around you. They are your sisters, spirit daughters of our Heavenly Father. He cares for them as He cares for you. He understands all their sorrows. He wants to succor them.

My message to you tonight is that you can and must be an important part of His giving comfort to those who need comfort. You can play your



part best if you know more of how He answers those prayers for help.

Many are praying to Heavenly Father for relief, for help in carrying their burdens of grief, loneliness, and fear. Heavenly Father hears those prayers and understands their needs. He and His Beloved Son, the resurrected Jesus Christ, have promised help.

Jesus Christ gave this sweet promise:

“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.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”¹

The burdens His faithful servants must carry in life are made lighter by His Atonement. The burden of sin can

be taken away, but the trials of mortal life for good people can still be heavy burdens.

You have seen such tests in the lives of good people you love. You have felt a desire to help them. There is a reason for your feeling of compassion for them.

You are a covenant member of the Church of Jesus Christ. A great change began in your heart when you came into the Church. You made a covenant, and you received a promise that began changing your very nature.

Alma described, in his words at the Waters of Mormon, what you promised at your baptism and what it will mean to you and everyone around you—especially in your families. He was speaking to those who were about to make the covenants you have made,

and they also received the promise that the Lord made to you:

“Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.”²

That is why you have a feeling to want to help a person struggling to move forward under a load of grief and difficulty. You promised that you would help the Lord make their burdens light and be comforted. You were given the power to help lighten those loads when you received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

When He was about to be crucified, the Savior described the way He helps lighten loads and gives strength to carry them. He knew that His disciples would grieve. He knew that they would fear for their future. He knew they would feel uncertain of their capacity to move forward.

So He gave them the promise that He makes to us and to all His true disciples:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”³

Then He promised:

“But the Comforter, which is the





of God who were pleading in prayer that their burdens would be lightened. The miracle of the loads being lightened came in a way the Lord promised. He and Heavenly Father sent the Holy Ghost as the Comforter to His disciples to help.

Mumbai, India

mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁵

Because I knew that was true, I was pleased and at peace when the grandparents invited me to meet with them and the parents of the little boy before the funeral.

I prayed to know how I could help the Lord comfort them. They sat down with me in our living room. I had warmed the room on a cold night with a small fire in the fireplace.

I had felt to tell them that I loved them. I told them that I had felt the Lord’s love for them. In just a few words I tried to tell them that I mourned for them but that only the Lord knew and could experience perfectly their pain and grief.

After saying those few words, I felt impressed to listen with love while they talked about their feelings.

In the hour we sat together, they spoke far more than I did. I could feel in their voices and see in their eyes that the Holy Ghost was touching them. In words of simple testimony, they spoke of what happened and how they felt. The Holy Ghost had already given them the peace that comes with the hope of eternal life, when their son, who died without sin, could be theirs forever.

When I gave them each a priesthood blessing, I gave thanks for the influence of the Holy Ghost that was there. The Comforter had come, bringing hope, courage, and increased strength for all of us.

That night, I saw demonstrated how the Lord works with us to lighten the loads of His people. You remember in the Book of Mormon when His people were nearly crushed by the burdens placed upon their backs by fierce taskmasters.



Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

“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.”⁴

In just the past few weeks, I have seen that promise of sending the Holy Ghost fulfilled in the lives of children

Recently three generations of a family were grieving at the death of a five-year-old boy. He died accidentally while with his family on a vacation. I was granted the opportunity to watch once again how the Lord blesses the faithful with relief and the strength to endure.

I watched the way the Lord made their great burden lighter. I was with them as the Lord’s covenant servant—as you will be often in your life—“to



The people pleaded for relief, as many of those we love and serve do. Here is the record, which I know is true:

“And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”⁶

I have seen that miracle time and time again. We lighten the loads of others best by helping the Lord strengthen them. That is why the Lord included in our charge to comfort others the command to be His witnesses at all times and in all places.

The father and the mother of the little boy bore witness of the Savior that evening in my living room. The Holy Ghost came, and all were comforted. The parents were strengthened. The burden of grief did not disappear, but they were made able to bear the

sorrow. Their faith increased. And their strength will continue to grow as they ask for it and live for it.

The Spirit’s witness of the Atonement that came that night also strengthened Job to carry his load:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”⁷

It was that witness of the Spirit that gave him strength to endure. He would pass through mourning and the lack of comfort from people around him to see the joy that would come to the faithful after passing faithfully through their trials.

It was true for Job. Blessings came to him in this life. The story of Job ends with this miracle:

“So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. . . .

“And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

“After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations.

“So Job died, being old and full of days.”⁸

It was the witness of the Spirit of the coming Atonement which saw Job

through the tests life is intended to include for all of us. That is part of the great plan of happiness the Father gave us. He allowed His Son to provide, by His atoning sacrifice, the hope that comforts us no matter how hard the way home to Him may be.

The Father and the Son send the Holy Ghost to comfort and strengthen disciples of the Master in their journey.

I saw this miracle of comfort as I arrived outside the chapel where the funeral of the little boy was to be held. I was stopped by a lovely young woman I did not recognize. She said that she was coming to the funeral to mourn and to give comfort if she could.

She said that she had come to the funeral in part for comfort for herself. She told me that her first child had died recently. She was carrying in her arms a beautiful little girl. I leaned toward her to look into the little girl’s smiling face. I asked the baby’s mother, “What is her name?” Her quick and cheerful answer was “Her name is Joy. Joy always comes after sorrow.”

She was bearing her witness to me. I could see that the peace and comfort had come to her from the only sure source. Only God knows hearts, and so only He can say, in truth, “I know how you feel.” So I can only imagine both her joy and the sorrow that preceded it, but the Lord, who loves her, knows.

I can know only partially how much He feels joy each time you, as His disciple, help Him bring a moment of peace and joy to a child of our Heavenly Father.

I bear my witness that the Lord has asked each of us, His disciples, to help bear one another’s burdens. We have promised to do it. I bear my testimony that the Lord, through His Atonement and Resurrection, has broken the power of death. I give my witness that

the living Christ sends the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to those we are pledged to help Him comfort.

You are all witnesses, as I am, of the truth of the inscription on the pin my mother wore for more than 20 years as a member of the Relief Society general board. It read, “Charity Never Faileth.”⁹ I still do not know the full meaning of those words. But I have caught a glimpse as I saw her reach out to those in need. The scripture tells us this truth: “Charity is the pure love of Christ.”¹⁰

His love never fails, and we never will cease to feel in our hearts the urge “to mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”¹¹ Nor will the peace He promises ever leave us as we serve others for Him.

As His witness, I extend gratitude for what you do so well to help the living Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, strengthen feeble knees and lift up hands that hang down.¹² I am grateful, with all my heart, for the women in my life who have helped me and blessed me as true disciples of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 11:28–30.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. John 14:16–17.
4. John 14:26–27.
5. Mosiah 18:9.
6. Mosiah 24:14–15.
7. Job 19:25–26.
8. Job 42:12, 15–17.
9. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
10. Moroni 7:47.
11. Mosiah 18:9.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf1 to watch this talk or to find media to share.





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

“Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?”

Your fast offering will do more than help feed and clothe bodies. It will heal and change hearts.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is a joy for me to extend my love to you in this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That joy comes from the witness of the Spirit that the love of the Savior reaches out to each of you and to all of Heavenly Father’s children. Our Heavenly Father wishes to bless His children spiritually and temporally. He understands each of their needs, their pains, and their hopes.

When we offer succor to anyone, the Savior feels it as if we reached out to succor Him.

He told us that was true when He described a future moment we all will have when we see Him after our life in this world is complete. A picture in my mind of that day has grown more vivid in the days that I have prayed and fasted to know what to say this morning. The Lord’s description of that future interview was given to His disciples, and it describes what we want with all our hearts to be true for us as well:

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed

of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee

an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹

You and I want that warm welcome from the Savior. But how can we deserve it? There are more hungry, homeless, and lonely children of Heavenly Father than we can possibly reach. And the numbers grow ever farther from our reach.

So the Lord has given us something that we each can do. It is a commandment so simple that a child can understand it. It is a commandment with a wonderful promise for those in need and for us.

It is the law of the fast. The words in the book of Isaiah are the Lord’s description of the commandment and the blessing available to those of us in His Church:





“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.”

“Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and

thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”²

So the Lord has given us a simple commandment with a marvelous promise. In the Church today we are offered the opportunity to fast once a month and give a generous fast offering through our bishop or branch president for the benefit of the poor and the needy. Some of what you give will be used to help those around you, perhaps someone in your own family. The Lord’s servants will pray and fast for the revelation to know whom to help and what help to give. That which is not needed to help people in your local Church unit will become available to bless other Church members across the world who are in need.

The commandment to fast for the poor has many blessings attached to it. President Spencer W. Kimball called failing to follow that law a sin of omission with a heavy cost. He wrote: “Rich promises are made by the Lord to those who fast and assist the needy. . . . Inspiration and spiritual guidance will come with righteousness and closeness to our Heavenly Father. To

omit to do this righteous act of fasting would deprive us of these blessings.”³

I received one of those blessings just a few weeks ago. Since general conference falls on a weekend that would normally include the fast and testimony meeting, I fasted and prayed to know how I should still obey the commandment to care for those in need.

On a Saturday, still fasting, I woke at 6:00 and prayed again. I felt impressed to look at the world news. There I read this report:

Tropical Cyclone Pam destroyed many homes as it made a direct hit on Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. It killed at least six people in Vanuatu, the first confirmed from one of the most powerful storms ever to make landfall.

“Hardly a tree stood straight [as the cyclone] bellowed across” the Pacific island nation.⁴

World Vision’s emergency assessment team planned to view damage after the storm died down.

They advised residents to seek shelter in sturdy buildings such as universities and schools.

And then they said: “The strongest thing they’ve got is cement churches,”



said Inga Mephram [from] CARE International. . . . ‘Some of them don’t have that. It’s hard to find a structure that you’d think would be able to withstand a Category 5 (storm).’”⁵

When I read that, I remembered visiting little homes on Vanuatu. I could picture in my mind the people huddled in homes being destroyed by winds. And then I remembered the warm welcome to me of the people of Vanuatu. I thought of them and their neighbors fleeing to the safety of our cement chapel.

Then I pictured the bishop and the Relief Society president walking among them, giving comfort, blankets, food to eat, and water to drink. I could picture the frightened children huddled together.

They are so far away from the home where I read that report, and yet I knew what the Lord would be doing through His servants. I knew that what made it possible for them to succor those children of Heavenly Father was fast offerings, given freely by the Lord’s disciples who were far away from them but close to the Lord.

So I didn’t wait for Sunday. I took a fast offering to my bishop that morning. I know that my offering may be used by the bishop and Relief Society president to help someone in my neighborhood. My small offering may not be needed near where my family and I live, but the local surplus could reach even as far as Vanuatu.

Other storms and tragedies will come across the world to people the Lord loves and whose sorrows He feels. Part of your fast offering and mine this month will be used to help someone, somewhere, whose relief the Lord will feel as if it were His own.

Your fast offering will do more than help feed and clothe bodies. It will heal and change hearts. The fruit of a free-will offering may be the desire in the heart of the recipient to reach out to others in need. That happens across the world.

It happened in the life of Sister Abie Turay, who lives in Sierra Leone. A civil war began in 1991. It ravaged the country for years. Sierra Leone was already one of the poorest countries in the world. “During the war, it was unclear who [controlled] the country—banks . . . closed, government offices were shuttered, police forces [were ineffective against rebel forces], . . . and there was chaos, killing and sorrow. Tens of thousands of people lost their lives and more than two million people were forced from their homes to avoid the slaughter.”⁶

Even in such times, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints grew.

One of the first branches was organized in the city where Sister Turay lived. Her husband was the first branch president. He served as a district president during the civil war.

“When guests visit Sister Turay’s home [now], she loves to show them two [treasures] from the war: a blue-and-white striped shirt [she got] from a

bale of used clothing [given by members of the Church] and a blanket, now worn and riddled with holes.”⁷

She says, “This shirt is the first . . . clothing I [received]. . . . I used to wear it to go to work—it was so good. [It made me feel so beautiful.] I didn’t have other clothes.

“During the war, this blanket kept us warm, me and my children. When the rebels [would] come to attack us, this is the only thing I [could] lay [my] hands on [as we fled to the bush to hide]. So we [would] take the blanket with us. It would keep us warm and keep the mosquitos away from us.”⁸

“Sister Turay speaks of her gratitude for a mission president who would make his way into the war-torn country with [money] in his pocket.” Those funds, from the fast-offering donations of people like you, allowed the Saints to buy food that most Sierra Leoneans could not afford.⁹

Sister Turay, speaking of those who were generous enough to donate for them to survive, says, “When I think [of] the people who did this . . . I feel that [they were] sent by God, because ordinary human beings made this kind gesture for [us].”¹⁰

A visitor from the United States sat with Abie not long ago. During his time with her, he found his eyes “drawn to a set of scriptures that were on the table.” He could tell that they were a treasure, “well-marked with notes in the columns. The pages were [worn,] some were torn. The cover was detached from the binding.”

He held the scriptures in his “hand and gently turned the pages. As [he did, he found a] yellow copy of a tithing donation slip. [He] could see that, in a country where [a dollar was worth its] weight in gold, Abie Turay had paid one dollar as her tithing, one dollar to

the missionary fund, and one dollar as a fast offering for those who, in her words, were 'truly poor.'

The visitor closed Sister Turay's scriptures and thought, as he stood with this faithful African mother, that he was on sacred ground.¹¹

Just as the receipt of the blessing of your fast offering and mine can change hearts, so does fasting for the good of another. Even a child can feel it.

Many children, and some adults, may for personal reasons find a 24-hour fast difficult. It can be, in the words of Isaiah, felt that the fast has "afflicted [their] soul." Wise parents recognize that possibility and so are careful to follow the counsel of President Joseph F. Smith: "Better to teach them the principle, and let them observe it when they are old enough to choose intelligently."¹²

I saw the blessing in that counsel recently. One of my grandsons had found a 24-hour fast beyond his powers of endurance. But his wise parents still placed the principle in his heart. One of his school friends recently lost a young cousin to accidental death. My grandson asked his mother on fast day,

at about the time he had always felt the fast was too hard to continue, whether it would make his grieving friend feel better if he continued his fast.

His question was the confirmation of President Joseph F. Smith's counsel. My grandson had come to the point where he not only understood the principle of the fast, but it had also been planted in his heart. He had come to feel that his fasting and prayers would lead to a blessing from God for someone in need. If he lives the principle often enough, it will bring the wonderful effects in his own life, as promised by the Lord. He will have the spiritual blessing of power to receive inspiration and greater capacity to resist temptation.

We do not know all the reasons why Jesus Christ went into the wilderness to fast and to pray. But we know at least one of the effects: the Savior completely resisted Satan's temptations to misuse His divine power.

The brief time we fast every month and the small amount we offer for the poor may give us only a small part of the change in our natures to have no more desire to do evil. But there is a great promise, even as we do all that

we reasonably can to pray, to fast, and to donate for those in need:

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."¹³

I pray that we will claim those great blessings for ourselves and for our families.

I bear my witness that Jesus is the Christ, that in His Church we are invited to help Him as He cares for the poor in His way, and that He promises everlasting blessings will come from our helping Him. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 25:34–40.
2. Isaiah 58:6–11.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 98.
4. See Steve Almasy, Ben Brumfield, and Laura Smith-Spark, "Cleanup Begins in Vanuatu after Cyclone Batters Islands," Mar. 14, 2015, edition.cnn.com.
5. See Sean Morris, Steve Almasy, and Laura Smith-Spark, "'Unbelievable Destruction' Reported in Tropical Cyclone Pam's Wake," Mar. 14, 2015, edition.cnn.com.
6. Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story," unpublished manuscript.
7. Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story."
8. Abie Turay, quoted in Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story."
9. Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story."
10. Abie Turay, quoted in Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story."
11. Peter F. Evans, "Sister Abie Turay's Story"; a video about Sister Turay, "We Did Not Stand Alone," is available at lds.org/media-library.
12. Joseph F. Smith, "Editor's Table," *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1903, 149.
13. Isaiah 58:8–9.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf2 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By **President Boyd K. Packer**
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Plan of Happiness

The end of all activity in the Church is to see that a man and a woman with their children are happy at home, sealed for eternity.

Many years ago, after World War II, I was attending college. There I met Donna Smith.

About that time I read that two essential ingredients to a successful marriage are a cookie and a kiss. I thought that was a pretty good balance.

I attended college in the morning and then went back to Brigham City to work in my father's auto-repair garage in the afternoon. Donna's last morning class was home economics. I stopped by her classroom before leaving. The door had a frosted glass window, but if I stood close to the glass, she could see my shadow outside. She would slip out with a cookie and a kiss. The rest is history. We were married in the Logan Utah Temple, and that began the great adventure of our lives.

Over the years I have frequently taught an important principle: the end of all activity in the Church is to see that a man and a woman with their children are happy at home, sealed together for time and for all eternity.

In the beginning:

"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 the Gods said: We will cause

them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Abraham 4:27–28).

And so the cycle of human life began on this earth as "Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.

"And . . . the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, . . . and they also begat sons and daughters" (Moses 5:2–3).

The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth has never been

rescinded. It is essential to the plan of redemption and is the source of human happiness. Through the righteous exercise of this power, we may come close to our Father in Heaven and experience a fulness of joy, even godhood. The power of procreation is not an incidental part of the plan; it is the plan of happiness; it is the key to happiness.

The desire to mate in humankind is constant and very strong. Our happiness in mortal life, our joy and exaltation are dependent upon how we respond to these persistent, compelling physical desires. As the procreative power matures in early manhood and womanhood, very personal feelings occur, in a natural way, unlike any other physical experience.

Ideally, mating begins with romance. Though customs may vary, it flourishes with all the storybook feelings of excitement and anticipation, even sometimes rejection. There are moonlight and roses, love letters, love songs, poetry, the holding of hands, and other expressions of affection between a young man and a young woman. The world disappears around the couple, and they experience feelings of joy.

And if you suppose that the full-blown rapture of young romantic love is the sum total of the possibilities which spring from the fountains of life, you have not yet lived to see the devotion and the comfort of longtime married love. Married couples are tried by temptation, misunderstandings, financial problems, family crises, and illness, and all the while love grows stronger. Mature love has a bliss not even imagined by newlyweds.

True love requires reserving until after marriage the sharing of that affection which unlocks those sacred powers in that fountain of life. It means





avoiding situations where physical desire might take control. Pure love presupposes that only after a pledge of eternal fidelity, a legal and lawful ceremony, and ideally after the sealing ordinance in the temple are those procreative powers released in God's eye for the full expression of love. It is to be shared solely and only with that one who is your companion forever.

When entered into worthily, this process combines the most exquisite and exalted physical, emotional, and spiritual feelings associated with the word *love*. That part of life has no equal, no counterpart, in all human experience. It will, when covenants are made and kept, last eternally, "for therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory" (D&C 124:34), "which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever" (D&C 132:19).

But romantic love is incomplete; it is a prelude. Love is nourished by the coming of children, who spring from that fountain of life entrusted to couples in marriage. Conception takes place in a wedded embrace between husband and wife. A tiny body begins to form after a pattern of magnificent

complexity. A child comes forth in the miracle of birth, created in the image of its earthly father and mother. Within its mortal body is a spirit able to feel and perceive spiritual things. Dormant in that mortal body of this child is the power to beget offspring in its own image.

"The spirit and the body are the soul of man" (D&C 88:15), and there are spiritual and physical laws to obey if we are to be happy. There are eternal laws, including laws relating to this power to give life, "irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated" (D&C 130:20). These are spiritual laws which define the moral standard for mankind (see Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 7:14–15 [in the Bible appendix]; 2 Nephi 2:5; D&C 29:34; 134:6). There are covenants which bind, seal, and safeguard and give promise of eternal blessings.

Alma admonished his son Shiblon, "See that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love" (Alma 38:12). A bridle is used to guide, to direct, to restrain. Our passion is to be controlled. When lawfully used, the power of procreation will bless and will

sanctify (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 158).

Temptations are ever present. Because the adversary cannot beget life, he is jealous toward all who have that supernal power. He and those who followed him were cast out and forfeited the right to a mortal body. "He seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). He will tempt, if he can, to degrade, to corrupt, and, if possible, to destroy this gift by which we may, if we are worthy, have eternal increase (see D&C 132:28–31).

If we pollute our fountains of life or lead others to transgress, there will be penalties more "exquisite" and "hard to bear" (D&C 19:15) than all the physical pleasure could ever be worth.

Alma told his son Corianton, "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?" (Alma 39:5). We cannot escape the consequences when we transgress.

The only legitimate, authorized expression of the powers of procreation is between husband and wife,



a man and a woman, who have been legally and lawfully married. Anything other than this violates the commandments of God. Do not yield to the awful temptations of the adversary, for every debt of transgression must be paid “till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matthew 5:26).

Nowhere is the generosity and mercy of God more manifest than in repentance.

Our physical bodies, when harmed, are able to repair themselves, sometimes with the help of a physician. If the damage is extensive, however, often a scar will remain as a reminder of the injury.

With our spiritual bodies it is another matter. Our spirits are damaged when we make mistakes and commit sins. But unlike the case of our mortal bodies, when the repentance process is complete, no scars remain because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The promise is: “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

When we speak of marriage and family life, there inevitably comes to mind, “What about the exceptions?” Some are born with limitations and cannot beget children. Some innocents have their marriage wrecked because of the infidelity of their spouse. Others do not marry and live in single worthiness.

For now I offer this comfort: God is our Father! All the love and generosity

manifest in the ideal earthly father is magnified in Him who is our Father and our God beyond the capacity of the mortal mind to comprehend. His judgments are just; His mercy without limit; His power to compensate beyond any earthly comparison. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Reverently now I use the word *temple*. I envision a sealing room and an altar with a young couple kneeling there. This sacred temple ordinance is much more than a wedding, for this marriage can be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, and the scriptures declare that we “shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions” (D&C 132:19). I see the joy that awaits those who accept this super-nal gift and use it worthily.

Sister Donna Smith Packer and I have been side by side in marriage for nearly 70 years. When it comes to my wife, the mother of our children, I am without words. The feeling is so deep and the gratitude so powerful that I am left almost without expression. The greatest reward we have received in this life, and the life to come, is our children and our grandchildren. Toward the end of our mortal days together, I am grateful for each moment I am with her side by side and for the promise the Lord has given that there will be no end.

I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of the living God. He stands at the head of the Church. Through His Atonement and the power of the priesthood, families which are begun in mortality can be together through the eternities. The Atonement, which can reclaim each one of us, bears no scars. That means that no matter what we have done or where we have been or how something happened, if we truly repent, He has promised that He would atone. And when He atoned, that settled that. There are so many of us who are thrashing around, as it were, with feelings of guilt, not knowing quite how to escape. You escape by accepting the Atonement of Christ, and all that was heartache can turn to beauty and love and eternity.

I am so grateful for the blessings of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the power of procreation, for the power of redemption, for the Atonement—the Atonement which can wash clean every stain no matter how difficult or how long or how many times repeated. The Atonement can put you free again to move forward, cleanly and worthily, to pursue that path that you have chosen in life.

I bear witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that the Atonement is not a general thing that is for the whole Church. The Atonement is individual, and if you have something that is bothering you—sometimes so long ago you can hardly remember it—put the Atonement to work. It will clean it up, and you, as does He, will remember your sins no more. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf3 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By Linda K. Burton
Relief Society General President

We'll Ascend Together

As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become.

Next to the inspiring talks, music, and prayers that always touch our hearts during general conference, I have been told by many sisters that what they love most is watching the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve as they exit this podium with their eternal companions. And don't we all enjoy hearing the Brethren tenderly express their love for them?

Speaking about his wife, Donna, President Boyd K. Packer said, "Because of the office I hold, I have a solemn obligation to tell the truth: She's perfect."¹

"She is the sunshine of my life,"² said President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of his wife, Harriet.

President Henry B. Eyring, referring to his wife, Kathleen, said, "She [is] a person who has always made me want to be the very best that I can be."³

And President Thomas S. Monson, speaking of his beloved Frances, said, "She was the love of my life, my trusted confidant, and my closest friend. To say that I miss her does not begin to convey the depth of my feelings."⁴

I too would like to express my love for my beloved companion, Craig. He is a precious gift to me! Referring to my husband, a cherished and sacred phrase in my patriarchal blessing

promises that my life and the lives of my children will "be well in his keeping." It is clear to me that Craig is the fulfillment of that promise. Borrowing from the words of Mark Twain, I say that "life without [Craig] would not be life."⁵ I love him, heart and soul!

Divine Roles and Responsibilities

Today I wish to honor husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and uncles who know who they are and who are doing their best to fulfill their God-given roles as described in the family proclamation, including righteously presiding and providing for and protecting their families. Please know that



I am painfully aware that the topics of fatherhood, motherhood, and marriage can be troubling for many. I know that some Church members feel that their homes will never reach what they perceive to be the ideal. Many are hurting because of neglect, abuse, addictions, and incorrect traditions and culture. I do not condone the actions of men or women who have willfully or even ignorantly caused pain, anguish, and despair in their homes. But today I am speaking of something else.

I am convinced that a husband is never more attractive to his wife than when he is serving in his God-given roles as a worthy priesthood holder—most important in the home. I love and believe these words from President Packer to worthy husbands and fathers: "You have the power of the priesthood directly from the Lord to protect your home. There will be times when all that stands as a shield between your family and the adversary's mischief will be that power."⁶

Spiritual Leaders and Teachers in the Home

Earlier this year I attended the funeral of an extraordinary ordinary man—my husband's uncle Don. One of Uncle Don's sons shared an experience he had as a small child, shortly after his parents had purchased their first home. Because there were five small children to feed and clothe, there was not enough money to fence the yard. Taking seriously one of his divine roles as the protector of his family, Uncle Don drove a few small wooden stakes into the ground, took some string, and tied the string from stake to stake all around the yard. He then called his children to him. He showed them the stakes and string and explained to them that if they would stay on the



inside of that makeshift fence, they would be safe.

One day the visiting teachers watched in disbelief as they approached the house and saw five little children standing obediently at the edge of the string, looking longingly at a ball that had bounced beyond their boundaries and out into the street. One little child ran to get their daddy, who, in response, ran and retrieved the ball.

Later in the funeral, the oldest son tearfully expressed that all he had ever hoped in this life was to be like his beloved father.

President Ezra Taft Benson said:

“Oh, husbands and fathers in Israel, you can do so much for the salvation and exaltation of your families! . . .

“Remember your sacred calling as a father in Israel—your most important calling in time and eternity—a calling from which you will never be released.”

“You must help create a home where the Spirit of the Lord can abide.”⁷

How applicable those prophetic words are today.

It must be difficult, at best, for covenant men to live in a world that not only demeans their divine roles and responsibilities but also sends false messages about what it means to be a “real man.” One false message is “It’s all about me.” On the other end of the

scale is the degrading and mocking message that husbands and fathers are no longer needed. I plead with you not to listen to Satan’s lies! He has forfeited that sacred privilege of ever becoming a husband or father. Because he is jealous of those who have the sacred roles he will never fill, he is intent on making “all men . . . miserable like unto himself!”⁸

Lifting and Helping in Our Complementary Roles

Brothers and sisters, we need each other! As covenant-keeping women and men, we need to lift each other and help each other become the people the Lord would have us become. And we need to work together to lift the rising generation and help them reach their divine potential as heirs of eternal life. We could do as Elder Robert D. Hales and his wife, Mary, have done and follow the proverb “Thee lift me and I’ll lift thee, and we’ll ascend together.”⁹

We know from the scriptures that “it is not good that . . . man should be alone.” That is why our Heavenly Father made “an help meet for him.”¹⁰ The phrase *help meet* means “a helper suited to, worthy of, or corresponding to him.”¹¹ For example, our two hands are similar to each other but not exactly

the same. In fact, they are exact opposites, but they complement each other and are suited to each other. Working together, they are stronger.¹²

In a chapter about families, the Church handbook contains this statement: “The nature of male and female spirits is such that they complete each other.”¹³ Please note that it does not say “compete with each other” but “complete each other”! We are here to help, lift, and rejoice with each other as we try to become our very best selves. Sister Barbara B. Smith wisely taught, “There is so much more of happiness to be had when we can rejoice in another’s successes and not just in our own.”¹⁴ When we seek to “complete” rather than “compete,” it is so much easier to cheer each other on!

When I was a young mother of several small children, at the end of days filled with diapering, dish washing, and disciplining, no one sang more emphatically the Primary song “I’m so glad when daddy comes home.”¹⁵ I’m sad to admit, however, I was not always cheerful when Craig seemed to bounce through the door after a hard day of work. He always greeted each of us with a hug and kiss and turned many difficult and sometimes disastrous days into delightful daddy times. I wish I had been a little less preoccupied with

the endless list of to-dos still to be done and had more wisely focused, like he did, on things that mattered most. I would have stopped more often and enjoyed sacred family time and would have thanked him more often for blessing our lives!

Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words to Each Other

Not long ago, a faithful sister in the Church shared with me a deep concern she had been praying about for some time. Her concern was for some of the sisters in her ward. She told me how it hurt her heart to observe that they sometimes spoke disrespectfully to their husbands and about their husbands, even in front of their children. She then told me how as a young woman she had earnestly desired and prayed to find and marry a worthy priesthood holder and build a happy home with him. She had grown up in a

home where her mother had “ruled the roost” and her father had cowered to her mother’s demands in order to keep peace at home. She felt that there was a better way. She had not seen it modeled in the home she grew up in, but as she prayed fervently for guidance, the Lord blessed her to know how to create a home with her husband where the Spirit would be warmly welcomed. I have been in that home and can testify it is a holy place!

Sisters and brothers, how often do we intentionally “speak kind words to each other”?¹⁶

We might test ourselves by asking a few questions. With a little adaptation, these questions can apply to most of us, whether we are married or single, whatever our home situation might be.

1. When was the last time I sincerely praised my companion, either alone or in the presence of our children?

2. When was the last time I thanked, expressed love for, or earnestly pleaded in faith for him or her in prayer?
3. When was the last time I stopped myself from saying something I knew could be hurtful?
4. When was the last time I apologized and humbly asked for forgiveness—without adding the words “but if only you had” or “but if only you hadn’t”?
5. When was the last time I chose to be happy rather than demanding to be “right”?

Now, if any of these questions lead you to squirm or feel a tinge of guilt, remember that Elder David A. Bednar has taught that “guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage.”¹⁷

I invite each of us to heed Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s heartfelt plea: “Brothers and sisters, in this long eternal quest to be more like our Savior, may we try to be ‘perfect’ men and women in at least this one way now—by offending not in word, or more positively put, by speaking with a new tongue, the tongue of angels.”¹⁸

As I have prepared for this opportunity today, the Spirit has taught me, and I have committed to speak words of kindness more often to my cherished companion and about him, to lift the men in my family and express gratitude for the ways they fulfill their divine and complementary roles. And I have committed to follow the proverb “Thee lift me and I’ll lift thee, and we’ll ascend together.”

Will you join me in seeking the help of the Holy Ghost to teach us how we can better lift each other in our complementary roles as covenant sons



and daughters of our loving heavenly parents?

I know that through the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our faith in Him, we can do it. I pray we will put our trust in Him to help us help each other live happily and eternally as we ascend together, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, in “Donna Smith Packer Receives Family History Certificate from BYU,” news.byu.edu/archive/12-jun-packer.aspx.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Jeffrey R. Holland, “Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf: On to New Horizons,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2005, 12; *Liahona*, Mar. 2005, 10.
3. Henry B. Eyring, in Gerald N. Lund, “Elder Henry B. Eyring: Molded by ‘Defining Influences,’” *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 14; *Liahona*, Apr. 1996, 31.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 85.
5. Mark Twain, *Eve’s Diary* (1905), 107.
6. Boyd K. Packer, “The Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 9.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Fathers in Israel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 51, 50.
8. 2 Nephi 2:27.
9. See Robert D. Hales, “Strengthening Families: Our Sacred Duty,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 34; *Liahona*, July 1999, 40; see also LaRene Gaunt, “Elder Robert D. Hales: ‘Return with Honor,’” *Ensign*, July 1994, 51; *Liahona*, Apr. 1995, 31.
10. Genesis 2:18.
11. Genesis 2:18, footnote *b*.
12. See Bruce K. Satterfield, “The Family under Siege: The Role of Man and Woman” (presentation given at Ricks College Education Week, June 7, 2001), 4; emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELD/PDF/RoleManWoman2.pdf.
13. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.1.
14. Barbara B. Smith, “Hearts So Similar,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 97.
15. “Daddy’s Homecoming,” *Children’s Songbook*, 210.
16. “Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words,” *Hymns*, no. 232.
17. David A. Bednar, “We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 44.
18. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 18.



By Elder Dallin H. Oaks
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Parable of the Sower

It is up to each of us to set the priorities and to do the things that make our soil good and our harvest plentiful.

Subjects for general conference talks are assigned—not by mortal authority but by the impressions of the Spirit. Many subjects would address the mortal concerns we all share. But just as Jesus did not teach how to overcome the mortal challenges or political oppression of His day, He usually inspires His modern servants to speak about what we must do to reform our personal lives to prepare us to return to our heavenly home. On this Easter weekend I have felt impressed to talk about the precious and timeless teachings in one of the parables of Jesus.

The parable of the sower is one of a small number of parables reported in all three of the synoptic Gospels. It is also one of an even smaller group of parables Jesus explained to His disciples. The seed that was sown was “the word of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:19), “the word” (Mark 4:14), or “the word of God” (Luke 8:11)—the teachings of the Master and His servants.

The different soils on which the seeds fell represent different ways in which mortals receive and follow these teachings. Thus the seeds that

“fell by the way side” (Mark 4:4) have not reached mortal soil where they might possibly grow. They are like teachings that fall upon a heart hardened or unprepared. I will say nothing more of these. My message concerns those of us who have committed to be followers of Christ. What do we do with the Savior’s teachings as we live our lives?

The parable of the sower warns us of circumstances and attitudes that can keep anyone who has received the seed of the gospel message from bringing forth a goodly harvest.

I. Stony Ground, No Root

Some seed “fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away” (Mark 4:5–6).

Jesus explained that this describes those “who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness,” but because they “have no root in themselves, . . . when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word’s sake,



immediately they are offended” (Mark 4:16–17).

What causes hearers to “have no root in themselves”? This is the circumstance of new members who are merely converted to the missionaries or to the many attractive characteristics of the Church or to the many great fruits of Church membership. Not being rooted in the word, they can be scorched and wither away when opposition arises. But even those raised in the Church—long-term members—can slip into a condition where they have no root in themselves. I have known

some of these—members without firm and lasting conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are not rooted in the teachings of the gospel and regular in its practices, any one of us can develop a stony heart, which is stony ground for spiritual seeds.

Spiritual food is necessary for spiritual survival, especially in a world that is moving away from belief in God and the absolutes of right and wrong. In an age dominated by the Internet, which magnifies messages that menace faith, we must increase our exposure to spiritual truth in order

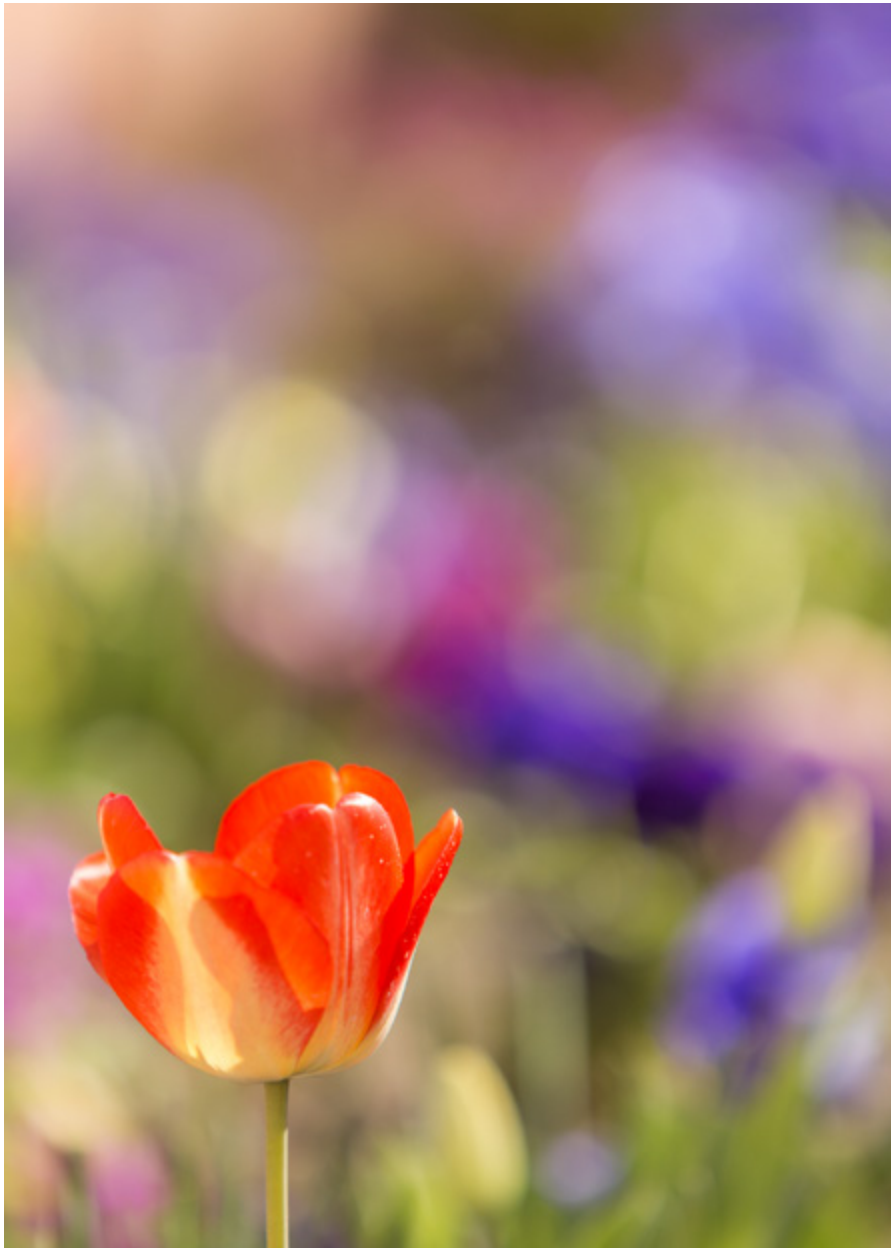
to strengthen our faith and stay rooted in the gospel.

Young people, if that teaching seems too general, here is a specific example. If the emblems of the sacrament are being passed and you are texting or whispering or playing video games or doing anything else to deny yourself essential spiritual food, you are severing your spiritual roots and moving yourself toward stony ground. You are making yourself vulnerable to withering away when you encounter tribulation like isolation, intimidation, or ridicule. And that applies to adults also.

Another potential destroyer of spiritual roots—accelerated by current technology but not unique to it—is the keyhole view of the gospel or the Church. This limited view focuses on a particular doctrine or practice or perceived deficiency in a leader and ignores the grand panorama of the gospel plan and the personal and communal fruits of its harvest. President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a vivid description of one aspect of this keyhole view. He told a BYU audience about political commentators “afire with indignation” at a then-recent news event. “With studied art they poured out the sour vinegar of invective and anger. . . . Surely,” he concluded, “this is the age and place of the gifted pickle sucker.”¹ In contrast, to be securely rooted in the gospel, we must be moderate and measured in criticism and seek always for the broader view of the majestic work of God.

II. Thorns: The Cares of This World and the Deceitfulness of Riches

Jesus taught that “some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit” (Mark 4:7). He explained that these are “such as hear the word, and the



cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:18–19). This is surely a warning to be heeded by all of us.

I will speak first of the deceitfulness of riches. Wherever we are in our spiritual journey—whatever our state of conversion—we are all tempted by this. When attitudes or priorities are fixed on the acquisition, use, or possession of property, we call that materialism. So much has been said and written about materialism that little needs to

be added here.² Those who believe in what has been called the theology of prosperity are suffering from the deceitfulness of riches. The possession of wealth or significant income is not a mark of heavenly favor, and their absence is not evidence of heavenly disfavor. When Jesus told a faithful follower that he could inherit eternal life if he would only give all that he had to the poor (see Mark 10:17–24), He was not identifying an evil in the *possession* of riches but an evil in that follower’s *attitude* toward them. As we are all aware, Jesus praised the good

Samaritan, who used the same coinage to serve his fellowman that Judas used to betray his Savior. The root of all evil is not money but the *love of money* (see 1 Timothy 6:10).

The Book of Mormon tells of a time when the Church of God “began to fail in its progress” (Alma 4:10) because “the people of the church began to . . . set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world” (Alma 4:8). Whoever has an abundance of material things is in jeopardy of being spiritually “sedated” by riches and other things of the world.³ That is a suitable introduction to the next of the Savior’s teachings.

The most subtle thorns to choke out the effect of the gospel word in our lives are the worldly forces that Jesus called the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14). These are too numerous to recite. Some examples will suffice.

On one occasion Jesus rebuked His chief Apostle, saying to Peter, “Thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matthew 16:23; see also D&C 3:6–7; 58:39). Savoring the things of men means putting the cares of this world ahead of the things of God in our actions, our priorities, and our thinking.

We surrender to the “pleasures of this life” (1) when we are addicted, which impairs God’s precious gift of agency; (2) when we are beguiled by trivial distractions, which draw us away from things of eternal importance; and (3) when we have an entitlement mentality, which impairs the personal growth necessary to qualify us for our eternal destiny.

We are overcome by the “cares . . . of this life” when we are paralyzed by fear of the future, which hinders our going forward in faith, trusting in God and



His promises. Twenty-five years ago my esteemed BYU teacher Hugh W. Nibley spoke of the dangers of surrendering to the cares of the world. He was asked in an interview whether world conditions and our duty to spread the gospel made it desirable to seek some way to “be accommodating of the world in what we do in the Church.”⁴

His reply: “That’s been the whole story of the Church, hasn’t it? You have to be willing to offend here, you have to be willing to take the risk. That’s where the faith comes in. . . . Our commitment is supposed to be a test, it’s supposed to be hard, it’s supposed to be impractical in the terms of this world.”⁵

This gospel priority was affirmed on the BYU campus just a few months ago by an esteemed Catholic leader, Charles J. Chaput, the archbishop of Philadelphia. Speaking of “concerns that the LDS and Catholic communities share,” such as “about marriage and family, the nature of our sexuality, the sanctity of human life, and the urgency of religious liberty,” he said this:

“I want to stress again the importance of really living what we claim to believe. That needs to be a priority—not just in our personal and family lives but in our churches, our political choices, our business dealings, our treatment of the poor; in other words, in everything we do.”

“Here’s why that’s important,” he continued. “Learn from the Catholic experience. We Catholics believe that our vocation is to be leaven in society. But there’s a fine line between being leaven *in* society, and being digested *by* society.”⁶

The Savior’s warning against having the cares of this world choke out the word of God in our lives surely challenges us to keep our priorities

fixed—our hearts set—on the commandments of God and the leadership of His Church.

The Savior’s examples could cause us to think of this parable as the parable of the soils. The suitability of the soil depends upon the heart of each one of us who is exposed to the gospel seed. In susceptibility to spiritual teachings, some hearts are hardened and unprepared, some hearts are stony from disuse, and some hearts are set upon the things of the world.

III. Fell into Good Ground and Brought Forth Fruit

The parable of the sower ends with the Savior’s description of the seed that “fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit” in various measures (Matthew 13:8). How can we prepare ourselves to be that good ground and to have that good harvest?

Jesus explained that “the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). We have the seed of the gospel word. It is up to each of us to set the priorities and to do the things that make our soil good and our harvest plentiful. We must seek to be firmly rooted and converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Colossians 2:6–7). We achieve this conversion by praying, by scripture reading, by serving, and by regularly partaking of the sacrament to always have His Spirit to be with us. We must also seek that mighty change of heart

(see Alma 5:12–14) that replaces evil desires and selfish concerns with the love of God and the desire to serve Him and His children.

I testify of the truth of these things, and I testify of our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose teachings point the way and whose Atonement makes it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled” (Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 29, 1974), 1; speeches.byu.edu.
2. See, for example, Dallin H. Oaks, “Materialism,” chapter 5 in *Pure in Heart* (1988), 73–87.
3. I am indebted to Elder Neal A. Maxwell for this memorable image (see “These Are Your Days,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2004, 26).
4. James P. Bell, in “Hugh Nibley, in Black and White,” *BYU Today*, May 1990, 37.
5. Hugh Nibley, in “Hugh Nibley, in Black and White,” 37–38.
6. Charles J. Chaput, “The Great Charter at 800: Why It Still Matters,” *First Things*, Jan. 23, 2015, firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/01/the-great-charter-at-800; see also Tad Walch, “At BYU, Catholic Archbishop Seeks Friends, Says U.S. Liberty Depends on Moral People,” *Deseret News*, Jan. 23, 2015, deseretnews.com/article/865620233/At-BYU-Catholic-archbishop-seeks-friends-says-US-liberty-depends-on-moral-people.html. Archbishop Chaput also said that “some of our best Catholic institutions have either lost or greatly softened their religious identity. . . . Brigham Young is an extraordinary university . . . because it’s a center of learning enriched by its religious identity. Never lose that” (“The Great Charter at 800”).



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf4 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By Elder L. Whitney Clayton
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Choose to Believe

The Savior provides His gospel as a light to guide those who choose to believe in and follow Him.

Last January, seven-year-old Sailor Gutzler and her family were flying from Florida to Illinois in a private airplane. Sailor's father was at the controls. Just after nightfall, the aircraft developed mechanical problems and crashed in the pitch-dark hills of Kentucky, upside down in very rough terrain. Everyone but Sailor died in the accident. Her wrist was broken in the crash. She suffered cuts and scrapes and had lost her shoes. The temperature was 38 degrees Fahrenheit (or 3 degrees Celsius)—it was a cold, rainy Kentucky winter's night—and Sailor was wearing only shorts, a T-shirt, and one sock.

She cried out for her mother and father, but no one answered. Summoning every ounce of courage, she set off barefoot across the countryside in search of help, wading through creeks, crossing ditches, and braving blackberry briars. From the top of one small hill, Sailor spotted a light in the distance, about a mile away. Stumbling through the darkness and brush toward that light, she eventually arrived at the home of a kind man she had never met before who sprang to her care. Sailor was safe. She would soon be taken to a hospital and helped on her way to recovery.¹

Sailor survived because she saw a light in the distance and fought her way to it—notwithstanding the wild countryside, the depth of the tragedy she faced, and the injuries she had sustained. It is hard to imagine how Sailor managed to do what she did that night. But what we do know is that she recognized in the light of that distant house a chance for rescue. There was hope. She took courage in the fact that no matter how bad things were, her rescue would be found in that light.



Few of us will ever endure an experience as harrowing as Sailor's. But all of us will, at some time or another, have to traverse our own spiritual wilderness and undertake our own rugged emotional journeys. In those moments, however dark or seemingly hopeless they may be, if we search for it, there will *always* be a spiritual light that beckons to us, giving us the hope of rescue and relief. That light shines from the Savior of all mankind, who is the Light of the World.

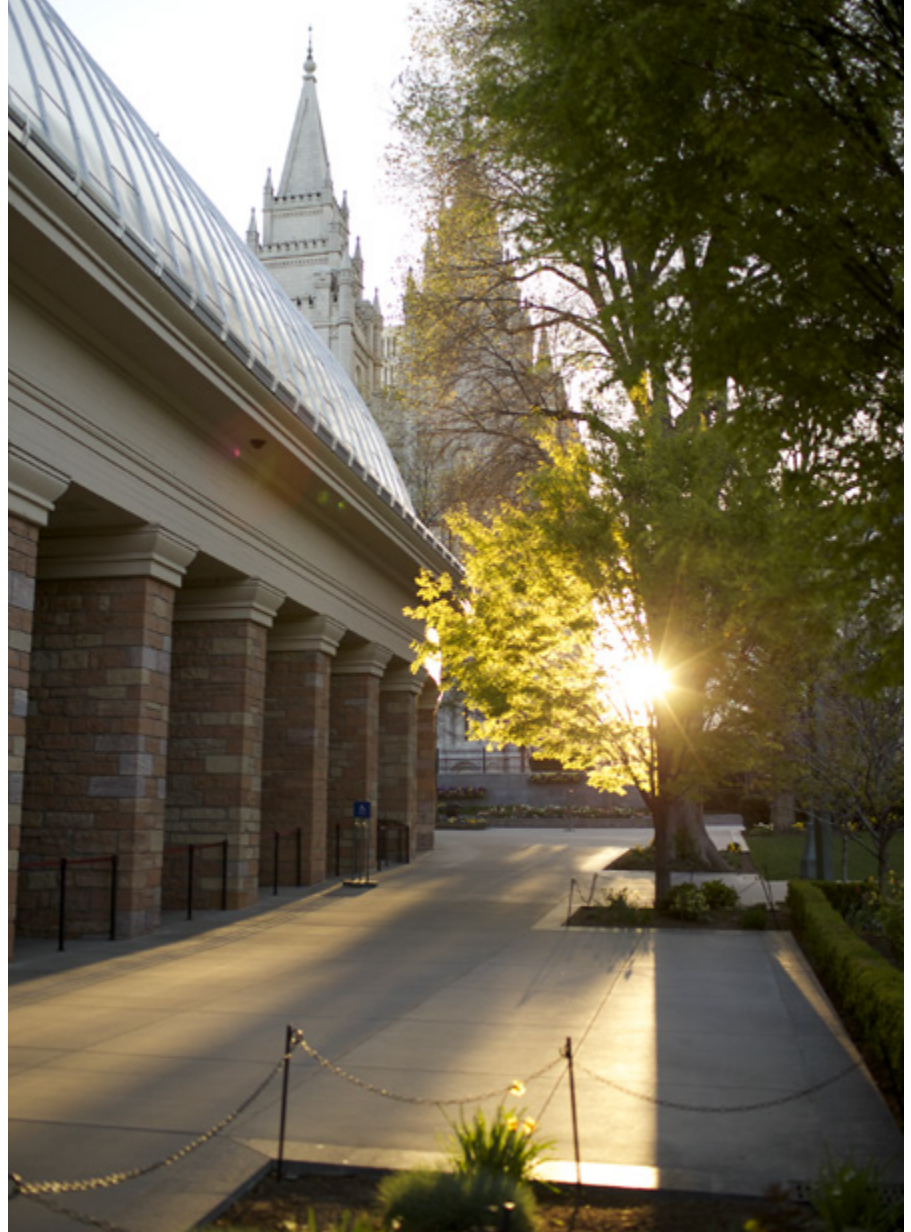
Perceiving spiritual light is different from seeing physical light. Recognizing the Savior's spiritual light begins with our willingness to believe. God requires that initially we at least desire to believe. "If ye will awake and arouse your faculties . . . and exercise a *particle* of faith," the prophet Alma teaches, "yea, even if ye can no more than *desire* to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of [the Savior's] words."²

Alma's call for us to desire to believe and to "give place" in our hearts for the Savior's words reminds us that belief and faith require our personal choice and action. We must "awake and arouse [our] faculties." We ask before it is given unto us; we seek before we find; we knock before it is opened unto us. We are then given this promise: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."³

No more impassioned plea for us to believe has come than from the Savior Himself, during His earthly ministry, when He appealed to His disbelieving listeners:

"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

"But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may



know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."⁴

Every day each of us faces a test. It is the test of our lifetimes: will we choose to believe in Him and allow the light of His gospel to grow within us, or will we refuse to believe and insist on traveling alone in the dark? The Savior provides His gospel as a light to guide those who choose to believe in and follow Him.

After the crash, Sailor had a choice. She could have chosen to stay by the airplane in the dark, alone and afraid. But there was a long night ahead, and it was just going to get colder. She chose another way. Sailor climbed up a hill, and there she saw a light on the horizon.

Gradually, as she made her way through the night toward the light, it grew brighter. Still, there must have been times when she could not see it. Perhaps it went out of view when she was in a ravine or behind trees or bushes, but she pressed on. Whenever she could see the light, Sailor had evidence that she was on the right path. She did not yet know precisely what that light was, but she kept walking toward it based on what she knew, trusting and hoping that she would see it again if she kept moving in the right direction. By so doing, she may have saved her life.

Our lives can be like that too. There may be times when we have been hurt, when we are tired, and when our lives



seem dark and cold. There may be times when we cannot see any light on the horizon, and we may feel like giving up. If we are willing to believe, if we desire to believe, if we choose to believe, then the Savior's teachings and example will show us the pathway forward.

Choose to Believe

Just as Sailor had to believe that she would find safety in that distant light, so we too must choose to open our hearts to the divine reality of the Savior—to His eternal light and His healing mercy. Prophets across the ages have encouraged us and even implored us to believe in Christ. Their exhortations reflect a fundamental fact: God does not force us to believe. Instead He invites us to believe by sending living prophets and apostles to teach us, by providing scriptures, and by beckoning to us through His Spirit. We are the ones who must choose to embrace those spiritual invitations, electing to see with inward eyes the spiritual light with which He calls us. The decision to believe is the most important choice we ever make. It shapes all our other decisions.

God does not compel us to believe any more than He compels us to keep

any commandments, despite His perfect desire to bless us. Yet His call to us to believe in Him—to exercise that particle of faith and to give place for His words—remains in effect today. As the Savior said, "I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me."⁵

Belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles. They do not just happen to us. Belief is something we choose—we hope for it, we work for it, and we sacrifice for it. We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay tithing. We actively choose to believe, just like we choose to keep other commandments.

Put Belief into Action

Sailor could not know at first if what she was doing as she pushed her way through the underbrush would actually work. She was lost and injured; it was dark and cold. But she left the crash site and ventured out in hope of rescue, crawling and scraping her way forward until she saw a light in the distance. Once she had seen it, she did her best to move toward it, remembering what she had seen.

We likewise must give place for the hope that we will find spiritual light by embracing belief rather than choosing to doubt. Our actions are the evidence of our belief and become the substance of our faith. We are choosing to believe when we pray and when we read the scriptures. We are choosing to believe when we fast, when we keep the Sabbath day holy, and when we worship in the temple. We are choosing to believe when we are baptized and when we partake of the sacrament. We are choosing to believe when we repent and seek divine forgiveness and healing love.

Never Give Up

Sometimes progress in spiritual things can seem slow or intermittent. Sometimes we may feel that we have lost ground, that we have made mistakes, or that our best efforts to find the Savior are not working. If you feel this way, please do not give up—ever. Go right on believing in Him and in His gospel and His Church. Align your actions with that belief. In those moments when the light of your faith has dimmed, let your hope for the Savior's love and grace, found in His

gospel and His Church, overcome your doubt. I promise that He stands ready to receive you. Over time you will come to see that you have made the best choice you could possibly have made. Your courageous decision to believe in Him will bless you immeasurably and forever.

The Blessings of Belief

I have felt the merciful love of the Savior in my life. I have searched for Him in my own moments of darkness, and He has reached out to me with His healing light. One of the great joys of my life has been traveling with my wife, Kathy, to meet with members of the Church in many corners of the globe. These wonderful encounters have taught me and taught us about God's love for His children. They have shown me the limitless potential for happiness that becomes the blessing of those who choose to follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have learned that believing in Him and in His redemptive power is the true path to "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."⁶

I testify that Jesus Christ is the source of light and hope for all of us. I pray that we may all choose to believe in Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Lindsey Bever, "How 7-Year-Old Sailor Gutzler Survived a Plane Crash," *Washington Post*, Jan. 5, 2015, washingtonpost.com; "Girl Who Survived Plane Crash Hoped Family 'Was Just Sleeping,'" Jan. 4, 2015, myfox8.com; "Kentucky Plane Crash: Four Killed, Little Girl Survives," Jan. 4, 2015, news.com.au; Associated Press, "Young Girl, Sole Survivor of Kentucky Plane Crash," Jan. 3, 2015, jems.com.
2. Alma 32:27; emphasis added.
3. 3 Nephi 14:8; see also verse 7.
4. John 10:37–38.
5. 3 Nephi 11:32.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.



By Elder L. Tom Perry
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Why Marriage and Family Matter— Everywhere in the World

Family is the center of life and is the key to eternal happiness.

Last November, I had the privilege of being invited—along with President Henry B. Eyring and Bishop Gérald Caussé—to attend a colloquium on marriage and family at the Vatican in Rome, Italy. In attendance

were religious representatives from 14 different faiths and from six of the seven continents, all of whom had been invited to express their beliefs on what is happening to the family in today's world.

Pope Francis opened the first session of the assembly with this statement: "We now live in a culture of the temporary, in which more and more people are simply giving up on marriage as a public commitment. This revolution in manners and morals has often flown the flag of freedom, but in fact it has brought spiritual and material devastation to countless human beings, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. . . . It is always they who suffer the most in this crisis."¹

In referring to those of the rising generation, he said it is important that they "do not give themselves over to the poisonous [mentality] of the temporary, but rather be revolutionaries with the courage to seek true and





Colloquium on marriage and family, Vatican City

lasting love, going against the common pattern”; this must be done.²

This was followed by three days of presentation and discussion with religious leaders addressing the subject of marriage between a man and a woman. As I listened to the widest imaginable variety of worldwide religious leaders, I heard them agree completely with each other and express support for one another’s beliefs on the sanctity of the institution of marriage and of the importance of families as the basic unit of society. I felt a powerful sense of commonality and unity with them.

There were many who saw and expressed this unity, and they did so in a variety of ways. One of my favorites was when a Muslim scholar from Iran quoted two paragraphs verbatim from our very own proclamation on the family.

During the colloquium, I observed that when various faiths and denominations and religions are united on marriage and family, they are also united on the values and loyalty and commitment which are naturally associated with family units. It was remarkable for me to see how marriage and family-centered priorities cut across and superseded any political, economic, or religious differences. When it comes to love of spouse and hopes, worries, and dreams for children, we are all the same.

It was marvelous to be in meetings with worldwide presenters as they universally addressed their feelings of the importance of marriage between a man and a woman. Each of their addresses was followed by testimonies from other religious leaders. President Henry B. Eyring gave a final testimony at the



colloquium. He bore powerful witness to the beauty of a committed marriage and to our belief in the promised blessing of eternal families.

President Eyring’s testimony was a fitting benediction to those three special days.

Now, you may be asking, “If the majority felt that similarity of family priority and beliefs, if all of those faiths and religions essentially agreed on what marriage should be, and if they all agreed on the value that should be placed on homes and family relationships, then how are we any different? How does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints distinguish and differentiate itself from the rest of the world?”

Here is the answer: while it was wonderful to see and feel that we have so much in common with the rest of the world in regard to our families,

only we have the eternal perspective of the restored gospel.

What the restored gospel brings to the discussion on marriage and family is so large and so relevant that it cannot be overstated: we make the subject eternal! We take the commitment and the sanctity of marriage to a greater level because of our belief and understanding that families go back to before this earth was and that they can go forward into eternity.

This doctrine is taught so simply, powerfully, and beautifully by Ruth Gardner’s text for the Primary song “Families Can Be Together Forever.” Pause for just a moment and think about Primary children all over the world singing these words in their native tongue, at the top of their lungs, with an enthusiasm that only love of family can evoke:

*Families can be together forever
Through Heavenly Father's plan.
I always want to be with my own
family,
And the Lord has shown me how I can.*³

The entire theology of our restored gospel centers on families and on the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we believe in a pre-mortal life where we all lived as literal spirit children of God our Heavenly Father. We believe that we were, and still are, members of His family.

We believe that marriage and family ties can continue beyond the grave—that marriages performed by those who have the proper authority in His temples will continue to be valid in the world to come. Our marriage ceremonies eliminate the words “till death do us part” and instead say, “for time and for all eternity.”

We also believe that strong traditional families are not only the basic units of a stable society, a stable economy, and a stable culture of values—but that they are also the basic units of eternity and of the kingdom and government of God.

We believe that the organization and government of heaven will be built around families and extended families.

It is because of our belief that marriages and families are eternal that we, as a church, want to be a leader and a participant in worldwide movements to strengthen them. We know that it is not only those who are actively religious who share common values and priorities of lasting marriages and strong family relationships. A great number of secular people have concluded that a committed marriage and family lifestyle is the most sensible, the most economical, and the happiest way to live.



No one has ever come up with a more efficient way to raise the next generation than a household of married parents with children.

Why should marriage and family matter—everywhere? Public opinion polls show that marriage is still the ideal and the hope among the majority of every age group—even among the millennial generation, where we hear so much about chosen singleness, personal freedom, and cohabitation instead of marriage. The fact is that strong majorities worldwide still want to have children and to create strong families.

Once we are married and once we have children, the true commonality among all mankind becomes even more evident. As “family people”—no matter where we live or what our religious beliefs may be—we share many of the same struggles, the same adjustments, and the same hopes, worries, and dreams for our children.

As *New York Times* columnist David Brooks said: “People are not better off when they are given maximum personal freedom to do what they

want. They’re better off when they are enshrouded in commitments that transcend personal choice—commitments to family, God, craft and country.”⁴

One problem is that much of the media and entertainment that the world shares does not reflect the priorities and values of the majority. For whatever reasons, too much of our television, movies, music, and Internet present a classic case of a minority masquerading as a majority. Immorality and amorality, ranging from graphic violence to recreational sex, is portrayed as the norm and can cause those who have mainstream values to feel like we are out of date or from a bygone era. In such a media and Internet-dominated world, it has never been harder to raise responsible children and to keep marriages and families together.

Despite what much of media and entertainment outlets may suggest, however, and despite the very real decline in the marriage and family orientation of some, the solid majority of mankind still believes that marriage should be between one man and one woman. They believe in fidelity within



marriage and family are so important, why marriage and family really do matter, and why they always will.

My brothers and sisters, the restored gospel centers on marriage and family. It is also on marriage and family where we can unite most with other faiths. It is around marriage and family where we will find our greatest commonality with the rest of the world. It is around marriage and family that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the greatest opportunity to be a light on the hill.

Let me close by bearing witness (and my nine decades on this earth fully qualify me to say this) that the older I get, the more I realize that family is the center of life and is the key to eternal happiness.

I give thanks for my wife, for my children, for my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, and for all of the cousins and in-laws and extended family who make my own life so rich and, yes, even eternal. Of this eternal truth I bear my strongest and most sacred witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Pope Francis, address at Humanum: An International Interreligious Colloquium on the Complementarity of Man and Woman, Nov. 17, 2014, humanum.it/en/videos; see also zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-at-opening-of-colloquium-on-complementarity-of-man-and-woman.
2. Pope Francis, Colloquium on the Complementarity of Man and Woman.
3. "Families Can Be Together Forever," *Hymns*, no. 300.
4. David Brooks, "The Age of Possibility," *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 2012, A35, nytimes.com/2012/11/16/opinion/brooks-the-age-of-possibility.html.

marriage, and they believe in the marriage vows of "in sickness and in health" and "till death do us part."

We need to remind ourselves once in a while, as I was reminded in Rome, of the wonderfully reassuring and comforting fact that marriage and family are still the aspiration and ideal of most people and that we are not alone in those beliefs. It has never been more of a challenge to find a practical balance between employment, families, and personal needs than it is in our day. As a church, we want to assist in all that we can to create and support strong marriages and families.

That is why the Church actively participates in and provides leadership to various coalitions and ecumenical efforts to strengthen the family. It is why we share our family-focused values in the media and on social media. It is why we share our genealogical and extended family records with all nations.

We want our voice to be heard against all of the counterfeit and alternative lifestyles that try to replace the family organization that God Himself established. We also want our voice to be heard in sustaining the joy and fulfillment that traditional families bring. We must continue to project that voice throughout the world in declaring why



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf5 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



Presented by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The Sustaining of Church Officers

Brothers and sisters, 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.

The vote has been noted.

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.

Thank you. The vote has been noted.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

The vote has been noted.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies, effective on May 1, 2015: Juan C. Avila, Philip K. Bussey, René J. Cabrera, Renato Capelletti, Paul D. M. Christensen, Samuel W. Clark, Rogério G. R. Cruz, George R. Donaldson, Ini B. Ekong, Christian H. Fingerle, Craig G. Fisher, Jerryl L. Garns, M. Keith Giddens, Allen D. Haynie, Jui Chang Juan, George M. Keele, Von G. Keetch, Katsumi Kusume, German Laboriel, J. Christopher Lansing, Gustavo Lopez, Dmitry V. Marchenko, Peter F. Meurs, T. Jackson Mkhabela, Hugo Montoya, Valentín F. Nuñez, Hee Keun Oh, Jeffery E. Olson, R. Ingvar Olsson, Norbert K. Ounleu, Robert N. Packer, Nathaniel R. Payne, Cesar A. Perez Jr.,





Paschoal F. Fortunato, Patricio M. Giuffra, Daniel P. Hall, Toru Hayashi, Paul F. Hintze, J. K. Chukwuemeka Igwe, Seung Hoon Koo, Ming-Shun Kuan, Johnny L. Leota, Carlo M. Lezano, Joel Martinez, J. Vaun McArthur, Kyle S. McKay, Helamán Montejo, A. Fabio Moscoso, Michael R. Murray, Norman R. Nemrow, S. Mark Palmer, Ferdinand P. Pangan, Jairus C. Perez, Steven M. Petersen, Wolfgang Pilz, Jay D. Pimentel, John C. Pingree Jr., Edvaldo B. Pinto Jr., Evan A. Schmutz, K. David Scott, Paul H. Sinclair, Benjamin T. Sinjoux, Rulon F. Stacey, David L. Stapleton, Karl M. Tilleman, William R. Titera, Seiji Tokuzawa, Carlos R. Toledo, Cesar E. Villar, Juan Pablo Villar, David T. Warner, Gary K. Wilde, and Robert K. William.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Cheryl A. Esplin to now serve as first counselor in the Primary general presidency and Mary R. Durham to serve as second counselor.

It is also proposed that we sustain Brother Stephen W. Owen as Young Men general president, with Douglas Dee Holmes as first counselor and Monte Joseph Brough as second counselor.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

President Monson, the voting has been noted. We invite those who opposed any of the proposals to contact their stake presidents. My dear brothers and sisters, we thank you for your faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church.

We invite the new General Authorities and the new general auxiliary presidency members to now take their seats on the rostrum. ■

Michael J. Reall, Edson D. G. Ribeiro, Brad K. Risenmay, Walter C. Selden, Mozart B. Soares, Carlos Solis, Norland Souza, Vern P. Stanfill, T. Marama Tarati, Kouzou Tashiro, Ruben D. Torres, Omar Villalobos, Jack D. Ward, Alan J. Webb, Gerardo J. Wilhelm, and Jim L. Wright.

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

It is proposed that we release with heartfelt gratitude Brothers David L. Beck, Larry M. Gibson, and Randall L. Ridd as the Young Men general presidency. We likewise extend releases to all members of the Young Men general board.

At this time we also extend releases to Sister Jean A. Stevens as first counselor in the Primary general presidency and Sister Cheryl A. Esplin as second

counselor in the Primary general presidency.

All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation to these brothers and sisters for their remarkable service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Kim B. Clark, Von G. Keetch, Allen D. Haynie, Hugo Montoya, and Vern P. Stanfill.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies: Nelson Ardila, Jose M. Batalla, Lawrence P. Blunck, Bradford C. Bowen, Mark A. Bragg, Sergio Luis Carboni, Armando Carreón, S. Marc Clay Jr., Z. Dominique Dekaye, Osvaldo R. Dias, Michael M. Dudley, Mark P. Durham, James E. Evanson,

Church Auditing Department Report, 2014

Presented by Kevin R. Jergensen
Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: As directed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes—composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric—authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. Church entities disburse funds in accordance with approved budgets, policies, and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department, which consists of credentialed professionals and is independent of all other Church departments, has responsibility to perform audits for the purpose of providing reasonable assurance regarding contributions received,

expenditures made, and safeguarding of Church assets.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2014 have been recorded and administered in accordance with approved Church budgets, policies, and accounting practices. The Church follows the practices taught to its members of living within a budget, avoiding debt, and saving against a time of need.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Auditing Department
Kevin R. Jergensen
Managing Director ■

Statistical Report, 2014

Presented by Brook P. Hales
Secretary to the First Presidency

The First Presidency has issued the following statistical report regarding the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2014.

Church Units

Stakes	3,114
Missions	406
Districts.....	561
Wards and Branches	29,621

Church Membership

Total Membership.....	15,372,337
New Children of Record.....	116,409
Converts Baptized.....	296,803

Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries.....	85,147
Church-Service Missionaries.....	30,404

Temples

Temples Dedicated during 2014 (Fort Lauderdale Florida, Gilbert Arizona, and Phoenix Arizona)	3
Temples Rededicated (Ogden Utah).....	1
Temples in Operation at Year End....	144





By Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Therefore They Hushed Their Fears

Unlike worldly fear that creates alarm and anxiety, godly fear is a source of peace, assurance, and confidence.

I remember vividly an experience I had as a small boy. One day while playing with my friends, I accidentally broke a window in a store near our home. As the glass shattered and the security alarm blared, a paralyzing fear filled my heart and mind. I realized immediately I was doomed to spend the remainder of my life in prison. My parents eventually coaxed me out from a hiding place under my bed and helped me to make amends with the store owner. Fortunately, my jail sentence was commuted.

The fear I felt that day was overwhelming and real. You undoubtedly have experienced much greater feelings of dread after learning about a personal health challenge, discovering a family member in difficulty or danger, or observing disturbing world events. In such instances, the distressing emotion of fear arises because of impending danger, uncertainty, or pain and through experiences that are unexpected, sometimes sudden, and likely to produce a negative outcome.

In our daily lives, endless reports of criminal violence, famine, wars, corruption, terrorism, declining values,

disease, and the destructive forces of nature can engender fear and apprehension. Surely we live in the season foretold by the Lord: “And in that day . . . the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts shall fail them” (D&C 45:26).

My purpose is to describe how fear is dispelled through a correct knowledge of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I earnestly pray the Holy Ghost will bless each of us as we consider together this important topic.

Mortal Fear

Upon hearing the voice of God after partaking of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve hid themselves in the Garden of Eden. God called unto Adam and asked, “Where art thou? And [Adam answered], I heard thy voice . . . , and I was afraid” (Genesis 3:9–10). Notably, one of the first effects of the Fall was for Adam and Eve to experience fear. This potent emotion is an important element of our mortal existence.

An example from the Book of Mormon highlights the power of the knowledge of the Lord (see 2 Peter 1:2–8; Alma 23:5–6) to dispel fear and provide peace even as we confront great adversity.

In the land of Helam, Alma’s people were frightened by an advancing Lamanite army.

“But Alma went forth and stood among them, and exhorted them that they should not be frightened, but . . . should remember the Lord their God and he would deliver them.

“Therefore they hushed their fears” (Mosiah 23:27–28).

Notice Alma did not hush the people’s fears. Rather, Alma counseled





the believers to remember the Lord and the deliverance only He could bestow (see 2 Nephi 2:8). And knowledge of the Savior's protecting watchcare enabled the people to hush their own fears.

Correct knowledge of and faith in the Lord empower us to hush our fears because Jesus Christ is the only source of enduring peace. He declared, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

The Master also explained, "He who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23).

Trust and confidence in Christ and a ready reliance on His merits, mercy, and grace lead to hope, through His Atonement, in the Resurrection and eternal life (see Moroni 7:41). Such faith and hope invite into our lives the sweet peace of conscience for which we all yearn. The power of the Atonement makes repentance possible and quells the despair caused

by sin; it also strengthens us to see, do, and become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. Truly, one of the great blessings of devoted discipleship is "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

The peace Christ gives allows us to view mortality through the precious perspective of eternity and supplies a spiritual settledness (see Colossians 1:23) that helps us maintain a consistent focus on our heavenly destination. Thus, we can be blessed to hush our fears because His doctrine provides purpose and direction in all aspects of our lives. His ordinances and covenants fortify and comfort in times both good and bad. And His priesthood authority gives assurance that the things that matter most can endure both in time and in eternity.

But can we hush the fears that so easily and frequently beset us in our contemporary world? The answer to this question is an unequivocal yes. Three basic principles are central to

receiving this blessing in our lives: (1) look to Christ, (2) build upon the foundation of Christ, and (3) press forward with faith in Christ.

Look to Christ

The counsel Alma gave to his son Helaman applies precisely to each of us today: "Yea, see that ye look to God and live" (Alma 37:47). We should look to and have our focus firmly fixed upon the Savior at all times and in all places.

Recall how the Lord's Apostles were in a ship, tossed in the midst of the sea. Jesus went to them, walking on the water; but not recognizing Him, they cried out in fear.

"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" (Matthew 14:27–29).

Peter then walked on the water to Jesus.

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid," began to sink, and cried out, "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?” (Matthew 14:30–31).

I envision Peter responding fervently and immediately to the Savior’s invitation. With his eyes fixed upon Jesus, he stepped out of the boat and miraculously walked on the water. Only when his gaze was diverted by the wind and the waves did he become afraid and begin to sink.

We can be blessed to conquer our fears and strengthen our faith as we follow the Lord’s instruction: “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36).

Build upon the Foundation of Christ

Helaman admonished his sons, Nephi and Lehi: “Remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye

are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

Ordinances and covenants are the building blocks we use to construct our lives upon the foundation of Christ and His Atonement. We are connected securely to and with the Savior as we worthily receive ordinances and enter into covenants, faithfully remember and honor those sacred commitments, and do our best to live in accordance with the obligations we have accepted. And that bond is the source of spiritual strength and stability in all of the seasons of our lives.

We can be blessed to hush our fears as we firmly establish our desires and deeds upon the sure foundation of the Savior through our ordinances and covenants.

Press Forward with Faith in Christ

Nephi declared: “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

The disciplined endurance described in this verse is the result of spiritual understanding and vision, persistence, patience, and God’s grace. Exercising faith in and on the holy name of Jesus Christ, meekly submitting to His will and timing in our lives, and humbly acknowledging His hand in all things yield the peaceable things of the kingdom of God that bring joy and eternal life (see D&C 42:61). Even as we encounter difficulties and face the uncertainties of the future, we can cheerfully persevere and live a “peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:2).

We can be blessed to hush our fears as we receive the fortitude that comes from learning and living gospel principles and resolutely pressing forward on the covenant pathway.

The Fear of the Lord

Different from but related to the fears we often experience is what the scriptures describe as “godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28) or “the fear of the Lord” (Job 28:28; Proverbs 16:6; Isaiah 11:2–3). Unlike worldly fear that creates alarm and anxiety, godly fear is a source of peace, assurance, and confidence.

But how can anything associated with fear be edifying or spiritually helpful?

The righteous fear I am attempting to describe encompasses a deep feeling of reverence, respect, and awe for the Lord Jesus Christ (see Psalm 33:8; 96:4), obedience to His commandments (see Deuteronomy 5:29; 8:6; 10:12; 13:4; Psalm 112:1), and anticipation of the Final Judgment and justice at His hand. Thus, godly fear grows out of a correct understanding of the divine nature and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, a

willingness to submit our will to His will, and a knowledge that every man and woman will be accountable for his or her own sins in the Day of Judgment (see D&C 101:78; Articles of Faith 1:2).

As the scriptures certify, godly fear “is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7), “the instruction of wisdom” (Proverbs 15:33), a “strong confidence” (Proverbs 14:26), and “a fountain of life” (Proverbs 14:27).

Please note that godly fear is linked inextricably to an understanding of the Final Judgment and our individual accountability for our desires, thoughts, words, and acts (see Mosiah 4:30). The fear of the Lord is not a reluctant apprehension about coming into His presence to be judged. I do not believe we will be afraid of Him at all. Rather, it is the prospect in His presence of facing things as they really are about ourselves and having “a perfect knowledge” (2 Nephi 9:14; see also Alma 11:43) of all our rationalizations, pretenses, and self-deceptions. Ultimately, we will be left without excuse.

Every person who has lived or will yet live upon the earth “shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to [his or her] works whether they be good or whether they be evil” (Mosiah 16:10). If our desires have been for righteousness and our works good, then the judgment bar will be pleasing (see Jacob 6:13; Enos 1:27; Moroni 10:34). And at the last day we will “be rewarded unto righteousness” (Alma 41:6).

Conversely, if our desires have been for evil and our works wicked, then the judgment bar will be a cause of dread. “We shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence” (Alma 12:14). And at the last day we will “have [our] reward of evil” (Alma 41:5).

As summarized in Ecclesiastes: “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

My beloved brothers and sisters, godly fear dispels mortal fears. It even subdues the haunting concern that we never can be good enough spiritually and never will measure up to the Lord’s requirements and expectations. In truth, we cannot be good enough or measure up relying solely upon our own capacity and performance. Our works and desires alone do not and cannot save us. “After all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23), we are made whole only through the mercy and grace available through the Savior’s infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice (see Alma 34:10, 14). Certainly, “we believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:3).

Godly fear is loving and trusting in Him. As we fear God more completely, we love Him more perfectly. And “perfect love casteth out all fear” (Moroni 8:16). I promise the bright light of godly fear will chase away the dark shadows of mortal fears (see D&C 50:25) as we look to the Savior, build upon Him as our foundation, and press forward on His covenant path with consecrated commitment.

Testimony and Promise

I love and revere the Lord. His power and peace are real. He is our Redeemer, and I witness He lives. And because of Him, our hearts need not be troubled or afraid (see John 14:27), and we will be blessed to hush our fears. I so testify in the sacred and holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf6 to watch this talk or to find media to share.





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

Why Marriage, Why Family

A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive.

Above the Great West Door of the renowned Westminster Abbey in London, England, stand the statues of 10 Christian martyrs of the 20th century. Included among them is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a brilliant German theologian born in 1906.¹ Bonhoeffer became a vocal critic of the Nazi dictatorship and its treatment of Jews and others. He was imprisoned for his active opposition and finally executed in a concentration camp. Bonhoeffer was a prolific writer, and some of his best-known pieces are letters that

sympathetic guards helped him smuggle out of prison, later published as *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

One of those letters was to his niece before her wedding. It included these significant insights: “Marriage is more than your love for each other. . . . In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to his glory, and calls into his kingdom. In your love you see only the heaven of your own happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal—it is a status, an office. Just as it is the crown, and not merely the will to rule, that makes the king, so it is marriage, and not merely your love for each other, that joins you together in the sight of God and man. . . . So love comes from you, but marriage from above, from God.”²

In what way does marriage between a man and a woman transcend their love for one another and their own happiness to become “a post

of responsibility towards the world and mankind”? In what sense does it come “from above, from God”? To understand, we have to go back to the beginning.

Prophets have revealed that we first existed as intelligences and that we were given form, or spirit bodies, by God, thus becoming His spirit children—sons and daughters of heavenly parents.³ There came a time in this premortal existence of spirits when, in furtherance of His desire that we “could have a privilege to advance like himself,”⁴ our Heavenly Father prepared an enabling plan. In the scriptures it is given various names, including “the plan of salvation,”⁵ “the great plan of happiness,”⁶ and “the plan of redemption.”⁷ The two principal purposes of the plan were explained to Abraham in these words:

“And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these [spirits] may dwell;

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

“And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”⁸

Thanks to our Heavenly Father, we had already become spirit beings. Now He was offering us a path to complete or perfect that being. The addition of the physical element is essential to the fullness of being and glory that God Himself enjoys. If, while with God in the premortal spirit world, we would agree to participate in His plan—or in



other words “keep [our] first estate”—we would “be added upon” with a physical body as we came to dwell on the earth that He created for us.

If, then in the course of our mortal experience, we chose to “do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God [should] command [us],” we would have kept our “second estate.” This means that by our choices we would demonstrate to God (and to ourselves) our commitment and capacity to live His celestial law while outside His presence and in a physical body with all its powers, appetites, and passions. Could we bridle the flesh so that it became the instrument rather than the master of the spirit? Could we be trusted both in time and eternity with godly powers, including power to create life? Would we individually overcome evil? Those who did would “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever”—a very significant aspect of that glory being a resurrected, immortal, and glorified physical body.⁹ No wonder we “shouted for joy” at these magnificent possibilities and promises.¹⁰

At least four things are needed for the success of this divine plan:

First was the Creation of the earth as our dwelling place. Whatever the details of the creation process, we know that it was not accidental but that it was directed by God the Father and implemented by Jesus Christ—“all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”¹¹

Second is the condition of mortality. Adam and Eve acted for all who had chosen to participate in the Father’s great plan of happiness.¹² Their Fall created the conditions needed for our physical birth and for mortal experience and learning outside the presence of God. With the Fall came an



awareness of good and evil and the God-given power to choose.¹³ Finally, the Fall brought about physical death needed to make our time in mortality temporary so that we would not live forever in our sins.¹⁴

Third is redemption from the Fall. We see the role of death in our Heavenly Father’s plan, but that plan would become void without some way to overcome death in the end, both physical and spiritual. Thus, a Redeemer, the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, suffered and died to atone for Adam and Eve’s transgression, thereby providing resurrection and immortality for all. And since none of us will have been perfectly and consistently obedient to the gospel law, His Atonement also redeems us from our own sins on condition of repentance. With the Savior’s atoning grace providing forgiveness of sins and sanctification of the soul, we can spiritually be born again and reconciled to God. Our spiritual death—our separation from God—will end.¹⁵

Fourth, and finally, is the setting for our physical birth and subsequent spiritual rebirth into the kingdom of God. For His work to succeed to “[exalt

us] with himself,”¹⁶ God ordained that men and women should marry and give birth to children, thereby creating, in partnership with God, the physical bodies that are key to the test of mortality and essential to eternal glory with Him. He also ordained that parents should establish families and rear their children in light and truth,¹⁷ leading them to a hope in Christ. The Father commands us:

“Teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

“That . . . inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the [Holy] Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory.”¹⁸

Knowing why we left the presence of our Heavenly Father and what it takes to return and be exalted with Him, it becomes very clear that nothing relative to our time on earth can be more important than physical birth and

spiritual rebirth, the two prerequisites of eternal life. This is, to use the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the “office” of marriage, the “post of responsibility towards . . . mankind,” that this divine institution “from above, from God” occupies. It is the “link in the chain of the generations” both here and hereafter—the order of heaven.

A family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive—the setting for the birth of children, who come in purity and innocence from God, and the environment for the learning and preparation they will need for a successful mortal life and eternal life in the world to come. A critical mass of families built on such marriages is vital for societies to survive and flourish. That is why communities and nations generally have encouraged and protected marriage and the family as privileged institutions. It has never been just about the love and happiness of adults.

The social science case for marriage and for families headed by a married man and woman is compelling.¹⁹ And so “we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.”²⁰ But our claims for the role of marriage and family rest not on social science but on the truth that they are God’s creation. It is He who in the beginning created Adam and Eve in His image, male and female, and joined them as husband and wife to become “one flesh” and to multiply and replenish the earth.²¹ Each individual carries the divine image, but it is in the matrimonial union of male and female as one that we attain perhaps the most complete meaning of our having been made in the image of God—male and female. Neither we nor any other mortal can

alter this divine order of matrimony. It is not a human invention. Such marriage is indeed “from above, from God” and is as much a part of the plan of happiness as the Fall and the Atonement.

In the premortal world, Lucifer rebelled against God and His plan, and his opposition only grows in intensity. He fights to discourage marriage and the formation of families, and where marriages and families are formed, he does what he can to disrupt them. He attacks everything that is sacred about human sexuality, tearing it from the context of marriage with a seemingly infinite array of immoral thoughts and acts. He seeks to convince men and women that marriage and family priorities can be ignored or abandoned, or at least made subservient to careers, other achievements, and the quest for self-fulfillment and individual autonomy. Certainly the adversary is pleased when parents neglect to teach and train their children to have faith in Christ and be spiritually born again. Brothers and sisters, many things are good, many are important, but only a few are essential.

To declare the fundamental truths relative to marriage and family is not to overlook or diminish the sacrifices and successes of those for whom the ideal is not a present reality. Some of you are denied the blessing of marriage for reasons including a lack of viable prospects, same-sex attraction, physical or mental impairments, or simply a fear of failure that, for the moment at least, overshadows faith. Or you may have married, but that marriage ended, and you are left to manage alone what two together can barely sustain. Some of you who are married cannot bear children despite overwhelming desires and pleading prayers.

Even so, everyone has gifts; everyone has talents; everyone can

contribute to the unfolding of the divine plan in each generation. Much that is good, much that is essential—even sometimes all that is necessary for now—can be achieved in less than ideal circumstances. So many of you are doing your very best. And when you who bear the heaviest burdens of mortality stand up in defense of God’s plan to exalt His children, we are all ready to march. With confidence we testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ has anticipated and, in the end, will compensate all deprivation and loss for those who turn to Him. No one is predestined to receive less than all that the Father has for His children.

One young mother recently confided to me her anxiety about being inadequate in this highest of callings. I felt that the issues that concerned her were small and she needn’t worry; she was doing fine. But I knew she only wanted to please God and to honor His trust. I offered words of reassurance, and in my heart I pleaded that God, her Heavenly Father, would buoy her up with His love and the witness of His approval as she is about His work.

That is my prayer for all of us today. May we each find approval in His sight.



May marriages flourish and families prosper, and whether our lot is a fullness of these blessings in mortality or not, may the Lord's grace bring happiness now and faith in sure promises to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Kevin Rudd, "Faith in Politics," *The Monthly*, Oct. 2006, themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-kevin-rudd-faith-politics-300.
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (1953), 42–43.
3. See, for example, Psalm 82:6; Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9; Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, 33; Moses 6:51; Abraham 3:22. The Prophet Joseph Smith provided this detail: "The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits [or intelligences] and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. . . . He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 210).
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 210.
5. Alma 24:14.
6. Alma 42:8.
7. Alma 12:25; see also verses 26–33.
8. Abraham 3:24–26.
9. The Prophet Joseph Smith offered this summary statement: "The design of God before the foundation of the world was that we should take tabernacles [bodies], that through faithfulness we should overcome and thereby obtain a resurrection from the dead, in this wise obtaining glory, honor, power, and dominion." The Prophet also stated: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none. All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not" (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 211).
10. Job 38:7.
11. John 1:3; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
12. See 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; 2 Nephi 2:25.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:15–18; Alma 12:24; Doctrine



- and Covenants 29:39; Moses 4:3. Joseph Smith said: "All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fullness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come." The Prophet also noted: "Satan cannot seduce us by his enticements unless we in our hearts consent and yield. Our organization is such that we can resist the devil; if we were not organized so, we would not be free agents" (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 213).
14. See Genesis 3:22–24; Alma 42:2–6; Moses 4:28–31.
 15. Even those who do not repent are redeemed from spiritual death by the Atonement in the sense that they come again into the presence of God for the Final Judgment (see Helaman 14:17; 3 Nephi 27:14–15).
 16. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 210.
 17. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36–40.
 18. Moses 6:58–59.
 19. People may be loyal to one another in nonmarital relationships, and children can be born and raised, sometimes quite successfully, in other than a married two-parent family environment. But on average and in the majority of cases, evidence of the social benefits of marriage and of

the comparatively superior outcomes for children in families headed by a married man and woman is extensive. On the other hand, the social and economic costs of what one commentator calls "the global flight from the family," weigh increasingly on society. Nicholas Eberstadt catalogs the worldwide declines in marriage and childbearing and the trends regarding fatherless homes and divorce and observes: "The deleterious impact on the hardly inconsequential numbers of children disadvantaged by the flight from the family is already plain enough. So too the damaging role of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing in exacerbating income disparities and wealth gaps—for society as a whole, but especially for children. Yes, children are resilient and all that. But the flight from family most assuredly comes at the expense of the vulnerable young. That same flight also has unforgiving implications for the vulnerable old." (See "The Global Flight from the Family," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 21, 2015, wsj.com/articles/nicholas-eberstadt-the-global-flight-from-the-family-1424476179.)

20. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
21. See Genesis 1:26–28; 2:7, 18, 21–24; 3:20; Moses 2:26–28; 3:7–8, 18, 20–24; 4:26.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf7 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By Elder Wilford W. Andersen
Of the Seventy

The Music of the Gospel

The music of the gospel is the joyful spiritual feeling that comes from the Holy Ghost. It brings a change of heart.

Years ago I listened to a radio interview of a young doctor who worked in a hospital in the Navajo Nation. He told of an experience he had one night when an old Native American man with long braided hair came into the emergency room. The young doctor took his clipboard, approached the man, and said, “How can I help you?” The old man looked straight ahead and said nothing. The doctor, feeling somewhat impatient, tried again. “I cannot help you if you don’t speak to me,” he said. “Tell me why you have come to the hospital.”

The old man then looked at him and said, “Do you dance?” As the young doctor pondered the strange question, it occurred to him that perhaps his patient was a tribal medicine man who, according to ancient tribal customs, sought to heal the sick through song and dance rather than through prescribing medication.

“No,” said the doctor, “I don’t dance. Do you dance?” The old man nodded yes. Then the doctor asked, “Could you teach me to dance?”

The old man’s response has for many years caused me much reflection. “I can teach you to dance,” he said, “but you have to hear the music.”

Sometimes in our homes, we successfully teach the dance steps but are not as successful in helping our family members to hear the music. And as the old medicine man well knew, it is hard to dance without music. Dancing without music is awkward and unfulfilling—even embarrassing. Have you ever tried it?

In section 8 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord taught Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, “Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come

upon you and which shall dwell in your heart” (verse 2). We learn the dance steps with our minds, but we hear the music with our hearts. The dance steps of the gospel are the things we do; the music of the gospel is the joyful spiritual feeling that comes from the Holy Ghost. It brings a change of heart and is the source of all righteous desires. The dance steps require discipline, but the joy of the dance will be experienced only when we come to hear the music.

There are those who ridicule members of the Church for the things we do. That is understandable. Those who dance often appear strange or awkward or, to use a scriptural term, “peculiar” (1 Peter 2:9) to those who cannot hear the music. Have you ever stopped your car at a stoplight next to a car where the driver was dancing and singing at the top of his lungs—but you couldn’t hear a sound because your windows were rolled up? Didn’t he look a little peculiar? If our children learn the dance steps without learning to hear and to feel the beautiful music of the gospel, they will over time become uncomfortable with the dance



and will either quit dancing or, almost as bad, keep dancing only because of the pressure they feel from others who are dancing around them.

The challenge for all of us who seek to teach the gospel is to expand the curriculum beyond just the dance steps. Our children's happiness depends on their ability to hear and love the beautiful music of the gospel. How do we do it?

First, we must keep our own lives attuned to the correct spiritual frequency. Back in the olden days, before the digital age, we found our favorite radio station by carefully turning the radio dial until it lined up perfectly with the station's frequency. As we approached the number, we could hear only static. But when we finally made the precise alignment, our favorite music could be heard clearly. In our lives, we have to align with the correct frequency in order to hear the music of the Spirit.

When we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism, we are filled with the heavenly music that accompanies conversion. Our hearts are changed, and we "have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). But the Spirit will not endure unkindness or pride or envy. If we lose that delicate influence in our lives, the rich harmonies of the gospel can quickly become dissonant and can ultimately be silenced. Alma asked the poignant question: "If ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

Parents, if our lives are out of tune with the music of the gospel, we need to tune them up. As President Thomas S. Monson taught us last October, we must ponder the path of our feet (see "Ponder the Path of Thy Feet," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov.



2014, 86–88). We know how to do it. We must walk the same path that we walked when we first heard the heavenly strains of gospel music. We exercise faith in Christ, repent, and take the sacrament; we feel more strongly the influence of the Holy Ghost; and the music of the gospel begins to play again in our lives.

Second, when we can hear the music ourselves, we must try our best to perform it in our homes. It is not something that can be forced or compelled. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood"—or by virtue of being the dad or the mom or the biggest or the loudest—"only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, . . . by love unfeigned; [and] by kindness" (D&C 121:41–42).

Why would these attributes lead to increasing power and influence in a home? Because they are the attributes that invite the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. They are the attributes that tune our hearts to the music of the gospel. When they are present, the dance steps will be performed more naturally and joyfully by all of the dancers in the family, without the need for threats or intimidation or compulsion.

When our children are little, we can sing them the lullaby of love

unfeigned, and when they are obstinate and refuse to go to sleep at night, we might need to sing the lullaby of long-suffering. When they are teenagers, we can tune out the cacophony of arguments and threats and, instead, perform the beautiful music of persuasion—and perhaps sing the second verse of the lullaby of long-suffering. Parents can perform in perfect harmony the tandem attributes of gentleness and meekness. We can invite our children to sing along with us in unison as we practice kindness toward a neighbor who is in need.

It won't come all at once. As every accomplished musician knows, it takes diligent practice to perform beautiful music. If early efforts at making music seem dissonant and discordant, remember that dissonance cannot be corrected by criticism. Dissonance in the home is like darkness in a room. It does little good to scold the darkness. We must *displace* the darkness by introducing light.

So if the basses in your family choir are too loud and overbearing, or if the string section in your family orchestra is a little too shrill or a little bit sharp, or if those impetuous piccolos are out of tune or out of control, be patient. If you're not hearing the music of the gospel in your home, please remember



By Elder Dale G. Renlund
Of the Seventy

these two words: *keep practicing*. With God's help, the day will come when the music of the gospel will fill your home with unspeakable joy.

Even when performed well, the music will not solve all of our problems. There will still be crescendos and decrescendos in our lives, staccatos and legatos. Such is the nature of life on planet earth.

But when we add music to the dance steps, the sometimes complicated rhythms of marriage and family life tend to move toward a harmonious balance. Even our most difficult challenges will add rich plaintive tones and moving motifs. The doctrines of the priesthood will begin to distill upon our souls as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost will be our constant companion, and our scepter—a clear reference to power and influence—will be an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth. And our dominion will be an everlasting dominion. And without compulsory means it will flow unto us forever and ever (see D&C 121:45–46).

May it be so in each of our lives and in each of our homes is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying

As we try, persevere, and help others to do the same, we are true Latter-day Saints.

My dear brothers and sisters, in December 2013 the world mourned the death of Nelson Mandela. After 27 years of imprisonment for his role in the antiapartheid struggle, Mandela was the first democratically elected president of South Africa. His forgiveness of those who had imprisoned him was remarkable. He received widespread acclaim and praise.¹ Mandela frequently deflected accolades by saying, “I’m no saint—that is, unless you think a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying.”²

This statement—“a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying”—should reassure and encourage members of the Church. Although we are referred to as “Latter-day Saints,” we sometimes flinch at this reference. The term *Saints* is commonly used to designate those who have achieved an elevated state of holiness or even perfection. And we know perfectly well that we are not perfect.

Our theology does teach us, though, that we may be perfected by repeatedly and iteratively “relying wholly upon” the doctrine of Christ: exercising faith in Him, repenting, partaking of the sacrament to renew the covenants and blessings of baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost as a constant companion to a greater degree. As we do so, we become more like Christ and are able to endure to the end, with all that that entails.³ In less formal terms, God cares a lot more about who we are and who we are becoming than about who we once were.⁴ He cares that we keep on trying.

The comedy *As You Like It*, written by the English playwright William Shakespeare, depicts a dramatic change in a character's life. An older brother





attempts to have his younger brother killed. Even knowing this, the younger brother saves his wicked brother from certain death. When the older brother learns of this undeserved compassion, he is totally and forever changed and has what he calls a “conversion.” Later several women approach the older brother and ask, “Was’t you that did so oft contrive to kill [your brother]?”

The older brother answers, “’Twas I; but ’tis not I: I do not shame to tell you what I was, since my conversion so sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.”⁵

For us, because of God’s mercy and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, such a change is not just literary fiction. Through Ezekiel, the Lord declared:

“As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. . . .

“ . . . If he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

“ . . . Restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live. . . .

“None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right.”⁶

In His mercy, God promises forgiveness when we repent and turn from wickedness—so much so that our sins

will not even be mentioned to us. For us, because of the Atonement of Christ and our repentance, we can look at our past deeds and say, “’Twas I; but ’tis not I.” No matter how wicked, we can say, “That’s who I was. But that past wicked self is no longer who I am.”⁷

President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “One of God’s greatest gifts to us is the joy of trying again, for no failure ever need be final.”⁸ Even if we’ve been a conscious, deliberate sinner or have repeatedly faced failure and disappointment, the moment we decide to try again, the Atonement of Christ can help us. And we need to remember that it is not the Holy Ghost that tells us we’re so far gone that we might as well give up.

God’s desire that Latter-day Saints keep on trying also extends beyond overcoming sin. Whether we suffer because of troubled relationships, economic challenges, or illnesses or as a consequence of someone else’s sins, the Savior’s infinite Atonement can heal even—and perhaps especially—those who have innocently suffered. He understands perfectly what it is like to suffer innocently as a consequence of another’s transgression. As prophesied, the Savior will “bind up the broken-hearted, . . . give . . . beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, [and] the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”⁹ No matter what, with His help,

God expects Latter-day Saints to keep on trying.

Just as God rejoices when we persevere, He is disappointed if we do not recognize that others are trying too. Our dear friend Thoba shared how she learned this lesson from her mother, Julia. Julia and Thoba were among the early black converts in South Africa. After the apartheid regime ended, black and white members of the Church were permitted to attend church together. For many, the equality of interaction between the races was new and challenging. One time, as Julia and Thoba attended church, they felt they were treated less than kindly by some white members. As they left, Thoba complained bitterly to her mother. Julia listened calmly until Thoba had vented her frustration. Then Julia said, “Oh, Thoba, the Church is like a big hospital, and we are all sick in our own way. We come to church to be helped.”

Julia’s comment reflects a valuable insight. We must not only be tolerant while others work on their individual illnesses; we must also be kind, patient, supportive, and understanding. As God encourages us to keep on trying, He expects us to also allow others the space to do the same, at their own pace. The Atonement will come into our lives in even greater measure. We will then recognize that regardless of



perceived differences, all of us are in need of the same infinite Atonement.

Some years ago a wonderful young man named Curtis was called to serve a mission. He was the kind of missionary every mission president prays for. He was focused and worked hard. At one point he was assigned a missionary companion who was immature, socially awkward, and not particularly enthusiastic about getting the work done.

One day, while they were riding their bicycles, Curtis looked back and saw that his companion had inexplicably gotten off his bike and was walking. Silently, Curtis expressed his frustration to God; what a chore it was to be saddled with a companion he had to drag around in order to accomplish anything. Moments later, Curtis had a profound impression, as if God were saying to him, “You know, Curtis, compared to me, the two of you aren’t all that different.” Curtis learned that he needed to be patient with an imperfect companion who nonetheless was trying in his own way.

My invitation to all of us is to evaluate our lives, repent, and keep on trying.

If we don’t try, we’re just latter-day sinners; if we don’t persevere, we’re latter-day quitters; and if we don’t allow others to try, we’re just latter-day hypocrites.¹⁰ As we try, persevere, and help others to do the same, we are true Latter-day Saints. As we change, we will find that God indeed cares a lot more about who we are and about who we are becoming than about who we once were.¹¹

I am deeply grateful for the Savior, for His infinite Atonement, and for latter-day prophets who encourage us to be Latter-day Saints, to keep on trying.¹² I witness of the Savior’s living reality in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994); “Biography of Nelson Mandela,” nelsonmandela.org/content/page/biography; and President Barack Obama’s Dec. 10, 2013, eulogy for Nelson Mandela, at whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/10/remarks-president-obama-memorial-service-former-south-african-president. The diversity of the awards is indicated by Mandela receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Soviet Order of Lenin.
2. See, for instance, Nelson Mandela’s address

at Rice University’s Baker Institute on Oct. 26, 1999, bakerinstitute.org/events/1221. He was likely paraphrasing the well-known statement attributed to Robert Louis Stevenson: “The saints are the sinners who keep on trying.” Over the years many have expressed similar sentiments. For instance, Confucius is credited with saying, “Our greatest glory lies not in never falling but in getting up every time we fall.”

3. See, for instance, 2 Nephi 31:2–21; 3 Nephi 11:23–31; 27:13–21; Moroni 6:6; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; 59:8–9; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.2.
4. Saying that God cares a lot more about who we are and who we are becoming than about who we once were does not mean that the Savior is dismissive of the consequences of an individual’s sin on others. In fact, the Savior cares infinitely about those who suffer hurt, pain, and heartache because of another’s transgressions. The Savior “will take upon him [His people’s] infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).
5. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, act 4, scene 3, lines 134–37.
6. Ezekiel 33:12, 14–16.
7. The use of present tense in verbs is notable in many scriptures related to Final Judgment. See, for instance, 2 Nephi 9:16; Mormon 9:14; Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “The Will Within,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 68.
9. Isaiah 61:1–3; see also Luke 4:16–21.
10. *Hypocrite* as used in the New Testament may be translated from the Greek as “pretender”; “the Greek word means ‘a play actor,’ or ‘one who feigns, represents dramatically, or exaggerates a part’” (Matthew 6:2, footnote *a*). If we do not give others the opportunity to change at their own pace, we are simply pretending to be Latter-day Saints.
11. See note 4, above.
12. The number of times this message appears in the sermons of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is striking. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf made this point as he said, “Of all the principles taught by prophets over the centuries, one that has been emphasized over and over again is the hopeful and heartwarming message that mankind can repent, change course, and get back on the true path of discipleship” (“You Can Do It Now!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 56).



By Elder Michael T. Ringwood
Of the Seventy

Truly Good and without Guile

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the desires of our hearts can be transformed and our motives can be educated and refined.

Unfortunately, there was a time in my life when I was motivated by titles and authority. It really began innocently. As I was preparing to serve a full-time mission, my older brother was made a zone leader in his mission. I heard so many positive things said about him that I couldn't help but want those things said about me. I hoped for and may have even prayed for a similar position.

Thankfully, as I served my mission, I learned a powerful lesson. Last conference I was reminded of that lesson.

In October, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said: "Over the course of my life, I have had the opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the most competent and intelligent men and women this world has to offer. When I was younger, I was impressed by those who were educated, accomplished, successful, and applauded by the world. But over the years, I have come to the realization that I am far more impressed by those wonderful and blessed souls who are *truly good and without guile*."¹

My Book of Mormon hero is a perfect example of a wonderful and blessed soul who was truly good and without guile. Shiblon was one of the sons of Alma the Younger. We are more familiar with his brothers Helaman, who would follow his father as the keeper of the records and the prophet of God, and Corianton, who gained some notoriety as a missionary who needed some counsel from his father. To Helaman, Alma wrote 77 verses (see Alma 36–37). To Corianton, Alma dedicated 91 verses (see Alma 39–42). To Shiblon, his middle son, Alma wrote a mere 15 verses (see Alma 38). Yet his words in those 15 verses are powerful and instructive.

"And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in your youth to look to the Lord your God, even so I hope that you will continue in keeping his commandments; for blessed is he that endureth to the end.

"I say unto you, my son, that I have had great joy in thee already, because of thy faithfulness and thy diligence, and thy patience and thy long-suffering among the people" (Alma 38:2–3).

In addition to speaking *to* Shiblon, Alma also spoke *about* him to Corianton. Alma said: "Have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee?" (Alma 39:1).²

It appears that Shiblon was a son who wanted to please his father and went about doing what was right for right's sake rather than for praise, position, power, accolades, or authority. Helaman must have known and respected this about his brother, for he gave Shiblon custody of the sacred





Woodbury, Minnesota, USA

records he had received from his father. Surely Helaman trusted Shiblon because “he was a just man, and he did walk uprightly before God; and he did observe to do good continually, to keep the commandments of the Lord his God” (Alma 63:2). As seems truly characteristic of Shiblon, there is not much recorded about him from the time he took possession of the sacred records until he gave them to Helaman’s son Helaman (see Alma 63:11).

Shiblon was truly good and without guile. He was a person who sacrificed his time, talents, and effort to help and lift others because of a love for God and his fellowmen (see Alma 48:17–19; 49:30). He is described perfectly by the words of President Spencer W. Kimball: “Great women and men are always more anxious to serve than to have dominion.”³

In a world where praise, position, power, accolades, and authority are sought on every side, I honor those wonderful and blessed souls who are truly good and without guile, those who are motivated by a love of God and their neighbors, those great women and men who are



“more anxious to serve than to have dominion.”

Today there are some who would have us believe our search for relevance can be satisfied only by obtaining position and power. Yet, thankfully, there are many who are uninfluenced by this perspective. They find relevance in seeking to be truly good and without guile. I have found them in all walks of life and in many faith traditions. And I find them in large numbers among the truly converted followers of Christ.⁴

I honor those who selflessly serve each week in wards and branches around the world by going above and beyond in fulfilling callings. But callings come and go. Even more impressive to me are the many who without formal

callings find ways to consistently serve and lift others. One brother shows up early for church to set up chairs and stays after to straighten up the chapel. One sister purposely selects a seat near a blind sister in her ward not only so she can greet her but also so she can sing the hymns loudly enough that the blind sister can hear the words and sing along. If you look closely in your ward or branch, you will find examples like these. There are always members who seem to know who needs help and when to offer it.

Perhaps my first lesson about truly good Saints without guile was learned when I was a young missionary. I moved into an area with an elder I didn’t know. I had heard other missionaries talk about how he had never received any leadership assignments and how he struggled with the Korean language despite having been in the country a long time. But as I got to know this elder, I found he was one of the most obedient and faithful missionaries I had known. He studied when it was time to study; he worked when it was time to work. He left the apartment on time and returned on time. He was diligent in studying Korean even though the language was especially difficult for him.

When I realized the comments I had heard were untrue, I felt like this missionary was being misjudged as unsuccessful. I wanted to tell the whole mission what I had discovered about this elder. I shared with my mission president my desire to correct this misunderstanding. His response was, “Heavenly Father knows this young man is a successful missionary, and so do I.” He added, “And now you know too, so who else really matters?” This wise mission president taught me what was important in service, and it wasn’t



praise, position, power, honor, or authority. This was a great lesson for a young missionary who was too focused on titles.

With this lesson in mind, I began to look back on my life and see how often I had been influenced by men and women who at the time held no great title or position. One of those Shiblun-like souls was my seminary teacher during my junior year in high school. This good man taught seminary for only two or three years, but he opened my heart in a way that helped me gain a testimony. He may not have been the most popular teacher at the school, but he was always prepared and his influence on me was powerful and lasting. One of the few times I saw this man in the 40 years since he taught me was when he came to see me at my father's funeral. Truly, that was an act not motivated by title or power.

I honor that dedicated teacher and many like him who are truly good and without guile. I honor the Sunday School teacher who doesn't teach his students just during class on Sunday but also teaches and influences these same students by inviting them to join his family for breakfast. I honor youth leaders who attend the sporting and cultural activities of the young men and young women in their wards. I honor

the man who writes notes of encouragement to neighbors and the woman who doesn't just mail Christmas cards but hand delivers them to family members and friends who need a visit. I honor the brother who routinely took a neighbor for a ride during that neighbor's dark days of Alzheimer's—giving both him and his wife a much-needed change of pace.

These things are not done for praise or accolades. These men and women are not motivated by the possibility of receiving titles or authority. They are disciples of Christ, going about doing good continually, and like Shiblun, they are trying to please their Father in Heaven.

It saddens me when I hear of some who stop serving or even attending church because they are released from a calling or feel overlooked for a position or title. I hope they will one day learn the same lesson I learned as a young missionary—that the service that counts most is usually recognized by God alone. In our pursuit of me and mine, have we forgotten Thee and Thine?

Some may say, "But I have so far to go to become like those you describe." The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the desires of our hearts can be transformed and our motives can be educated and refined. When we are baptized into the true fold of God,

we begin the process of becoming new creatures (see 2 Corinthians 5:17; Mosiah 27:26). Each time we renew the covenant of baptism by partaking of the sacrament, we are one step closer to that ultimate goal.⁵ As we endure in that covenant, we access the strength to mourn with those who mourn and to comfort those who need comfort (see Mosiah 18:9). In that covenant, we find the grace that enables us to serve God and keep His commandments, including loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbors as ourselves.⁶ In that covenant, God and Christ succor us so we can succor those who stand in need of our succor (see Mosiah 4:16; see also verses 11–15).

All I really want in life is to please my fathers—both earthly and heavenly—and to be more like Shiblun.⁷

I thank my Heavenly Father for Shiblun-like souls whose examples offer me—and all of us—hope. In their lives, we see a witness of a loving Father in Heaven and a caring and compassionate Savior. I add my testimony to theirs with a pledge to strive to be more like them, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Lord, Is It I?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 58; emphasis added.
2. Helaman did not go teach the Zoramites,



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

so we know that Alma is talking about Shiblon when he says “thy brother” (see Alma 31:7; 39:2).

3. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 104.
4. “The Lord taught us that when we are truly converted to His gospel, our hearts will be turned from selfish concerns and turned toward service to lift others as they move upward to eternal life. To obtain that conversion, we can pray and work in faith to become the new creature made possible by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We can start by praying for the faith to repent of selfishness and for the gift of caring for others more than ourselves. We can pray for the power to lay aside pride and envy” (Henry B. Eyring, “Testimony and Conversion,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Feb. 2015, 4–5).
5. “[God] is immortal and perfect. We are mortal and imperfect. Nevertheless we seek ways even in mortality whereby we can unite with Him spiritually. In so doing we gain some access to both the grace and the majesty of His power. Those special moments include . . . baptizing and confirming . . . [and] partaking of the emblems of the Lord’s Supper” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *To My Friends* [2014], 80).
6. “The Latter-day Saints who see themselves in all they do as children of God take naturally to making and keeping commitments. The plan of salvation is marked by covenants. We promise to obey commandments. In return, God promises blessings in this life and for eternity. He is exact in what he requires, and he is perfect in keeping his word. Because he loves us and because the purpose of the plan is to become like him, he requires exactness of us. And the promises he makes to us always include the power to grow in our capacity to keep covenants. He makes it possible for us to know his rules. When we try with all our hearts to meet his standards, he gives us the companionship of the Holy Ghost. That in turn both increases our power to keep commitments and to discern what is good and true. And that is the power to learn, both in our temporal studies and in the learning we need for eternity” (Henry B. Eyring, “A Child of God” [Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 21, 1997], 4–5; speeches.byu.edu). See also David A. Bednar, “Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 87–90.
7. From my earliest recollection, I wanted to please my father. As I grew and gained a testimony, I also gained the desire to please Heavenly Father. Later in my life, I learned about Shiblon and added to my life’s goals to be more like him.

The Lord Is My Light

Our ability to stand firm and true and follow the Savior despite the vicissitudes of life is greatly strengthened by righteous families and Christ-centered unity in our wards and branches.

In this Easter season we reflect upon and rejoice in the redemption provided by our Savior, Jesus Christ.¹

The clamor that reverberates across the earth because of worldly wickedness creates feelings of vulnerability. With modern communication the impact of iniquity, inequality, and injustice leaves many feeling that life is inherently unfair. As significant as these trials can be, they must not distract us from rejoicing in and celebrating Christ’s supernal intercession in our behalf. The Savior literally “gained the victory over death.” With mercy and compassion He took upon Himself our iniquity and transgressions, thus redeeming us and satisfying the demands of justice for all who would repent and believe on His name.²

His magnificent atoning sacrifice is of transcendent significance beyond mortal comprehension. This act of grace provides the peace that surpasses understanding.³

How, then, do we deal with the harsh realities that surround us?

My wife, Mary, has always loved sunflowers. She rejoices when they, in quite improbable places, appear on the roadside. There is a dirt road that



leads to the home where my grandparents lived. When we started down that road, Mary would often exclaim, “Do you think we will see those amazing sunflowers today?” We were surprised that sunflowers flourish in soil which has been impacted by farm and snow removal equipment and the accumulation of materials that would not be considered ideal soil for wildflowers to grow.

One of the remarkable characteristics of young wild sunflowers, in



One of the remarkable characteristics of young wild sunflowers is how the young flower bud follows the sun across the sky.

addition to growing in soil that is not hospitable, is how the young flower bud follows the sun across the sky. In doing so, it receives life-sustaining energy before bursting forth in its glorious yellow color.

Like the young sunflower, when we follow the Savior of the world, the Son of God, we flourish and become glorious despite the many terrible circumstances that surround us. He truly is our light and life.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Savior declared to His disciples that those who offend and do

iniquity shall be gathered *out* of His kingdom.⁴ But speaking of the faithful, He said, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”⁵ As individuals, disciples of Christ, living in a hostile world that is literally in commotion, we can thrive and bloom if we are rooted in our love of the Savior and humbly follow His teachings.

Our ability to stand firm and true and follow the Savior despite the vicissitudes of life is greatly strengthened by righteous families and Christ-centered unity in our wards and branches.⁶

The Right Time at Home

The role of the family in God’s plan is “to bring us happiness, to help us learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare us for eternal life.”⁷ The beautiful traditions of religious observance in the home need to be embedded in the hearts of our children.

My uncle Vaughn Roberts Kimball was a good student, an aspiring author, and a BYU football quarterback. On December 8, 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. While on a recruiting assignment in Albany, New York, he submitted a short article to the *Reader’s Digest*. The magazine paid him \$200 and published his piece, titled “The Right Time at Home,” in the May 1944 issue.

His contribution to the *Reader’s Digest*, where he casts himself as the sailor, reads in part:

“The Right Time at Home:

“One evening in Albany, New York, I asked a sailor what time it was. He pulled out a huge watch and replied, ‘It’s 7:20.’ I knew it was later. ‘Your watch has stopped, hasn’t it?’ I asked.

“‘No,’ he said, ‘I’m still on Mountain Standard Time. I’m from southern Utah. When I joined the Navy, Pa gave me this watch. He said it’d help me remember home.

“‘When my watch says 5 a.m. I know Dad is rollin’ out to milk the cows. And any night when it says 7:30 I know the whole family’s around a well-spread table, and Dad’s thankin’ God for what’s on it and askin’ Him to watch over me . . . ,’ he concluded. ‘I can find out what time it is where I am easy enough. What I want to know is what time it is in Utah.’”⁸

Soon after submitting the article, Vaughn was assigned to sea duty in the Pacific theater. On May 11, 1945, while he was serving on the carrier USS



Bunker Hill near Okinawa, the ship was bombed by two suicide planes.⁹ Almost 400 crewmen died, including my uncle Vaughn.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball extended his heartfelt sympathy to Vaughn's father, noting Vaughn's worthiness and the Lord's assurance that "those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them."¹⁰ Vaughn's father tenderly said that even though Vaughn was buried at sea, the hand of God would take Vaughn to his heavenly home.¹¹

Twenty-eight years later, President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of Vaughn in general conference. He said, in part: "I knew this family well. . . . I have knelt in mighty prayer with [them]. . . . Home training has carried through to the eternal blessing of this large family." President Kimball challenged every family "to be on their knees . . . praying for their sons and daughters twice daily."¹²

Brothers and sisters, if we faithfully have family prayer, scripture study, family home evening, priesthood blessings, and Sabbath day observance, our children will know what time it is at home. They will

be prepared for an eternal home in heaven, regardless of what befalls them in a difficult world. It is vitally important that our children know they are loved and safe at home.

Husbands and wives are equal partners.¹³ They have different but complementary responsibilities. The wife may bear children, which blesses the entire family. The husband may receive the priesthood, which blesses the entire family. But in family council, wives and husbands, as equal partners, make the most important decisions. They decide how the children will be taught and disciplined, how money will be spent, where they will live, and many other family decisions. These are made jointly after seeking guidance from the Lord. The goal is an eternal family.

The Light of Christ plants the eternal nature of the family in the hearts of all God's children. One of my favorite writers, not of our faith, said it this way: "So much in life is extraneous, [but] . . . the family is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; the thing to watch over and care for and be loyal to."¹⁴

The Church Helps Us Focus on the Savior as a United Family

In addition to the family, the role of the Church is also significant. "The Church provides the organization and means for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of God's children. It provides the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances of salvation and exaltation to all who are worthy and willing to accept them."¹⁵

In the world there is rampant contention and iniquity and a major emphasis on divergent cultures and inequality. In the Church, except for language units, our wards and branches are geographical. We don't divide by class or rank.¹⁶ We rejoice in the fact that all races and cultures are mixed together in a righteous congregation. Our ward family is important to our progress, happiness, and personal effort to be more Christlike.

Cultures often divide people and are sometimes a source of violence and discrimination.¹⁷ In the Book of Mormon some of the most haunting language is used to describe the traditions of wicked fathers which led to

violence, war, evil deeds, iniquity, and even the destruction of peoples and nations.¹⁸

There is no better starting point in the scriptures than 4 Nephi for a description of the Church culture that is essential for all of us. In verse 2 it reads in part, “The people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.” In verse 16 we read, “And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.” The fact that there was no contention was attributed to “the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”¹⁹ This is the culture to which we aspire.

Deep cultural values and beliefs go to the core of who we are. Traditions of sacrifice, gratitude, faith, and righteousness are to be cherished and preserved. Families must relish and protect traditions that build faith.²⁰

One of the most significant features of any culture is its language. In the San Francisco, California, area, where I

lived, there were seven nonnative language units. Our doctrine with respect to language is set forth in section 90, verse 11 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language.”

When God’s children pray to Him in their native language, that is the language of their heart. It is clear that the language of the heart is precious to all people.

My older brother, Joseph, is a medical doctor and practiced for many years in the San Francisco Bay area. An elderly Samoan Church member, who was a new patient, came to his office. He was in severe, debilitating pain. It was determined that he had a kidney stone, and appropriate treatment was undertaken. This faithful member stated that his original goal was merely to understand what was wrong so he could pray in Samoan to his Heavenly Father about his health problem.

It is important for members to understand the gospel in the language of their heart so they can pray and act in accordance with gospel principles.²¹

Even with diversity of languages and beautiful, uplifting cultural traditions, we must have hearts knit in unity and love.²² The Lord has stated emphatically: “Let every man esteem his brother as himself. . . . Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.”²³ While we treasure appropriate cultural diversities, our goal is to be united in the culture, customs, and traditions of the gospel of Jesus Christ in every respect.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Has Never Been Stronger

We recognize that some members have questions and concerns as they seek to strengthen their faith and testimonies. We should be careful not to be critical or judgmental of those with concerns—great or small. At the same time, those with concerns should do everything they can to build their own faith and testimony. Patiently and humbly studying, pondering, praying, living gospel principles, and counseling with appropriate leaders are the best ways to resolve questions or concerns.

Some have asserted that more members are leaving the Church today and that there is more doubt and unbelief than in the past. This is simply not true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never been stronger. The number of members removing their names from the records of the Church has always been very small and is significantly less in recent years than in the past.²⁴ The increase in demonstrably measurable areas, such as endowed members with a current temple recommend, adult full-tithe payers, and those serving missions, has been dramatic. Let me say again, the Church has never been stronger. But, “remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”²⁵ We reach out to everyone.



If the grim realities you are facing at this time seem dark and heavy and almost unbearable, remember that in the soul-wrenching darkness of Gethsemane and the incomprehensible torture and pain of Calvary, the Savior accomplished the Atonement, which resolves the most terrible burdens that can occur in this life. He did it for you, and He did it for me. He did it because He loves us and because He obeys and loves His Father. We will be rescued from death—even from the depths of the sea.

Our protections in this life and for eternity will be in individual and family righteousness, Church ordinances, and following the Savior. This is our refuge from the storm. For those who feel they are alone, you can stand resolutely in righteousness knowing that the Atonement will protect and

bless you beyond your ability to fully understand.

We should remember the Savior, keep our covenants, and follow the Son of God as the young sunflower follows the sunshine. Following His light and example will bring us joy, happiness, and peace. As Psalm 27 and a favorite hymn both proclaim, “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”²⁶

On this Easter weekend, as one of the Savior’s Apostles, I bear solemn witness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I know He lives. I know His voice. I testify of His divinity and the reality of the Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 9:20–22.
2. See Mosiah 15:8–9.
3. See Philippians 4:7.
4. See Matthew 13:41.
5. Matthew 13:43.

6. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:5–6.
7. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.1.4.
8. Vaughn R. Kimball, “The Right Time at Home,” *Reader’s Digest*, May 1944, 43.
9. See letter from Captain G. A. Seitz, U.S. Navy, USS *Bunker Hill*, dated May 25, 1945, to Vaughn Kimball’s father, Crozier Kimball, Draper, Utah.
10. See letter from Spencer W. Kimball, dated June 2, 1945, to Crozier Kimball; Doctrine and Covenants 42:46.
11. See Crozier Kimball, in Marva Jeanne Kimball Pedersen, *Vaughn Roberts Kimball: A Memorial* (1995), 53.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Family Influence,” *Ensign*, July 1973, 17. Spencer W. Kimball was then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.
13. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
14. Carla Carlisle, “Pray, Love, Remember,” *Country Life*, Sept. 29, 2010, 120.
15. *Handbook 2*, 1.1.5.
16. See 4 Nephi 1:26.
17. Culture is much discussed in today’s world. For the year 2014 the word *culture* was even named word of the year by Merriam-Webster.com.
18. See Alma 9; Helaman 5.
19. 4 Nephi 1:15.
20. The German philosopher Goethe famously wrote, “What from your fathers’ heritage is lent, earn it anew, to really possess it!” (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Bayard Taylor [1912], 1:28).
21. This is one of the reasons the Church teaches the gospel in 50 languages and translates the Book of Mormon into 110 languages. However, one of the challenges across the world is to learn the language of the country in which you live. As parents we need to sacrifice to help the rising generation learn the language of the country where they now live. Help them make that language the language of their heart.
22. See Mosiah 18:21.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 38:25, 27.
24. Over the last 25 years, the actual number of members leaving the Church has decreased and the Church has almost doubled in size. The percentage leaving is greatly reduced.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
26. Psalm 27:1; see also “The Lord Is My Light,” *Hymns*, no. 89.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf8 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By Elder M. Russell Ballard
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Greatest Generation of Young Adults

What we need now is the greatest generation of young adults in the history of the Church. We need your whole heart and soul.

One of the great pleasures I enjoy as I travel throughout the world is the opportunity to meet and greet our missionaries. These great elders and sisters radiate the Light of Christ, and I am always inspired by their love for the Lord Jesus Christ and their devoted service to Him. Every time I shake hands with them and feel of their remarkable spirit and faith, I say to myself, “These wonderful sons and daughters of ours are truly a miracle!”

During the October 2002 general priesthood meeting, I challenged bishops, parents, and prospective missionaries to “raise the bar” for full-time missionary service.

I then said that “what we need . . . is the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church. We need worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries. . . .

“ . . . We need your whole heart and soul. We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.”¹

In many ways the world today is more challenging than it was 13 years ago. Our young men and young women have many more distractions to sidetrack them in their preparations for both a mission and a future happy life. Technology has expanded, and almost everyone has access to handheld devices that can capture the

attention of the human family of God for both great good and unconscionable ill.

Tonight I speak to missionaries now serving, future missionaries, returned missionaries, and all young adult men in the Church. I pray you will understand and thoughtfully consider what I have to say to you as you journey through these exciting and exacting years of your life.

In the early days of the Church, missionaries were interviewed by a General Authority before they went on their missions. These days you are interviewed to serve as missionaries by your bishops and stake presidents, and most of you will go through your entire lives without being interviewed by a General Authority. That is simply a reflection of the reality in a worldwide church of more than 15 million members. I know I speak for my brethren when I tell you that we wish it were possible for us to know all of you personally and to be able to tell you that we love you and that we support you.

Fortunately the Lord has provided ways for us to reach out to you. For



example, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve assigns every missionary to his or her mission. Although this is done without a traditional face-to-face interview, technology and revelation combine to provide an experience that is remarkably intimate and personal. Let me tell you how this happens.

Your photograph comes up on a computer screen, together with key information provided by your bishop and stake president. When your picture appears, we look into your eyes and review your answers to the missionary recommendation questions. For that brief moment, it seems as if you are present and responding to us directly.

As we look at your photograph, we trust that you have cleared in every way the “raised bar” required today to be a faithful, successful missionary. Then, by the power of the Spirit of the Lord and under the direction of President Thomas S. Monson, we assign you to one of the Church’s 406 world-wide missions.

No, it isn’t the same as a personal, face-to-face interview. But it’s close.

Videoconferencing is another way that helps us reach out to Church leaders and members who live far away from Church headquarters.

With that in mind, I would like those of you preparing to serve missions, those who have returned, and all of you young adults to spend a few minutes with me as though we were having a personal video chat right now. Please look at me for a few minutes as though you and I were the only ones in the room, wherever you are tonight.

For my part, I will imagine that I am looking into your eyes and listening carefully to your responses to a few questions that I believe will tell me a lot about the depth of your testimony and your devotion to God. If I may paraphrase what I said to missionaries 13 years ago, what we need now is the greatest generation of young adults in the history of the Church. We need your whole heart and soul. We need vibrant, thinking, passionate young adults who know how to listen and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit as you make your way through

the daily trials and temptations of being a young, contemporary Latter-day Saint.

In other words, it’s time to raise the bar not only for missionaries but also for returned missionaries and for your entire generation. To that end, please ponder in your heart your answers to these questions:

1. Do you search the scriptures regularly?
2. Do you kneel in prayer to talk with your Heavenly Father each morning and each night?
3. Do you fast and donate a fast offering each month—even if you are a poor, struggling student who can’t afford to donate much?
4. Do you think deeply about the Savior and His atoning sacrifice for you when you are asked to prepare, bless, pass, or partake of the sacrament?
5. Do you attend your meetings and strive to keep the Sabbath day holy?
6. Are you honest at home, school, church, and work?
7. Are you mentally and spiritually clean? Do you avoid viewing pornography or looking at websites, magazines, movies, or apps, including Tinder and Snapchat photos, that would embarrass you if your parents, Church leaders, or the Savior Himself saw you?
8. Are you careful with your time—avoiding inappropriate technology and social media, including video games, which can dull your spiritual sensitivity?
9. Is there anything in your life you need to change and fix, beginning tonight?

Thank you for this short personal visit. I hope you answered each one of these questions honestly and



thoughtfully. If you find yourself lacking in any of these simple principles, then I urge you to courageously repent and bring your life back in line with gospel standards of righteous discipleship.

Now, brethren, may I offer additional counsel that will help you get your testimony of the gospel deep in your hearts and your souls?

I remind you returned missionaries that your preparation for life and for a family should be continuous. “RM” doesn’t mean “retired Mormon”! As a returned missionary, you “should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [your] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness.”²

Please use the skills you learned on your mission to bless the lives of people around you every day. Do not shift your focus from serving others to focusing exclusively on school, work, or social activities. Instead, balance your life with spiritual experiences that remind and prepare you for continued, daily ministering to others.

During your missions you learned the importance of visiting people in their homes. I would hope that all of our young adults, whether or not you served full-time missions, understand the importance of visiting with people who are lonely, sick, or discouraged—not only as an assignment but also because of the genuine love you have for Heavenly Father and His children.

Those of you in high school preparing for missions, I encourage you to participate in and graduate from seminary. You young adults should enroll in an institute of religion.³ If you are attending a Church school, consistently include a class each semester in religious education. During this important season of preparation for a



mission, eternal marriage, and life as an adult, you must continue to find ways to learn and grow and receive inspiration and guidance through the Holy Ghost. A careful, prayerful study of the gospel through seminary, institute, or religious education classes can assist you in that goal.

Whether you attend a Church school or not, whether you attend college or not, do not think that you are too busy to study the gospel. Seminary, institute, or religion classes will provide balance to your life and add to your secular education by giving you another opportunity to spend time studying the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and apostles. There are four outstanding new courses that I would encourage every young adult to look into and to attend.⁴

And don’t forget that classes and activities offered at your local institute or through your young single adult ward or stake will also be a place where you can be with other young men and young women and lift and inspire one another as you learn and grow spiritually and socialize together. Brethren, if you will set aside your cell

phone and actually look around a little, you may even find your future companion at the institute.

Which leads me to another bit of counsel that I’m sure you knew was coming: You single adults need to date and marry. Please stop delaying! I know some of you fear family formation. However, if you marry the right person at the right time and in the right place, you need not fear. In fact, many problems you encounter will be avoided if you are “anxiously engaged” in righteous dating, courting, and marriage. Don’t text her! Use your own voice to introduce yourself to the righteous daughters of God who are all around you. To actually hear a human voice will shock her—perhaps into saying yes.

Now, brethren, I testify to you that the Lord Jesus Christ can help us fix anything that needs fixing in our lives through His atoning sacrifice.

This evening, as we prepare to celebrate Easter Sunday tomorrow, please pause with me to remember the gift of Christ’s Atonement. Remember that our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, know you best and love you the most.



By Elder Ulisses Soares
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Through the Atonement, the Redeemer took upon Himself our troubles, pains, and sins. The Savior of the world came to understand each of us individually by experiencing our dashed hopes, challenges, and tragedies through His suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross.⁵ He died as one final act of love for us and was buried in a new tomb on that fateful night.

On Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the dead—promising new life for each of us. The risen Lord then commissioned His disciples to teach everyone to have faith in Christ, repent of sin, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end. Brethren, we know that God our Father and His Beloved Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and restored through him the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be strong, brethren. Keep the commandments of God. The Lord Jesus Christ promises that all things we desire to do in righteousness will be ours. Church leaders are counting on you. We need every one of you young adults to prepare to marry, to serve, and to lead in the days ahead, for which I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. M. Russell Ballard, “The Greatest Generation of Missionaries,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 47.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.
3. See First Presidency letter, Apr. 21, 2011.
4. See “New Religion Classes to Be Offered at Church Universities and Institutes of Religion,” [lds.org/topics/education/new-religion-classes](https://www.lds.org/topics/education/new-religion-classes).
5. See Mosiah 3:5–13.

Yes, We Can and Will Win!

We must hold ever more tightly to our testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then we will win the daily battles against evil.

Dear brethren, I am humbled by the privilege I have to speak to you, the bearers of the priesthood of God throughout the Church today.

President Thomas S. Monson once said:

“The world can at times be a frightening place in which to live. The moral fabric of society seems to be unraveling at an alarming speed. None—whether young or old or in-between—is exempt from exposure to those things which have the potential to drag us down and destroy us. . . .

“. . . But we need not despair. . . . We are waging a war with sin. . . . It is a war we can and will win. Our Father in Heaven has given us the tools we need in order to do so.”¹

All of us, young and old, are faced daily with the war mentioned by President Monson. The enemy and his angels are trying to distract us. Their purpose is to encourage us to deviate from the covenants that we have made with the Lord, causing us to lose sight of our eternal inheritance. They know well our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children, for they were present with us in that great Council in Heaven

when it was all presented. They try to take advantage of our weaknesses and frailties, deceiving us with “mists of darkness . . . , which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.”²

Despite the opposition we face, as President Monson has taught, this is a war that we can and will win. The Lord trusts in our capacity and determination to do so.

The scriptures contain countless examples of those who have won their wars even in the midst of very hostile situations. One of these examples is Captain Moroni in the Book of Mormon. This remarkable young man had the courage to defend the truth at a time when there were many dissensions and wars which put at risk the very survival of the entire Nephite nation. Although he was brilliant in exercising his responsibilities, Moroni remained humble. This and other attributes made him an extraordinary instrument in the hands of God at that time. The book of Alma explains that if all men had been like Moroni, “the



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf9 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



General Authorities and General Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY



Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor



Thomas S. Monson
President



Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor

THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES



Boyd K. Pecker



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



Neil L. Andersen

THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SEVENTY



Ronald A. Rasband



L. Whitney Clayton



Donald L. Hallstrom



Richard J. Maynes



Craig C. Christensen



Ulisses Soares



Lynn G. Robbins

THE FIRST QUORUM OF THE SEVENTY

(in alphabetical order)



Marcos A. Aloukhalis



Jose L. Alonso



Ian S. Ardern



Mervyn B. Arnold



David S. Baxter



Shayne M. Bowen



Craig A. Candon



Yoon Hwan Choi



Kim B. Clark



Don R. Clarke



Carl B. Cook



Lawrence E. Cochrane



Wilford W. Andersen



Koichi Aoyagi



Randall K. Bennett



Bruce A. Carlson



Claudio R. M. Costa



LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.



Benjamin De Hoyos



Edward Dube



Kevin R. Durcan



Larry J. Echo Hawk



Stanley G. Ellis



David F. Evans



Enrique R. Falabella



Eduardo Gavaret



Robert C. Gay



Carlos A. Godoy



J. Dean Comishi



Timothy J. Dydies



Bradley D. Foster



Randy D. Turk



Christoffer Golden



Genit W. Gong



Walter F. Gonzalez



C. Scott Grow



James J. Hamub



Allen D. Haynie



Daniel L. Johnson



Paul V. Johnson



Patrick Keanon



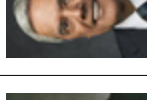
Von G. Keetch



Jung Kleibingat



Erich W. Kopschke



O. Vincent Haleck



Kevin S. Hamilton



Larry S. Kacher



Larry R. Lawrence



Hugo Montoya



Marcus B. Nash



S. Gifford Nielsen



Brent H. Nielson



Allan F. Packler



Kevin W. Pearson



Anthony D. Perkins



Paul B. Pieper



Rafael E. Pino



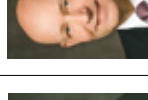
Bruce D. Porter



Dale G. Reiland



Michael L. Ringwood



Per G. Malm



Hugo E. Martinez



James B. Mattino



Jairo Mazzagardi



Joseph W. Slati



Steven E. Snow



Ven P. Stanfill



Michael John U. Teh



Jose A. Teixeira



Juan A. Uceda



Amilfo Valenzuela



Francisco J. Vinas



W. Christopher Wardell



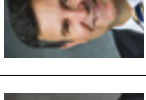
Scott D. Whiting



Chi Hong (Sam) Wong



Kazuhiko Yamashita



Adrian Ochoa



Kent E. Richards



Gregory A. Schwizer



Terence M. Vinson



Larry Y. Wilson



W. Craig Zwick



Jorge F. Zeballos



Claudio D. Zivic

THE PRESIDING BISHOPRIC



Gerald Causse
First Counselor



Gary E. Stevenson
Presiding Bishop



Dean M. Dawes
Second Counselor



John S. Tanner
First Counselor



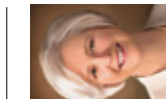
Tad R. Callister
President



Devin C. Durrant
Second Counselor



Bonnie L. O'Scarson
President



Neill F. Marriott
Second Counselor



Carol M. Stephens
First Counselor



Linda K. Burton
President



Linda S. Reeves
Second Counselor



Cheryl A. Espin
First Counselor



Rosemary M. Vinson
President



Mary R. Duffham
Second Counselor



Douglas D. Holmes
First Counselor



Stephen W. Owen
President



M. Joseph Brough
Second Counselor

GENERAL OFFICERS

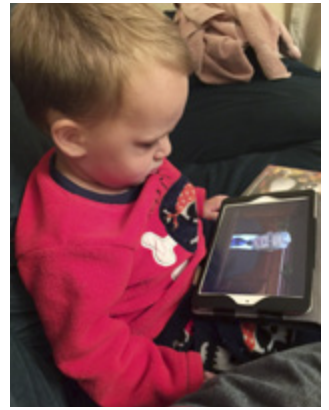
SUNDAY SCHOOL

YOUNG WOMEN

RELIEF SOCIETY

PRIMARY

YOUNG MEN



Pictured clockwise from top left are Church members and missionaries in McMinnville, Oregon, USA; San Martín de los Andes, Neuquén, Argentina; Johannesburg, South Africa; Helsinki, Finland; Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil; Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche, Mexico; Perpignan, France; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; London, England.



very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; [and] the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.”³ All of Moroni’s attributes stemmed from his great faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ⁴ and his firm determination to follow the voice of God and His prophets.⁵

Figuratively, all of us need to transform ourselves into modern Captain Moroni in order to win the wars against evil. I know a very faithful young deacon who transformed himself into a modern Captain Moroni. Inasmuch as he has sought to follow the counsel of his parents and Church leaders, his faith and determination have been tested every day, even at his young age. He told me one day he was surprised by a very difficult and uncomfortable situation—his friends were accessing pornographic images on their cell phones. In that exact moment, this young man had to decide what was most important—his popularity or his righteousness. In the few seconds that followed, he was filled with courage and told his friends that what they were doing was not right. Moreover, he told them that they should stop what they were doing or they would become slaves to it. Most of his classmates ridiculed his counsel, saying that it was a part of life and that there was nothing wrong with it. However, there was one among them who listened to the counsel of that young man and decided to stop what he was doing.

This deacon’s example had a positive influence on at least one of his classmates. Undoubtedly, he and his friend faced mockery and persecution because of that decision. On the other hand, they had followed the admonition of Alma to his people when he said, “Come ye out from the wicked,



and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things.”⁶

The pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* contains the following counsel, approved by the First Presidency for the youth of the Church: “You are responsible for the choices you make. God is mindful of you and will help you make good choices, even if your family and friends use their agency in ways that are not right. Have the moral courage to stand firm in obeying God’s will, even if you have to stand alone. As you do this, you set an example for others to follow.”⁷

The war of good against evil will continue throughout our lives since the adversary’s purpose is to make all people as miserable as he is. Satan and his angels will try to shroud our thoughts and assert control by tempting us to sin. If they can, they will corrupt all that is good. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand that they will have power over us only if we allow it.

The scriptures also contain several examples of those who gave that permission to the adversary and ended up becoming confused and even destroyed, like Nehor, Korihor,

and Sherem. We need to be alert to this danger. We cannot allow ourselves to be confused by popular messages that are easily accepted by the world and that contradict the doctrine and true principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of these worldly messages represent nothing more than an attempt of our society to justify sin. We need to remember that, at the end, all will stand before Christ to be judged of our works, whether they are good or whether they are evil.⁸ As we encounter these worldly messages, great courage and a solid knowledge of the plan of our Heavenly Father will be required to choose the right.

All of us can receive the strength to choose the right if we seek the Lord and place all our trust and faith in Him. But, as the scriptures teach, we need to have “a sincere heart” and “real intent.” Then the Lord, in His infinite mercy, “will manifest the truth unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things.”⁹

This knowledge acquired through the Holy Ghost is nothing more than our testimony, which propels our faith



and determination to follow the teachings of the restored gospel in these latter days, regardless of the popular messages we hear from the world. Our testimony must be our shield to protect us against the fiery darts of the adversary in his attempts to attack us.¹⁰ It will guide us safely through the darkness and confusion that exist in the world today.¹¹

I learned this principle when I served as a young missionary. My companion and I were serving in a very small and faraway branch of the Church. We tried to speak with every person in the city. They received us

very well, but they liked to debate the scriptures and asked us for concrete evidence regarding the truthfulness of what we were teaching.

I recall that each time my companion and I set out to try to prove something to people, the Spirit of God left us and we felt totally lost and confused. We felt that we should more strongly align our testimonies with the truths of the gospel we were teaching. From that time on, I remember that when we bore a testimony with all our hearts, a silent confirming power coming from the Holy Ghost filled the room, and there was no space for confusion or

discussion. I learned that no evil forces exist that are capable of confusing, deceiving, or subverting the power of a sincere testimony of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

As the Savior Himself taught, the adversary desires to sift us as wheat, causing us to lose our ability to influence the world for good.¹²

My dear brethren, because of the wave of confusion and doubt spreading throughout the world today, we must hold ever more tightly to our testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then will our ability to defend truth and justice greatly increase. We will win the daily battles against evil, and, rather than fall on the battlefields of life, we will rally others to the Master's standards.

I invite all to find safety in the teachings contained in the scriptures. Captain Moroni aligned his faith in God and his testimony of the truth with the knowledge and wisdom found in the scriptures. In this way, he trusted that he would receive the blessings of the Lord and would obtain many victories, which is what, in fact, happened.

I invite all to find safety in the wise words of our current prophets. President Thomas S. Monson said: "We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we maintain our personal purity and honor our priesthood, we become righteous examples for others to follow . . . [and we] help to illuminate an increasingly dark world."¹³

I invite all to trust in the merits and in the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Through His atoning sacrifice, we can gain the courage to win all the wars of our time, even in the midst of our difficulties, challenges, and temptations. Let us trust in His love and power to save us. Christ Himself said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life:

no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”¹⁴

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”¹⁵

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹⁶

I bear testimony of these truths in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

This address was delivered in Portuguese.

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Looking Back and Moving Forward,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 90.
2. 1 Nephi 12:17.
3. Alma 48:17.
4. See Alma 48:13.
5. See Alma 43:23–24; 48:16.
6. Alma 5:57.
7. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 2.
8. See 3 Nephi 27:14.
9. Moroni 10:4–5.
10. See Ephesians 6:16; Doctrine and Covenants 27:17.
11. See Revelation 12:11.
12. See Luke 22:31–32.
13. Thomas S. Monson, “Guided Safely Home,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 68.
14. John 14:6.
15. John 8:12.
16. John 16:33.



By **Larry M. Gibson**

Recently Released First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Fatherhood—Our Eternal Destiny

May we each enjoy the fulness of Father’s blessings in this life and the fulfillment of His work and His glory by becoming fathers to our families for eternity.

My father taught me a significant lesson when I was young. He sensed that I was becoming too enamored with temporal things. When I had money, I immediately spent it—almost always on myself.

One afternoon he took me to purchase some new shoes. On the second floor of the department store, he invited me to look out the window with him.

“What do you see?” he asked.

“Buildings, sky, people” was my response.

“How many?”

“A lot!”

He then pulled this coin from his pocket. As he handed it to me, he asked, “What is this?”

I immediately knew: “A silver dollar!”

Drawing on his knowledge of chemistry, he said, “If you melt that silver dollar and mix it with the right ingredients, you would have silver nitrate. If we coated this window with silver nitrate, what would you see?”

I had no idea, so he escorted me to a full-length mirror and asked, “Now what do you see?”

“I see me.”

“No,” he replied, “what you see is silver reflecting you. If you focus on the silver, all you will see is yourself, and like a veil, it will keep you from seeing clearly the eternal destiny Heavenly Father has prepared just for you.”

“If you focus on the silver,” my father replied, “all you will see is yourself, and it will keep you from seeing clearly the eternal destiny Heavenly Father has prepared just for you.”



“Larry,” he continued, “seek not the things of this world but seek . . . first . . . the kingdom of God, and to establish [*His*] righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*]).

He told me to keep the dollar and never lose it. Each time I looked at it, I was to think about the eternal destiny that Heavenly Father has for me.

I loved my father and how he taught. I wanted to be like him. He planted in my heart the desire to be a good father, and my deepest hope is that I am living up to his example.

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has often said that our decisions determine our destiny and have eternal consequences (see “Decisions Determine Destiny” [Church

Educational System fireside, Nov. 6, 2005], 2; lds.org/broadcasts).

Should we not, then, develop a clear vision of our *eternal destiny*, particularly the one that Heavenly Father wants us to achieve—eternal fatherhood? Let our *eternal destiny* drive *all* of our decisions. Regardless of how difficult those decisions may be, Father will sustain us.

I learned about the power of such a vision when I joined my 12- and 13-year-old sons for a 50/20 competition. A 50/20 consists of walking 50 miles (80 km) in less than 20 hours. We started at 9:00 p.m. and walked all that night and most of the next day. It was an excruciating 19 hours, but we succeeded.

Upon returning home, we literally crawled into the house, where a

wonderful wife and mother had prepared a lovely dinner, which we didn’t touch. My younger son collapsed, totally exhausted, on the couch, while my older son crawled downstairs to his bedroom.

After some painful rest of my own, I went to my younger son to make sure he was still alive.

“Are you OK?” I asked.

“Dad, that was the hardest thing I have ever done, and I never want to do it again.”

I wasn’t about to tell him that I would never do it again either. Instead, I told him how proud I was that he had accomplished such a hard thing. I knew it would prepare him for other hard things he would face in his future. With that thought, I said, “Son, let me make you this promise. When you go on your mission, you will never have to walk 50 miles in one day.”

“Good, Dad! Then I’m going.”

Those simple words filled my soul with gratitude and joy.

I then went downstairs to my oldest son. I lay by him—then touched him. “Son, are you all right?”

“Dad, that was the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life, and I will never, ever do it again.” His eyes closed—then opened—and he said, “Unless my son wants me to.”

Tears came as I expressed how grateful I was for him. I told him I knew he was going to be a much better father than I was. My heart was full because at his young and tender age he already recognized that one of his most sacred priesthood duties was to be a father. He had no fear of that role and title—the very title that God Himself wants us to use when we speak to Him. I knew I had the responsibility to nurture the embers of fatherhood that were burning within my son.



These words of the Savior took on a much deeper meaning to me as a father:

“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for [whatsoever things He] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19).

“I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me” (John 8:28).

I love being a husband and father—married to a chosen daughter of heavenly parents. I love her. It is one of the most fulfilling parts of my life. My hope that night was that my five sons and their sister would always see in me the joy that comes from eternal marriage, fatherhood, and family.

Fathers, I am sure you have heard the saying “Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words” (attributed to Francis of Assisi). Every day you are teaching your children what it means to be a father. You are laying a foundation for the next generation. Your sons will learn how to be husbands and fathers by observing the way you fulfill these roles. For example:

Do they know how much you love and cherish their mother and how much you love being their father?

They will learn how to treat their future wife and children as they watch you treat *each one of them* just as Heavenly Father would.

Through your example, they can learn how to respect, honor, and protect womanhood.

In your home, they can learn to preside over their family in love and righteousness. They can learn to provide the necessities of life and protection for their family—temporally and spiritually (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

Brethren, with all the energy of my soul, I ask you to consider this



question: Do your sons see you striving to do what Heavenly Father would have *them* do?

I pray the answer is yes. If the answer is no, it's not too late to change, but you must begin today. And I testify that Heavenly Father will help you.

Now, you young men, whom I dearly love, you know you are preparing to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, receive sacred temple ordinances, fulfill your *duty* and *obligation* to serve a full-time mission, and then, without waiting too long, get married in the temple to a daughter of God and have a family. You are then to lead your family in spiritual things as guided by the Holy Ghost (see D&C 20:44; 46:2; 107:12).

I have asked many young men around the world, “Why are you here?”

So far, not one has responded, “To learn to be a father, that I might be prepared and qualified to receive all that Heavenly Father has.”

Let's examine *your* Aaronic Priesthood duties as described in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Be sensitive to what *you* feel as I apply these duties to your service in your family.

“Invite all [of your family] to come unto Christ” (verse 59).

“Watch over [them] always, and be with and strengthen them” (verse 53).

“Preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize” members of your family (verse 46).

“Exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties” (verse 47).

“See that there is no iniquity in [your family], neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking” (verse 54).

“See that [your family meets] together often” (verse 55).

Assist your father in his duties as patriarch. Support your mother with priesthood strength when a father is not present (see verses 52, 56).

When asked, “ordain other priests, teachers, and deacons” in your family (verse 48).

Doesn't this sound like *the work and role of a father*?

Fulfilling your Aaronic Priesthood duties is preparing you young men for *fatherhood*. The *Duty to God* resource can help you learn about and make



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

specific plans to fulfill your duties. It can serve as a guide and assistance as you seek Heavenly Father's will and set goals to accomplish it.

Father in Heaven has brought you here at this particular time for a special work and eternal purpose. He wants you to see clearly and understand what that purpose is. He is your Father, and you can always turn to Him for guidance.

I know that Heavenly Father is concerned about each of us individually and has a personal plan for us to achieve our eternal destiny. He has sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to help us overcome our imperfections through the Atonement. He has blessed us with the Holy Ghost to be a witness, companion, and guide *to our eternal destination* if we will rely on Him. May we each enjoy the fulness of Father's blessings in this life and the fulfillment of *His work* and *His glory* by becoming fathers to our families for eternity (see Moses 1:39). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

On Being Genuine

I pray that we will resist the temptation to draw attention to ourselves and, instead, strive for a far greater honor: to become humble, genuine disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the late 18th century, Catherine the Great of Russia announced she would tour the southern part of her empire, accompanied by several foreign ambassadors. The governor of the area, Grigory Potemkin, desperately wanted to impress these visitors. And so he went to remarkable lengths to showcase the country's accomplishments.

For part of the journey, Catherine floated down the Dnieper River, proudly pointing out to the ambassadors the thriving hamlets along

the shore, filled with industrious and happy townspeople. There was only one problem: it was all for show. It is said that Potemkin had assembled pasteboard facades of shops and homes. He had even positioned busy-looking peasants to create the impression of a prosperous economy. Once the party disappeared around the bend of the river, Potemkin's men packed up the fake village and rushed it downstream in preparation for Catherine's next pass.

Although modern historians have questioned the truthfulness of this story, the term "Potemkin village" has entered the world's vocabulary. It now refers to any attempt to make others believe we are better than we really are.

Are Our Hearts in the Right Place?

It is part of human nature to want to look our best. It is why many of us work so hard on the exterior of our homes and why our young Aaronic Priesthood brethren make sure every hair is in place, just in case they run into that special someone. There is nothing wrong with shining our shoes, smelling our best, or even hiding the dirty dishes before the home teachers arrive. However, when taken to





extremes, this desire to impress can shift from useful to deceitful.

The Lord's prophets have ever raised a warning voice against those who "draw near [to the Lord] with their mouth, and with their lips do honour [Him], but have removed their heart far from [Him]."¹

The Savior was understanding and compassionate with sinners whose hearts were humble and sincere. But He rose up in righteous anger against hypocrites like the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees—those who tried to appear righteous in order to win the praise, influence, and wealth of the world, all the while oppressing the people they should have been blessing. The Savior compared them to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."²

In our day, the Lord has similarly strong words for priesthood holders who try to "cover [their] sins, or to gratify [their] pride, [or their] vain ambition." When they do this, He said, "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."³

Why does this happen? Why do we sometimes try to appear active, prosperous, and dedicated outwardly when on the inside—as the Revelator said of

the Ephesians—we have "left [our] first love"?⁴

In some cases, we may simply have lost our focus on the essence of the gospel, mistaking the "form of godliness" for the "power thereof."⁵ This is especially dangerous when we direct our outward expressions of discipleship to impress others for personal gain or influence. It is then that we are at risk of entering into Pharisee territory, and it is high time to examine our hearts to make immediate course corrections.

Potemkin Programs

This temptation to appear better than we are is found not just in our personal lives but can be found in our Church assignments as well.

For example, I know of a stake where the leaders set some ambitious goals for the year. While the goals all looked worthwhile, they focused either on lofty and impressive declarations or on numbers and percentages.

After these goals had been discussed and agreed upon, something began to trouble the stake president. He thought about the members of his stake—like the young mother with small children who was recently widowed. He thought about the members who were struggling with doubts or loneliness or with severe health conditions and no

insurance. He thought about the members who were grappling with broken marriages, addictions, unemployment, and mental illness. And the more he thought about them, the more he asked himself a humbling question: will our new goals make a difference in the lives of these members?

He began to wonder how their stake's goals might have been different if they had first asked, "What is our ministry?"

So this stake president went back to his councils, and together they shifted their focus. They determined that they would not allow "the hungry, . . . the needy, . . . the naked, . . . the sick and the afflicted to pass by [them], and notice them not."⁶

They set new goals, recognizing that success with *these* new goals could not always be measured, at least not by man—for how does one measure personal testimony, love of God, or compassion for others?

But they also knew that "many of the things you can count, do not count. Many of the things you cannot count, really do count."⁷

I wonder if our organizational and personal goals are sometimes the modern equivalent of a Potemkin village. Do they look impressive from a distance but fail to address the real needs of our beloved fellowmen?



Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil

My dear friends and fellow priesthood holders, if Jesus Christ were to sit down with us and ask for an accounting of our stewardship, I am not sure He would focus much on programs and statistics. What the Savior would want to know is the condition of our heart. He would want to know how we love and minister to those in our care, how we show our love to our spouse and family, and how we lighten their daily load. And the Savior would want to know how you and I grow closer to Him and to our Heavenly Father.

Why Are We Here?

It may be beneficial to search our own hearts. For example, we might ask ourselves, why do we serve in the Church of Jesus Christ?

We could even ask, why are we here at this meeting today?

I suppose if I were to answer that question on a superficial level, I could say that I'm here because President Monson assigned me to speak.

So I really didn't have a choice.

Besides that, my wife, whom I love very much, expects me to attend. And how can I say no to her?

But we all know there are better

reasons for attending our meetings and living our lives as committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

I am here because I desire with all my heart to follow my Master, Jesus Christ. I yearn to do all that He asks of me in this great cause. I hunger to be edified by the Holy Spirit and hear the voice of God as He speaks through His ordained servants. I am here to become a better man, to be lifted by the inspiring examples of my brothers and sisters in Christ, and to learn how to more effectively minister to those in need.

In short, I am here because I love my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I am sure this is your reason too. This is why we are willing to make sacrifices and not just declarations to follow the Savior. This is why we bear with honor His holy priesthood.

From Spark to Bonfire

Whether your testimony is thriving and healthy or your activity in the Church more closely resembles a Potemkin village, the good news is that you can build on whatever strength you have. Here in the Church of Jesus Christ you can mature spiritually and

draw closer to the Savior by *applying* gospel principles *day by day*.

With patience and persistence, even the smallest act of discipleship or the tiniest ember of belief can become a blazing bonfire of a consecrated life. In fact, that's how most bonfires begin—as a simple spark.

So if you feel small and weak, please simply come unto Christ, who makes weak things strong.⁸ The weakest among us, through God's grace, can become spiritually strong, because God "is no respecter of persons."⁹ He is our "faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments."¹⁰

It is my conviction that if God can reach out and sustain a poor German refugee from a modest family in a war-torn country half a world away from the headquarters of the Church, then He can reach out to you.

My beloved brothers in Christ, the God of Creation, who breathed life into the universe, surely has the power to breathe life into you. Surely He can make of you the genuine, spiritual being of light and truth you desire to be.

God's promises are sure and certain. We can be forgiven of our sins and

cleansed from all unrighteousness.¹¹ And if we continue to embrace and live true principles in our personal circumstances and in our families, we will ultimately arrive at a point where we “hunger no more, neither thirst any more. . . . For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed [us], and shall lead [us] unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes.”¹²

The Church Is a Place of Healing, Not Hiding

But this cannot happen if we hide behind personal, dogmatic, or organizational facades. Such artificial discipleship not only keeps us from seeing ourselves as who we really are, but it also prevents us from truly changing through the miracle of the Savior’s Atonement.

The Church is not an automobile showroom—a place to put ourselves on display so that others can admire our spirituality, capacity, or prosperity. It is more like a service center, where vehicles in need of repair come for maintenance and rehabilitation.

And are we not, all of us, in need of repair, maintenance, and rehabilitation?

We come to church not to hide our problems but to heal them.

And as priesthood holders, we have an additional responsibility—to “feed the flock of God . . . , not by constraint, but willingly; not for [personal gain], but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being [ex]amples to the flock.”¹³

Remember, brethren, “God resist[s] the proud, but give[s] grace unto the humble.”¹⁴

The greatest, most capable, most accomplished man who ever walked this earth was also the most humble. He performed some of His most impressive service in private moments, with only a few observers, whom He asked to “tell no man” what He had done.¹⁵ When someone called Him “good,” He quickly deflected the compliment, insisting that only God is truly good.¹⁶ Clearly the praise of the world meant nothing to Him; His single purpose was to serve His Father and “do always those things that please

him.”¹⁷ We would do well to follow the example of our Master.

May We Love as He Loved

Brethren, this is our high and holy calling—to be agents of Jesus Christ, to love as He loved, to serve as He served, to “lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees,”¹⁸ to “look [after] the poor and the needy,”¹⁹ and to care for the widows and orphans.²⁰

I pray, brethren, that as we serve in our families, quorums, wards, stakes, communities, and nations, we will resist the temptation to draw attention to ourselves and, instead, strive for a far greater honor: to become humble, genuine disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we do so, we will find ourselves walking the path that leads to our best, most genuine, and noblest selves. Of this I testify in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 29:13.
2. Matthew 23:27.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
4. Revelation 2:4.
5. See Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
6. Mormon 8:39.
7. Attributed to Albert Einstein.
8. See Ether 12:27.
9. Acts 10:34.
10. Deuteronomy 7:9.
11. See 1 John 1:9.
12. Revelation 7:16–17.
13. 1 Peter 5:2–3.
14. James 4:6.
15. See Luke 8:56.
16. See Mark 10:17–18.
17. John 8:29.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 38:35.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 83:6.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf10 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



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

Priesthood and Personal Prayer

God can grant us power in the priesthood for whatever circumstance we may be in. It simply requires that we ask in humility.

I am grateful for the trust to speak to holders of the priesthood of God in all the earth. I feel the weight of that opportunity because I know something of the trust that the Lord has placed in you. With your acceptance of the priesthood, you have received the right to speak and to act in the name of God.

That right will become a reality only as you receive inspiration from God. Only then will you be able to speak in His name. And only then can you act in His name. You might have made the mistake of thinking, “Oh, that isn’t so difficult. I could get inspiration if I am ever asked to give a talk or if I ever need to give a priesthood blessing.” Or the young deacon or teacher might take comfort in the thought, “When I am older or when I am called as a missionary, then I will know what God would say and what God would do.”

But think of the day when you must know what God would say and what He would do. It has already come for us all—wherever you are in your calling in the priesthood. I grew up in the mission field in the eastern United States during World War II. The

members of the Church lived far apart, and there was strict gas rationing. I was the only deacon in the branch. The members gave their fast-offering envelopes to the branch president when they came to fast and testimony meeting in our home.

When I was 13 years old, we moved to Utah to live in a large ward. I remember my first assignment to walk to homes to collect fast offerings. I looked at the name on one of the envelopes I was given and noticed



the last name was the same as one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. So I knocked on the door with confidence. The man opened the door, looked at me, scowled, and then barked at me to go away. I went away with my head down.

That was nearly 70 years ago, but I still remember the feeling I had that day on the doorstep that there was something I was supposed to have said or done. If only I had prayed in faith as I went out that day, I might have been inspired to stand a moment longer on that doorstep, smile, and say something like: “It is good to meet you. Thank you for what you and your family have given in the past. I look forward to seeing you next month.”

Had I said and done that, he might have been even more irritated—and even offended. But I know now how I might have felt. Rather than feeling sadness or failure as I walked away, I might have felt the soft commendation in my mind and heart: “Well done.”

All of us must speak and act in the name of God in moments when our unaided judgment will not be enough without inspiration. Those moments can come upon us when there is not time to make preparation. That has happened to me often. It did many years ago in a hospital when a father told me and my companion that the doctors had told him that his critically injured three-year-old daughter would die within minutes. As I placed my hands on the one spot on her head not covered with bandages, I had to know, as God’s servant, what He would do and say.

The words came to my mind and my lips that she would live. The doctor standing by me snorted in disgust and asked me to get out of the way. I walked out of that hospital room with a feeling of peace and love. The little girl



lived and walked down the aisle into a sacrament meeting on my last day in that city. I still remember the joy and satisfaction I felt from what I had said and done in the Lord's service for that little girl and her family.

The difference in my feelings at the hospital and the sadness I felt as I walked away from that door as a deacon came from what I had learned about the connection of prayer to priesthood power. As a deacon, I had not yet learned that the power to speak and act in God's name requires revelation and that to have it when we need it requires praying and working in faith for the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

On the evening before I went to that door for fast offerings, I had said my prayers at bedtime. But for weeks and months before that phone call came from the hospital, I had followed a pattern of prayer and made the effort that President Joseph F. Smith taught will allow God to give us the inspiration necessary for us to have power in the priesthood. He put it simply:

"We do not have to cry unto him with many words. We do not have to weary him with long prayers. What we do need, and what we should do as

Latter-day Saints, for our own good, is to go before him often, to witness unto him that we remember him and that we are willing to take upon us his name, keep his commandments, work righteousness; and that we desire his Spirit to help us."¹

And then President Smith told us what we should pray for, as his servants pledged to speak and act for God. He said: "What do you pray for? You pray that God may recognize you, that he may hear your prayers, and that he may bless you with his Spirit."²

It is not a matter so much of which words to use, but it will take some patience. It is an approach to your Heavenly Father with the intent to be recognized by Him personally. He is the God above all, the Father of all, and yet willing to give undivided attention to one of His children. That may be why the Savior used the words "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."³

It is easier to get the proper feeling of reverence when you are kneeling or bowing your head, but it is possible to feel that you are approaching your Heavenly Father in less formal and even in silent prayer, as you will

often need to do in your priesthood service. There will be noise and people around you most of your waking day. God hears your silent prayers, but you may have to learn to shut out the distractions because the moment you need the connection with God may not come in quiet times.

President Smith suggested that you will need to pray that God will recognize your call to serve Him. He already knows about your call in complete detail. He called you, and by praying to Him about your call, He will reveal more for you to know.⁴

I will give you an example of what a home teacher might do as he prays. You may already know that you are to:

"Visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties. . . .

". . . Watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."⁵

Now, even for the experienced home teacher and his junior companion, that is clearly impossible without the help of the Holy Ghost. Think of the families or even individuals you have been called to serve. Human judgment and good intentions will not be enough.

So you will pray for the way to know their hearts, to know what things are amiss in the lives and the hearts of people whom you don't know well and who are not anxious to have you know them. You will need to know what God would have you do to help them and to do it all, as nearly as you can, feeling God's love for them.

It is because you have such important and difficult priesthood calls that President Smith suggests that when you pray, you always plead with God that He will bless you with His Spirit. You will need the Holy Ghost not once but as much as God will grant it to you for your constant companion. That is why we must always pray that God will guide us in our service to His children.

Because you cannot rise to your priesthood potential without the Spirit going with you, you are a personal target for the enemy of all happiness. If he can tempt you to sin, he can lessen your power to be led by the Spirit and so reduce your power in the priesthood. That is why President Smith said

that you should always pray that God will warn and protect you from evil.⁶

He warns us in many ways. Warnings are part of the plan of salvation. Prophets, apostles, stake presidents, bishops, and missionaries all raise the warning voice to escape calamity through faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and making and keeping sacred covenants.

As a priesthood holder, you are to be part of the warning voice of the Lord. But you need to heed the warning yourself. You will not survive spiritually without the protection of the companionship of the Holy Ghost in your daily life.

You must pray for it and work to have it. Only with that guide will you

be able to find your way along the strait and narrow path through the mists of evil. The Holy Ghost will be your guide as He reveals truth when you study the words of prophets.

Getting that guidance will take more than casual listening and reading. You will need to pray and work in faith to put the words of truth down into your heart. You must pray that God will bless you with His Spirit, that He will lead you into all truth and show you the right way. That is how He will warn and guide you into the right path in your life and in your priesthood service.

General conference provides a great opportunity to let the Lord strengthen your power to serve in the priesthood of God. You can prepare yourself, as



I'm sure you have for this conference, with prayer. You can join your faith with those who will pray in the conference. They will pray for many blessings on many people.

They will pray for the Spirit to come upon the prophet as the Lord's mouthpiece. They will pray for the Apostles and all of the servants called by God. That includes you, from the newest deacon to the seasoned high priest, and some, both old and young, who may soon go to the spirit world, where they will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."⁷

That salutation will go to some who will be surprised by it. They may never have held high office in the kingdom of God on the earth. Some may have felt that they saw little result from their labors or that some opportunities to serve were never given to them. Others may feel that their time of service was cut shorter in this life than they had hoped.

It will not be the offices held or the time served that will be weighed in the balance with the Lord. We know this from the Lord's parable of the laborers in the vineyard, where the pay was the same regardless of how long they served or where. They will be rewarded for how they served.⁸

I know a man, a dear friend, whose mortal service in the vineyard ended last night at 11:00. He had been treated for cancer for years. During those years of treatment and of terrible pain and difficulty, he accepted a call to hold meetings with and be responsible for members in his ward whose children were gone from their homes; some were widows. His calling was to help them find comfort in sociality and gospel learning.

When he got the final sobering prognosis that he had only a short time to live, his bishop was away for a



business trip. Two days later, he sent a message to his bishop through his high priests group leader. He said this about his assignment: "I understand the bishop is out of town, so I'm in action. I'm thinking of a meeting for our group next Monday. Two members can take us for a tour of the Conference Center. We could use some members to drive them and some Scouts to push wheelchairs. Depending upon who signs up, we may have enough oldsters to do it ourselves, but it would be good to know we have backup if needed. It could also be a good family night for the helpers to bring their families as well. Anyway let me know before I post the plan. . . . Thanks."

And then he surprised the bishop with a phone call. Without reference to his own condition or his valiant efforts in his assignment, he asked, "Bishop, is there anything I could do for you?" Only the Holy Ghost could have allowed him to feel the bishop's load when his own load was so crushing. And only the Spirit could have made it possible for him to create a plan to serve his brothers and sisters with the same precision he used in planning Scouting events when he was young.

With a prayer of faith, God can grant us power in the priesthood for whatever circumstance we may be in.

It simply requires that we ask in humility for the Spirit to show us what God would have us say and do, do it, and continue to live worthy of that gift.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives, loves us, and hears our every prayer. I bear testimony that Jesus is the living Christ, whose Atonement makes it possible for us to be purified and so be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. I testify that with our faith and diligence, we can one day hear the words that will bring us joy: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."⁹ I pray that we will receive that wonderful benediction from the Master we serve. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 23.
2. *Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 26.
3. Luke 11:2.
4. See Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 215–21.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51, 53–55.
6. See *Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 26.
7. Matthew 25:21.
8. See Matthew 20:1–16.
9. Matthew 25:21.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf11 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By President Thomas S. Monson

The Priesthood— a Sacred Gift

Each of us has been entrusted with one of the most precious gifts ever bestowed upon mankind.

One of my most vivid memories is attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing during the opening hymn, “Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood.”¹ Tonight, to all assembled here in the Conference Center and, indeed, throughout the world, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you: *Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood*, let us consider our callings; let us reflect on our responsibilities; let us determine our duty; and let us follow Jesus Christ, our Lord. While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we are united as one in our priesthood callings.

To each of us, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood to Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith by John the Baptist is most significant. Likewise, the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James, and John is a cherished event.

Let us take most seriously the callings, the responsibilities, and the duties which come with the priesthood we hold.

I felt a great responsibility when I was called to be secretary of my deacons quorum. I prepared most conscientiously the records I kept, for I wanted to do the very best I knew how to do in that calling. I took great pride in my work. Doing all I can, to the very best of my ability, has been my goal in any position I have ever held.

I hope each young man who has been ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood is given a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling, as well as opportunities to magnify that calling. I received such an opportunity as a deacon when the bishopric asked that I take the sacrament to a shut-in who lived about a mile from our chapel. That special Sunday morning, as I knocked on Brother Wright’s door and heard his feeble voice call, “Come in,” I entered not only his humble cottage but also a room filled with the Spirit of the Lord. I approached Brother Wright’s bedside and carefully placed a piece of the bread to his lips. I then held the cup of water, that he might drink. As I departed, I saw tears in his eyes as he said, “God bless you, my boy.” And

God did bless me—with an appreciation for the sacred emblems of the sacrament and for the priesthood which I held.

No deacon, teacher, or priest from our ward will ever forget the memorable visits we made to Clarkston, Utah, to the gravesite of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. As we surrounded the tall granite shaft which marks his grave, and as one of the quorum leaders read to us those penetrating words from “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” found at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, we developed a love for that sacred record and for the truths found therein.

During those years our objective was to become as the sons of Mosiah. Of them it was said:

“They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of





prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”²

I cannot think of a more worthy goal for a young man to have than to be described as were the valiant and righteous sons of Mosiah.

As I approached my 18th birthday and prepared to enter the mandatory military service required of young men during World War II, I was recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, but first I needed to telephone my stake president, Paul C. Child, for an interview. He was one who loved and understood the holy scriptures, and it was his intent that all others should similarly love and understand them. Having heard from some of my friends of his rather detailed and searching interviews, I desired minimum exposure of my scriptural knowledge; therefore, when I called him I suggested we meet the following Sunday at a time I knew was just an hour before his sacrament meeting time.

His response: “Oh, Brother Monson, that would not provide us sufficient time to peruse the scriptures.” He then suggested a time three hours

before his sacrament meeting, and he instructed me to bring with me my personally marked and referenced set of scriptures.

When I arrived at his home on Sunday, I was greeted warmly, and then the interview began. President Child said, “Brother Monson, you hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Have you ever had angels minister to you?” I replied that I had not. When he asked if I knew I was entitled to such, I again replied that I had not known.

He instructed, “Brother Monson, repeat from memory the 13th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.”

I began, “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—”

“Stop,” President Child directed. Then, in a calm, kindly tone, he counseled, “Brother Monson, never forget that as a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood you are entitled to the ministering of angels.”

It was almost as though an angel were in the room that day. I have never forgotten the interview. I yet

feel the spirit of that solemn occasion as we together read of the responsibilities, the duties, and the blessings of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood—blessings which come not only to us but also to our families and to others we will have the privilege to serve.

I was ordained an elder, and on the day of my departure for active duty with the navy, a member of my ward bishopric joined my family and friends at the train station to bid me farewell. Just before train time, he placed in my hand a small volume titled *Missionary Handbook*. I laughed and commented that I wasn’t going on a mission.

He answered, “Take it anyway. It may come in handy.”

It did. I needed a hard, rectangular object to place in the bottom of my seabag so that my clothing would stay more firm and would thus be less wrinkled. The *Missionary Handbook* was just what I needed, and it served well in my seabag for 12 weeks.

The night before our Christmas leave, our thoughts were of home. The barracks were quiet, but then the silence was broken by my buddy in the



those in need than I could possibly count. Each opportunity has found me deeply grateful that God has entrusted to me this sacred gift. I revere the priesthood. I have witnessed its power time and time again. I have seen its strength. I have marveled at the miracles it has wrought.

Brethren, each of us has been entrusted with one of the most precious gifts ever bestowed upon mankind. As we honor our priesthood and live our lives so that we are at all times worthy, the blessings of the priesthood will flow through us. I love the words found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121, verse 45, which tell us what we must do to be worthy: “Let thy bowels . . . be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.”

As bearers of the priesthood of God, we are engaged in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have answered His call; we are on His errand. Let us learn of Him. Let us follow in His footsteps. Let us live by His precepts. By so doing, we will be prepared for any service He calls us to perform. This is His work. This is His Church. Indeed, He is our captain, the King of Glory, even the Son of God. I testify that He lives and bear this witness in His holy name, the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Hymns*, no. 322.
2. Alma 17:2–3.

adjoining bunk—a Mormon boy, Leland Merrill—who began to moan in pain. I inquired concerning the reason, and he said he felt really sick. He did not want to go to the base dispensary, for he knew that doing such would prevent his going home the following day.

He seemed to grow worse as the hours passed. Finally, knowing that I was an elder, he asked me to give him a priesthood blessing.

I had never before given a priesthood blessing, I had never received a blessing, and I had never witnessed a blessing being given. As I prayed

silently for help, I remembered the *Missionary Handbook* in the bottom of my seabag. I quickly emptied the bag and took the book to the night-light. There I read how one blesses the sick. With many curious sailors looking on, I proceeded with the blessing. Before I could put everything back into my bag, Leland Merrill was sleeping like a child. He awakened the following morning feeling fine. The gratitude each of us felt for the power of the priesthood was immense.

The years have brought me more opportunities to provide blessings to



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf12 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By President Thomas S. Monson

Blessings of the Temple

As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace.

My beloved brothers and sisters, how grateful I am to be with you this beautiful Easter morning when our thoughts turn to the Savior of the world. I extend my love and greetings to each of you and pray that our Heavenly Father will inspire my words.

This conference marks seven years since I was sustained as President of the Church. They have been busy years, filled not only with a few challenges but also with countless blessings. Among the most enjoyable and sacred of these blessings has been my opportunity to dedicate and rededicate temples.

Most recently, this past November it was my privilege to dedicate the beautiful new Phoenix Arizona Temple. I was joined by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder Richard J. Maynes, Elder Lynn G. Robbins, and Elder Kent F. Richards. On the evening prior to the dedication, a marvelous cultural celebration was held where over 4,000 of our youth from the temple district performed beautifully. The following day the temple was dedicated in three sacred and inspiring sessions.

The building of temples is a very clear indication of the growth of the Church. We currently have 144 temples

in operation worldwide, with 5 being renovated and 13 more under construction. In addition, 13 temples which were previously announced are in various stages of preparation before construction begins. This year we anticipate rededicating 2 temples and dedicating 5 new temples which are scheduled for completion.

For the past two years, as we have concentrated our efforts on completing previously announced temples, we have held in abeyance plans for any additional temples. This morning, however, I am very pleased to announce

three new temples which will be built in the following locations: Abidjan, Ivory Coast; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Bangkok, Thailand. What marvelous blessings are in store for our faithful members in these areas and, indeed, wherever temples are located throughout the world.

The process of determining needs and finding locations for additional temples is ongoing, for we desire that as many members as possible have an opportunity to attend the temple without great sacrifices of time and resources. As we have done in the past, we will keep you informed as decisions are made in this regard.

As I think of temples, my thoughts turn to the many blessings we receive therein. As we enter through the doors of the temple, we leave behind us the distractions and confusion of the world. Inside this sacred sanctuary, we find beauty and order. There is rest for our souls and a respite from the cares of our lives.

As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality



and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart. We will grasp the true meaning of the words of the Savior when He said: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”¹

Such peace can permeate any heart—hearts that are troubled, hearts that are burdened down with grief, hearts that feel confusion, hearts that plead for help.

I recently learned firsthand of a young man who attended the temple with a heart pleading for help. Many months earlier he had received his call to serve in a mission in South America. However, his visa was delayed for such a lengthy period that he was reassigned to a mission in the United States. Although disappointed that he could not serve in the area of his original call, he nonetheless worked hard in his new assignment, determined to serve to the best of his ability. He became discouraged, however, because of negative experiences he had with missionaries who seemed to him to be more interested in having a good time than in sharing the gospel.

A few short months later this young man suffered a very serious health challenge which left him partially paralyzed, and so he was sent home on a medical leave.

Some months later the young man had healed completely, and his paralysis had disappeared. He was informed that he would once again be able to serve as a missionary, a blessing for which he had prayed daily. The only disappointing news was that he would return to the same mission which he had left, where he felt the behaviors and attitudes of some missionaries were less than they should be.



He had come to the temple to seek comfort and a confirmation that he could have a good experience as a missionary. His parents also had prayed that this temple visit would provide the help their son needed.

As the young man entered the celestial room following the session, he sat in a chair and began to pray for guidance from his Heavenly Father.

Another who entered the celestial room shortly afterward was a young man whose name is Landon. As he walked into the room, his gaze was immediately drawn to the young man sitting on the chair, eyes closed and obviously praying. Landon received an unmistakable prompting that he should speak with the young man. Hesitant to interrupt, however, he decided to wait. After several minutes had gone by, the young man was still praying. Landon knew he could no longer postpone the prompting. He approached the young man and gently touched his shoulder. The young man opened his eyes, startled that he had been disturbed. Landon said quietly, “I have felt impressed that I need to talk with you, although I am not certain why.”

As they began to converse, the young man poured out his heart to Landon, explaining his circumstances and ending with his desire to receive some comfort and encouragement concerning his

mission. Landon, who had returned from a successful mission just a year earlier, told of his own mission experiences, the challenges and concerns he had faced, the manner in which he had turned to the Lord for help, and the blessings he had received. His words were comforting and reassuring, and his enthusiasm for his mission was contagious. Eventually, as the young man’s fears subsided, a feeling of peace came to him. He felt deep gratitude as he realized his prayer had been answered.

The two young men prayed together, and then Landon prepared to leave, happy that he had listened to the inspiration which had come to him. As he stood to go, the young man asked Landon, “Where did you serve your mission?” To this point, neither of them had mentioned to the other the name of the mission in which he had served. When Landon replied with the name of his mission, tears welled up in the eyes of the young man. Landon had served in the very mission to which the young man would be returning!

In a recent letter to me, Landon shared with me the young man’s parting words to him: “I had faith Heavenly Father would bless me, but I never could have imagined that He would send someone to help me who had served in my own mission. I know now that all will be well.”² The humble

prayer of a sincere heart had been heard and answered.

My brothers and sisters, in our lives we will have temptations; we will have trials and challenges. As we go to the temple, as we remember the covenants we make there, we will be better able to overcome those temptations and to bear our trials. In the temple we can find peace.

The blessings of the temple are priceless. One for which I am grateful every day of my life is that which my beloved wife, Frances, and I received as we knelt at a sacred altar and made covenants binding us together for all eternity. There is no blessing more precious to me than the peace and comfort I receive from the knowledge I have that she and I will be together again.

May our Heavenly Father bless us that we may have the spirit of temple worship, that we may be obedient to His commandments, and that we may follow carefully the steps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I testify that He is our Redeemer. He is the Son of God. He it is who came forth from the grave that first Easter morning, bringing with Him the gift of everlasting life for all of God's children. On this beautiful day, as we celebrate that momentous event, may we offer prayers of gratitude for His great and marvelous gifts to us. That this may be so, I pray humbly in His holy name, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 14:27.
2. Correspondence in the possession of Thomas S. Monson.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf13 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



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

Returning to Faith

Every one of us can strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ on our individual journey and find joy.

On this Easter morning, President Monson, we are so grateful to hear the voice of our living prophet. We value your words, including your counsel “Find joy in the journey”¹ and “The future is as bright as your faith.”²

This year Primary children are sharing the joy and the brightness of their faith in Jesus Christ when they sing the song “I Know That My Savior Loves Me.” They sing the truth “I know He lives! . . . My heart I give to Him.”³ Like Primary children, every one of us can

strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ on our individual journey and find joy.

In a recent Sunday Relief Society meeting, I listened to a young mother share part of her journey of conversion. She had grown up in the Church, with parents who taught her the gospel. She attended Primary, Young Women, and seminary. She loved to learn and discover truths. Her constant quest was to know *why*. Elder Russell M. Nelson has said, “The Lord can only teach an inquiring mind.”⁴ And this young woman was teachable.





After high school she attended a university, was sealed in the temple to a returned missionary, and was blessed with beautiful children.

With the spirit of inquiry, this mother continued to ask questions. But as the questions grew harder, so did the answers. And sometimes there were no answers—or no answers that brought peace. Eventually, as she sought to find answers, more and more questions arose, and she began to question some of the very foundations of her faith.

During this confusing time, some of those around her said, “Just lean on my faith.” But she thought, “I can’t. You don’t understand; you’re not grappling with these issues.” She explained, “I was willing to extend courtesy to those without doubts if they would extend courtesy to me.” And many did.

She said, “My parents knew my heart and allowed me space. They chose to love me while I was trying to figure it out for myself.” Likewise, this young mother’s bishop often met with her and spoke of his confidence in her.

Ward members also did not hesitate to give love, and she felt included. Her ward was not a place to put on a perfect face; it was a place of nurture.

“It was interesting,” she remembers. “During this time I felt a real connection to my grandparents who had died. They were pulling for me and urging

me to keep trying. I felt they were saying, ‘Focus on what you know.’”

In spite of her substantial support system, she became less active. She said, “I did not separate myself from the Church because of bad behavior, spiritual apathy, looking for an excuse not to live the commandments, or searching for an easy out. I felt I needed the answer to the question ‘What do I really believe?’”

About this time she read a book of the writings of Mother Teresa, who had shared similar feelings. In a 1953 letter, Mother Teresa wrote: “Please pray specially for me that I may not spoil His work and that Our Lord may show Himself—for there is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work.’ Ask Our Lord to give me courage.”

Archbishop Périer responded: “God guides you, dear Mother; you are not so much in the dark as you think. The path to be followed may not always be clear at once. Pray for light; do not decide too quickly, listen to what others have to say, consider their reasons. You will always find something to help you. . . . Guided by faith, by prayer, and by reason with a right intention, you have enough.”⁵

My friend thought if Mother Teresa could live her religion without all the answers and without a feeling of

clarity in all things, maybe she could too. She could take one simple step forward in faith—and then another. She could focus on the truths she did believe and let those truths fill her mind and heart.

As she reflected back, she said, “My testimony had become like a pile of ashes. It had all burned down. All that remained was Jesus Christ.” She continued, “But He does not leave you when you have questions. When anyone tries to keep the commandments, the door is wide open. Prayer and scripture study became incredibly important.”

Her first step to rebuild her faith was to start with basic gospel truths. She bought a Primary songbook and began reading the words of the songs. They were treasures to her. She prayed for faith to lift the heaviness she felt.

She learned that when she came up against a statement that caused her to doubt, she “could stop, look at the whole picture, and make the gospel personal.” She said, “I would ask, ‘Is this the right path for me and my family?’ Sometimes I would ask myself, ‘What do I want for my children?’ I realized I want them to have temple marriages. That’s when belief came back to my heart.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has said, “Humility, faith, and the influence of the Holy Spirit [will] always be elements of *every* quest for truth.”⁶

Though she had questions about how the Book of Mormon came to be, she could not deny the truths she knew in the Book of Mormon. She had focused on studying the New Testament to better understand the Savior. “But eventually,” she said, “I found myself back in the Book of Mormon because I loved what I felt when reading about Jesus Christ and His Atonement.”



She concluded, “You have to have your own spiritual experiences with the truths in that book,” and she was having them. She explained, “I read in Mosiah and felt completely directed: ‘Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things . . . ; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.’”⁷

About this time a call came to serve as Primary pianist. “It was safe,” she said. “I wanted to have my children in Primary, and now I could be with them. And I wasn’t ready to teach yet.” As she served, she continued to feel from those around her the invitation “Come; we want you, whatever stage you are at, and we will meet you there. Give us whatever you have to offer.”

Playing the Primary songs, she often thought to herself, “Here are truths I love. I can still bear testimony. I will just say those things that I know and trust. It may not be a perfect offering of knowledge, but it will be my offering. What I focus on expands inside of me. It is beautiful to get back to the essence of the gospel and feel clarity.”

On that Sunday morning, as I listened to this young sister share the story of her journey, I was reminded that “it is upon the rock of our Redeemer” that we all must build our foundation.⁸ I was also reminded of the counsel of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: “Hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes.”⁹

During her lesson, I came to know more fervently that answers to our sincere questions come when we earnestly seek and when we live the commandments. I was reminded that our faith can reach beyond the limits of current reason.

And, oh, how I want to be like those who surrounded this young mother, loving and supporting her. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said: “We are all pilgrims seeking God’s light as we journey on the path of discipleship. We do not condemn others for the amount of light they may or may not have; rather, we nourish and encourage all light until it grows clear, bright, and true.”¹⁰

When the Primary children sing “A Child’s Prayer,” they ask: “Heavenly Father, are you really there? And do you hear and answer every child’s prayer?”¹¹

We too may wonder, “Is Heavenly Father really there?” only to rejoice—as my friend did—when the answers come in quiet, simple assurances. I testify that those simple assurances come as His will becomes ours. I testify that truth is on the earth today and His gospel is found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 85.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 92.
3. “I Know That My Savior Loves Me,” in *I Know My Savior Lives: 2015 Outline for Sharing Time* (2014), 29.
4. Russell M. Nelson, in M. Russell Ballard, “What Came from Kirtland” (Brigham Young University fireside, Nov. 6, 1994); speeches.byu.edu.
5. In *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light; The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*, ed. Brian Kolodiejchuk (2007), 149–50; punctuation standardized.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be Not Afraid, Only Believe” (evening with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Feb. 6, 2015); lds.org/broadcasts.
7. Mosiah 4:9.
8. See Helaman 5:12.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lord, I Believe,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94.
10. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Receiving a Testimony of Light and Truth,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 22.
11. “A Child’s Prayer,” *Children’s Songbook*, 12.



By Elder José A. Teixeira
Of the Seventy

Seeking the Lord

As we deepen our understanding of the Savior, we will have an increased desire to live joyfully and a conviction that joy is possible.

My dear brothers and sisters, it is with great joy that I stand here before you as we participate in this general conference together. Listening to the words of wisdom, counsel, comfort, and warning given in general conferences over many years has been an immeasurable blessing to Sister Teixeira, to our family, and to me.

In this special season of the year, especially on this Easter Sabbath, I cannot help but reflect on the significance of the Savior's teachings and His kind and loving example in my life.



A deeper understanding of Jesus Christ will give us greater hope for the future and, despite our imperfections, more confidence in achieving our righteous goals. This will also grant us a greater desire to serve our fellowman.

The Lord said, “[Seek] me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”¹ Seeking the Lord and feeling His presence is a daily quest, a worthwhile effort.

Brothers and sisters, today more than in any other time, we have at our disposal exceptional opportunities and resources to deepen our understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ and of His Atonement. Using these resources appropriately will help us live a fruitful life filled with joy.

In the Savior's metaphor of the vine and the branches, He said: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”²

The more we understand the extraordinary role of Christ in our lives, the more conscious we become of our purpose here in mortality, which is to have joy. That joy, however, does not preclude us from experiencing trials and difficulties, even some so great and complex that they may lead us to think

that happiness is not possible in such circumstances.

I know by personal experience that the joy of living in righteousness and abiding in Christ can continue despite the tribulations characteristic of mortality. Ultimately, these tribulations often enrich, refine, and guide us to a deeper understanding of the purpose of our existence here in mortality and of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the fulness of joy can only be achieved through Jesus Christ.³

He said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”⁴

I believe that as we deepen our understanding of the Savior, we will have an increased desire to live joyfully and a conviction that joy is possible. Consequently, we will have a greater ability to go about each day with more enthusiasm for life and for keeping the commandments of God, even in challenging circumstances.

Let us not leave for tomorrow what we can do today. It is now that we must come unto Christ because “if [we] believe [Him], [we] will labor while it is called today.”⁵

Every day we should consider including frequent interactions with the teachings of Christ. Small and simple gestures and acts made daily will:

1. Deepen our understanding of the significance of the Lord in our lives, and
2. Help us share this understanding with the rising generations, who will surely feel the love of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, when they see our example of sincerely living the gospel.

So what are some of the simple behaviors in this modern time that will become a balm for our souls in strengthening our testimony of Christ and His mission?

In 2014, the National Geographic photo contest received more than 9,200 submissions by professional



Above: General conference broadcast from airplane in flight. Left: The winning photograph from the 2014 National Geographic photo contest depicts a woman relaying a clear message to other train passengers: despite being physically present, she is not truly there.



photographers and enthusiasts from over 150 countries. The winning photo depicts a woman in the center of a train filled with passengers. The light coming from her mobile phone illuminates her face. She relays a clear message to the other passengers: despite being physically present, she is not truly there.⁶

Mobile data, smartphones, and social networks have profoundly changed our way of being in the world and how we communicate with others.

In this digital era, we can so rapidly transport ourselves to places and activities that can quickly remove us from

what is essential for a life filled with lasting joy.

This networked life can, if left unchecked, give precedence to relationships with people whom we don't know or have never met rather than with the people we live with—our own family!

On the other hand, we all know that we are blessed with excellent online resources, including those developed by the Church, such as text and audio versions of the holy scriptures and general conference, video productions of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, apps to record our family history, and opportunities to listen to inspiring music.

The choices and priorities we make with our time online are decisive. They can determine our spiritual progress and maturity in the gospel and our desire to contribute to a better world and to live a more productive life.

For these reasons, today I would like to mention three simple habits that will establish healthy online activity. These habits will generate the daily self-reflections that are necessary for us to grow closer to the teachings of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Habit Number 1: Visit the Church's Official Websites for Resources

Often visits during the week to these resources will help us to always be sensitive to the teachings of the gospel and encourage our family and friends to think and reflect on what matters most.

Habit Number 2: Subscribe to the Church's Official Social Networks

This choice will bring to your screen the content that is essential to deepen your searching and seeking of the Lord and His teachings, and it will strengthen your desire to understand the gospel. More important, this will help you remember what Christ expects of each of us.



By Bishop Gérald Caussé
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

Just as “there is no good soil without a good farmer,”⁷ likewise will there be no good online harvest unless we prioritize from the very beginning that which is accessible to our fingers and our minds.

Habit Number 3: Make Time to Set Aside Your Mobile Devices

It is refreshing to put aside our electronic devices for a while and instead turn the pages of the scriptures or take time to converse with family and friends. Especially on the Lord’s day, experience the peace of participating in a sacrament meeting without the constant urge to see if you have a new message or a new post.

The habit of setting aside your mobile device for a time will enrich and broaden your view of life, for life is not confined to a four-inch (10 cm) screen.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”⁸ God wants us to have joy and to feel His love. Christ makes such joy a possibility for each of us. We have the means to know Him better and to live His gospel.

I bear my testimony of the joy that exists when we keep the commandments and of the peace and safety that we feel when we abide in the love of Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
2. John 15:4.
3. See John 15:11.
4. John 15:5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:25.
6. See “Photo Contest 2014,” *National Geographic*, photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-contest/2014.
7. Author unknown.
8. John 15:9.

Is It Still Wonderful to You?

To marvel at the wonders of the gospel is a sign of faith. It is to recognize the hand of the Lord in our lives and in everything around us.

My wife and I had the great joy of rearing our five children near the magnificent city of Paris.

During those years we wanted to offer them rich opportunities to discover the marvelous things of this world. Each summer, our family took long trips to visit the most significant monuments, historic sites, and natural wonders of Europe. Finally, after spending 22 years in the Paris area, we were getting ready to move. I still remember the day when

my children came to me and said, “Dad, it’s absolutely shameful! We’ve lived here all our lives, and we have never been to the Eiffel Tower!”

There are so many wonders in this world. However, sometimes when we have them constantly before our eyes, we take them for granted. We look, but we don’t really see; we hear, but we don’t really listen.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus said to His disciples:





“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

“For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”¹

I have often wondered what it would have been like to live at the time of our Savior. Can you imagine sitting at His feet? feeling His embrace? witnessing as He ministered to others? And yet so many who met Him failed to recognize—to “see”—that the very Son of God was living among them.

We too are privileged to live in an exceptional time. The prophets of old saw the work of the Restoration as “a marvelous work . . . , yea, a marvelous work and a wonder.”² In no previous dispensation have so many missionaries been called, so many nations been opened for the gospel message, and so many temples been built throughout the world.

For us, as Latter-day Saints, wonders also occur in our individual lives. They include our own personal conversion, the answers we receive to our prayers,

and the tender blessings God showers upon us daily.

To marvel at the wonders of the gospel is a sign of faith. It is to recognize the hand of the Lord in our lives and in everything around us. Our amazement also produces spiritual strength. It gives us the energy to remain anchored in our faith and to engage ourselves in the work of salvation.

But let us beware. Our ability to marvel is fragile. Over the long term, such things as casual commandment keeping, apathy, or even weariness may set in and make us insensitive to even the most remarkable signs and miracles of the gospel.

The Book of Mormon describes a period, very similar to our own, that preceded the coming of the Messiah to the Americas. Suddenly the signs of His birth appeared in the heavens. The people were so stricken with astonishment that they humbled themselves, and nearly all were converted. However, only a short four years later, “the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from

heaven, . . . and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen.”³

My brothers and sisters, is the gospel still wonderful to you? Can you yet see, hear, feel, and marvel? Or have your spiritual sensors gone into standby mode? Whatever your personal situation, I invite you to do three things.

First, never tire of discovering or rediscovering the truths of the gospel. The writer Marcel Proust said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”⁴ Do you remember the first time you read a verse of scripture and felt as if the Lord was speaking to you personally? Can you recall the first time you felt the sweet influence of the Holy Ghost come over you, perhaps before you even realized it was the Holy Ghost? Weren’t these sacred, special moments?

We should hunger and thirst every day after spiritual knowledge. This personal practice is founded on study, meditation, and prayer. Sometimes we might be tempted to think, “I don’t need to study the scriptures today; I’ve read them all before” or “I don’t need



to go to church today; there's nothing new there."

But the gospel is a fountain of knowledge that never runs dry. There is always something new to learn and feel each Sunday, in every meeting, and in every verse of scripture. In faith we hold to the promise that if we "seek, . . . [we] shall find."⁵

Second, anchor your faith in the plain and simple truths of the gospel. Our amazement should be rooted in the core principles of our faith, in the purity of our covenants and ordinances, and in our most simple acts of worship.

A sister missionary told the story of three men she met during a district conference in Africa. They came from an isolated village far away in the bush where the Church had not yet been organized but where there were 15 faithful members and almost 20 investigators. For over two weeks these men had walked on foot, traveling more than 300 miles (480 km) over paths rendered muddy by the rainy season, so they could attend the conference and bring the tithes from the members of their group. They planned to stay for an entire week so they could enjoy the privilege of partaking of the sacrament the following Sunday and then hoped to set out on the return trip carrying boxes filled with copies of the Book of

Mormon on their heads to give to the people of their village.

The missionary testified how touched she was by the sense of wonder these brethren displayed and by their wholehearted sacrifices to obtain things that for her had always been readily available.

She wondered: "If I got up one Sunday morning in Arizona and found that my car wasn't working, would I walk to my church only a few blocks away from home? Or would I just stay home because it was too far or because it was raining?"⁶ These are good questions for all of us to consider.

Finally, I invite you to seek and cherish the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Most wonders of the gospel cannot be perceived by our natural senses. They are the things that the "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."⁷

When we have the Spirit with us, our spiritual senses are sharpened and our memory is kindled so we cannot forget the miracles and signs we have witnessed. That may be why, knowing Jesus was about to leave them, His Nephite disciples prayed fervently "for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them."⁸

Although they had seen the Savior with their own eyes and had touched His wounds with their own hands, they knew that their testimonies might dwindle without being constantly renewed by the power of the Spirit of God. My brothers and sisters, never do anything to risk the loss of this precious and marvelous gift—the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Seek it through fervent prayer and righteous living.

I testify that the work in which we are engaged is "a marvelous work and a wonder." As we follow Jesus Christ, God bears witness to us "with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."⁹ On this special day, I bear witness that the wonders and marvels of the gospel are anchored in the greatest of all of God's gifts—the Savior's Atonement. This is the perfect gift of love that the Father and the Son, united in purpose, have offered to each one of us. With you, "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me. . . . Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!"¹⁰

That we may always have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that perceive the wonders of this marvelous gospel is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 10:23–24.
2. 2 Nephi 27:26.
3. 3 Nephi 2:1.
4. "Marcel Proust," *Guardian*, July 22, 2008, theguardian.com/books/2008/jun/11/marcelproust.
5. Matthew 7:7.
6. Adapted from Lorraine Bird Jameson, "The Giants of Kinkondja" (article on Africa Southeast Area website, 2009); web.archive.org/web/20101210013757/http://www.lds.co.za/index.php/news-a-events/news/aseanews/91-the-giants-of-kinkondja.
7. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
8. 3 Nephi 19:9.
9. Hebrews 2:4.
10. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193.



By Elder Brent H. Nielson
Of the Seventy

Waiting for the Prodigal

May you and I receive the revelation to know how to best approach those in our lives who are lost.

The Savior Jesus Christ spent His earthly ministry teaching of His healing and redemptive power. On one occasion in Luke chapter 15 in the New Testament, He was actually criticized for eating and spending time with sinners (see Luke 15:2). The Savior used this criticism as an opportunity to teach us all how to respond to those who have lost their way.

He replied to His critics by asking them two important questions:

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (Luke 15:4).

“What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?” (Luke 15:8).

The Savior then teaches the parable of the prodigal son. This parable isn't about 100 sheep or 10 pieces of silver; it is about one precious son who is lost. Through the parable, what does the Savior teach us about how to respond when a family member loses his or her way?

The prodigal son informs his father that he wants his inheritance now. He wants to leave the safety of his home

and family and seek after worldly pursuits (see Luke 15:12–13). Please note that in the Savior's parable the father lovingly responds by giving the son his inheritance. Certainly the father must have done everything he could to convince the son to stay. However, once the adult son makes his choice, the wise father lets him go. The father then demonstrates sincere love, and he watches and he waits (see Luke 15:20).

My family had a similar experience. My two faithful brothers, wonderful sister, and I were raised by exemplary parents. We were taught the gospel in our home, we successfully made it

to adulthood, and all four of us were sealed in the temple to our spouses. However, in 1994 our sister, Susan, became disenchanted with the Church and some of its teachings. She was persuaded by those who mocked and criticized the early leaders of the Church. She allowed her faith in living prophets and apostles to diminish. Over time, her doubts overcame her faith, and she chose to leave the Church. Susan has given me permission to share her story with the hope that it might help others.

My brothers and I and our widowed mother were devastated. We couldn't imagine what possibly could have led her to abandon her faith. My sister's choices seemed to be breaking our mother's heart.

My brothers and I had served as bishops and quorum presidents, and we had experienced the joy of success with ward and quorum members as we left the ninety and nine and went after the one. However, with our sister, our persistent efforts to rescue her and to invite her back only pushed her further and further away.

As we sought heavenly guidance as to how we might properly respond to





her, it became evident that we had to follow the example of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. Susan had made her choice, and we had to figuratively let her go—but not without her knowing and feeling our sincere love for her. And so, with renewed love and kindness, we watched and we waited.

My mother never stopped loving and caring for Susan. Every time my mother attended the temple, she placed Susan's name on the prayer roll and never lost hope. My older brother and his wife, who lived closest to Susan in California, invited her to all family events. They prepared dinner in their home each year on Susan's birthday. They made sure they were always in touch with her and that she knew of their genuine love for her.

My younger brother and his wife reached out to Susan's children in Utah and cared for them and loved them. They made sure that her children were always invited to family gatherings, and when it came time for Susan's granddaughter to be baptized, my brother was there to perform the ordinance. Susan also had loving home teachers and visiting teachers who never gave up.

As our children went on missions and were married, Susan was invited to and attended these family celebrations.

We tried diligently to create family events so that Susan and her children could be with us and they would know that we loved them and that they were part of our family. As Susan received an advanced degree at a California university, we were all there to support her at her graduation. Although we could not embrace all of her choices, we could certainly embrace her. We loved, we watched, and we waited.

In 2006, after 12 years had passed since Susan left the Church, our daughter Katy moved with her husband to California so he could attend

law school. They were in the same city as Susan. This young couple looked to their aunt Susan for help and support, and they loved her. Susan helped care for our two-year-old granddaughter, Lucy, and Susan found herself helping Lucy with her nightly prayers. Katy called me one day and asked if I thought Susan would ever come back to the Church. I assured her that I felt she would and that we needed to continue to be patient. As another three years passed, with continued love, we watched and we waited.



Six years ago this weekend, my wife, Marcia, and I were sitting on the front row of this Conference Center. I was to be sustained as a new General Authority that day. Marcia, who is always in touch with the Spirit, had written a note to me that read, “I think it is time for Susan to come back.” My daughter Katy suggested that I leave and call Susan to invite her to watch general conference that day.

Prompted by these two great women, I walked to the foyer and called my sister. I got her voice mail and simply invited her to watch that session of general conference. She got the message. To our delight, she felt impressed to watch all the sessions of conference. She heard from prophets and apostles she had loved in earlier years. She found new names she had not heard before, such as President Uchtdorf and Elders Bednar, Cook, Christofferson, and Andersen. During this and other unique heaven-sent experiences, my sister—like the prodigal son—came to herself (see Luke 15:17). The words of prophets and apostles and the love of her family moved her to turn and begin the walk back home. After 15 years our daughter and sister who was lost had been found. The watch and the wait were over.

Susan describes this experience just as Lehi described it in the Book of Mormon. She let go of the iron rod and found herself in a mist of darkness (see 1 Nephi 8:23). She states that she did not know she was lost until her faith was reawakened by the Light of Christ, which brightly magnified the stark contrast between what she was experiencing in the world and what the Lord and her family were offering.

A miracle has occurred over the past six years. Susan has a renewed



testimony of the Book of Mormon. She has received her temple recommend. She has served as an ordinance worker in the temple, and she currently teaches the Gospel Doctrine class in her ward. The windows of heaven have opened to her children and her grandchildren, and although there have been difficult consequences, it feels as if she never left.

Some of you, like the Nielson family, have family members who have temporarily lost their way. The Savior's instruction to all who have 100 sheep is to leave the ninety and nine and go after and rescue the one. His instruction to those who have 10 pieces of silver and lose one is to search until you find it. When the lost one is your son or your daughter, your brother or your sister, and he or she has chosen to leave, we learned in our family that, after all we can do, we love that person with all of our hearts and we watch, we pray, and we wait for the Lord's hand to be revealed.

Perhaps the most important lesson the Lord taught me through this process happened during our family scripture study after my sister had left the Church. Our son David was reading as we studied together Luke 15. As he read the parable of the prodigal son, I heard it differently that day than I

had ever heard it before. For some reason, I had always related to the son who stayed home. As David read that morning, I realized that in some ways *I* was the prodigal son. All of us fall short of the glory of the Father (see Romans 3:23). All of us need the Savior's Atonement to heal us. All of us are lost and need to be found. This revelation that day helped me know that my sister and I both needed the Savior's love and His Atonement. Susan and I were actually on the same path back home.

The Savior's words in the parable as He describes the father greeting his prodigal son are powerful, and I believe they may be the description of the experience you and I will have with the Father when we return to our heavenly home. They teach us of a father who loves, waits, and watches. These are the words of the Savior: “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

May you and I receive the revelation to know how to best approach those in our lives who are lost and, when necessary, to have the patience and love of our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, as we love, watch, and wait for the prodigal. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet

Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose from death in order that He could lift us to eternal life.

Without safety ropes, harnesses, or climbing gear of any kind, two brothers—Jimmy, age 14, and John, age 19 (though those aren't their real names)—attempted to scale a sheer canyon wall in Snow Canyon State Park in my native southern Utah. Near the top of their laborious climb, they discovered that a protruding ledge denied them their final few feet of ascent. They could not get over it, but neither could they now retreat from it. They were stranded. After careful maneuvering, John found enough footing to boost his younger brother to safety on top of the ledge. But there was no way to lift himself. The more he strained to find finger or foot leverage, the more his muscles began to cramp. Panic started to sweep over him, and he began to fear for his life.

Unable to hold on much longer, John decided his only option was to try to jump vertically in an effort to grab the top of the overhanging ledge. If successful, he might, by his considerable arm strength, pull himself to safety.

In his own words, he said:

“Prior to my jump I told Jimmy to go search for a tree branch strong enough

to extend down to me, although I knew there was nothing of the kind on this rocky summit. It was only a desperate ruse. If my jump failed, the least I could do was make certain my little brother did not see me falling to my death.

“Giving him enough time to be out of sight, I said my last prayer—that I wanted my family to know I loved them and that Jimmy could make it home safely on his own—then I leapt. There was enough adrenaline in my spring that the jump extended my arms above the ledge almost to my elbows. But as I slapped my hands down on the surface, I felt nothing but loose sand on flat stone. I can still remember the gritty sensation of hanging there with nothing to hold on to—no lip, no ridge, nothing to grab or grasp. I felt my fingers begin to recede slowly over the sandy surface. I knew my life was over.

“But then suddenly, like a lightning strike in a summer storm, two hands shot out from somewhere above the edge of the cliff, grabbing my wrists with a strength and determination that belied their size. My faithful little brother had not gone looking for any





fictitious tree branch. Guessing exactly what I was planning to do, he had never moved an inch. He had simply waited—silently, almost breathlessly—knowing full well I would be foolish enough to try to make that jump. When I did, he grabbed me, held me, and refused to let me fall. Those strong brotherly arms saved my life that day as I dangled helplessly above what would surely have been certain death.”¹

My beloved brothers and sisters, today is Easter Sunday. Although we should *always* remember (we promise in our weekly sacramental prayers that we will), nevertheless this is the most sacred day of the year for special remembrance of brotherly hands and determined arms that reached into the abyss of death to save us from our fallings and our failings, from our sorrows and our sins. Against the background of this story reported by John and Jimmy’s family, I express my gratitude for the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge events in the divine plan of God that led up to and give meaning to “the love Jesus offers [us].”²

In our increasingly secular society, it is as uncommon as it is unfashionable to speak of Adam and Eve or the

Garden of Eden or of a “fortunate fall” into mortality. Nevertheless, the simple truth is that we *cannot* fully comprehend the Atonement and Resurrection of Christ and we *will not* adequately appreciate the unique purpose of His birth or His death—in other words, there is no way to truly celebrate Christmas *or* Easter—without understanding that there was an actual Adam and Eve who fell from an actual Eden, with all the consequences that fall carried with it.

I do not know the details of what happened on this planet before that, but I do know these two were created under the divine hand of God, that for a time they lived alone in a paradisaical setting where there was neither human death nor future family, and that through a sequence of choices they transgressed a commandment of God which required that they leave their garden setting but which allowed them to have children before facing physical death.³ To add further sorrow and complexity to their circumstance, their transgression had spiritual consequences as well, cutting them off from the presence of God forever. Because we were then born into that fallen world and because we too would

transgress the laws of God, we also were sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced.

What a plight! The entire human race in free fall—every man, woman, and child in it physically tumbling toward permanent death, spiritually plunging toward eternal anguish. Is that what life was meant to be? Is this the grand finale of the human experience? Are we all just hanging in a cold canyon somewhere in an indifferent universe, each of us searching for a toe-hold, each of us seeking for something to grip—with nothing but the feeling of sand sliding under our fingers, nothing to save us, nothing to hold on to, much less anything to hold on to us? Is our only purpose in life an empty existential exercise—simply to leap as high as we can, hang on for our prescribed three score years and ten, then fail and fall, and keep falling forever?

The answer to those questions is an unequivocal and eternal no! With prophets ancient and modern, I testify that “all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.”⁴ Thus, from the moment those first parents stepped out of the Garden of Eden, the God and Father of us all, anticipating Adam and Eve’s decision,



dispatched the very angels of heaven to declare to them—and down through time to us—that this entire sequence was designed for our eternal happiness. It was part of His divine plan, which provided for a Savior, the very Son of God Himself—another “Adam,” the Apostle Paul would call Him⁵—who would come in the meridian of time to atone for the first Adam’s transgression. That Atonement would achieve complete victory over physical death, unconditionally granting resurrection to every person who has been born or ever will be born into this world. Mercifully it would also provide forgiveness for the personal sins of all, from Adam to the end of the world, conditioned upon repentance and obedience to divine commandments.

As one of His ordained witnesses, I declare this Easter morning that Jesus of Nazareth was and is that Savior of the world, the “last Adam,”⁶ the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Alpha and Omega of eternal life. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,”⁷ Paul declared. And from the prophet-patriarch Lehi: “Adam fell that men might be. . . . And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.”⁸ Most thoroughly of all, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught as part of a two-day sermon on the Atonement of Jesus Christ that

“the resurrection must . . . come . . . by reason of the fall.”⁹

So today we celebrate the gift of victory over every fall we have ever experienced, every sorrow we have ever known, every discouragement we have ever had, every fear we have ever faced—to say nothing of our resurrection from death and forgiveness for our sins. That victory is available to us because of events that transpired on a weekend precisely like this nearly two millennia ago in Jerusalem.

Beginning in the spiritual anguish of the Garden of Gethsemane, moving to the Crucifixion on a cross at Calvary, and concluding on a beautiful Sunday morning inside a donated tomb, a sinless, pure, and holy man, the very Son of God Himself, did what no other deceased person had ever done nor ever could do. Under His own power, He rose from death, never to have His body separated from His spirit again. Of His own volition, He shed the burial linen with which He had been bound, carefully putting the burial napkin that had been placed over His face “in a place by itself,”¹⁰ the scripture says.

That first Easter sequence of Atonement and Resurrection constitutes the most consequential moment, the most generous gift, the most excruciating pain, and the most majestic manifestation of pure love ever to

be demonstrated in the history of this world. Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, suffered, died, and rose from death in order that He could, like lightning in a summer storm, grasp us as we fall, hold us with His might, and through our obedience to His commandments, lift us to eternal life.

This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that Jesus still stands triumphant over death, although He stands on wounded feet. This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that He still extends unending grace, although He extends it with pierced palms and scarred wrists. This Easter I thank Him and the Father, who gave Him to us, that we can sing before a sweat-stained garden, a nail-driven cross, and a gloriously empty tomb:

*How great, how glorious, how complete
Redemption’s grand design,
Where justice, love, and mercy meet
In harmony divine!*¹¹

In the sacred name of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Correspondence in the possession of Jeffrey R. Holland.
2. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:19–29, especially verses 20–23; Moses 5:10–11.
4. 2 Nephi 2:24.
5. See 1 Corinthians 15:45.
6. 1 Corinthians 15:45.
7. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
8. 2 Nephi 2:25–26.
9. 2 Nephi 9:6.
10. John 20:7.
11. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf14 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



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

The Gift of Grace

Today and forevermore God's grace is available to all whose hearts are broken and whose spirits are contrite.

On Easter Sunday we celebrate the most long-awaited and glorious event in the history of the world.

It is the day that changed everything.

On that day, my life changed.

Your life changed.

The destiny of all God's children changed.

On that blessed day, the Savior of mankind, who had taken upon Himself the chains of sin and death that held us captive, burst those chains and set us free.

Because of the sacrifice of our beloved Redeemer, death has no sting, the grave has no victory,¹ Satan has no lasting power, and we are “begotten . . . again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”²

Truly, the Apostle Paul was correct when he said we can “comfort one another with these words.”³

God's Grace

We often speak of the Savior's Atonement—and rightly so!

In Jacob's words, “Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?”⁴ But as “we talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in Christ, . . . preach of Christ, [and] prophesy of

Christ”⁵ at every opportunity, we must never lose our sense of awe and profound gratitude for the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God.

The Savior's Atonement cannot become commonplace in our teaching, in our conversation, or in our hearts. It is sacred and holy, for it was through this “great and last sacrifice” that Jesus the Christ brought “salvation to all those who shall believe on his name.”⁶

I marvel to think that the Son of God would condescend to save us, as imperfect, impure, mistake-prone, and

ungrateful as we often are. I have tried to understand the Savior's Atonement with my finite mind, and the only explanation I can come up with is this: God loves us deeply, perfectly, and everlastingly. I cannot even begin to estimate “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height . . . [of] the love of Christ.”⁷

A powerful expression of that love is what the scriptures often call the *grace of God*—the divine assistance and endowment of strength by which we grow from the flawed and limited beings we are now into exalted beings of “truth and light, until [we are] glorified in truth and [know] all things.”⁸

It is a most wondrous thing, this grace of God. Yet it is often misunderstood.⁹ Even so, we should know about God's grace if we intend to inherit what has been prepared for us in His eternal kingdom.

To that end I would like to speak of grace. In particular, first, how grace *unlocks the gates of heaven* and, second, how it *opens the windows of heaven*.





Helsinki, Finland

First: Grace Unlocks the Gates of Heaven

Because we have all “sinned, and come short of the glory of God”¹⁰ and because “there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God,”¹¹ every one of us is unworthy to return to God’s presence.

Even if we were to serve God with our whole souls, it is not enough, for we would still be “unprofitable servants.”¹² We cannot earn our way into heaven; the demands of justice stand as a barrier, which we are powerless to overcome on our own.

But all is not lost.

The grace of God is our great and everlasting hope.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the plan of mercy appeases the demands of justice¹³ “and [brings] about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.”¹⁴

Our sins, though they may be as scarlet, can become white as snow.¹⁵ Because our beloved Savior “gave himself a ransom for all,”¹⁶ an entrance into His everlasting kingdom is provided unto us.¹⁷

The gate is unlocked!

But the grace of God does not merely restore us to our previous innocent state. If salvation means only erasing our mistakes and sins, then salvation—as wonderful as it is—does not fulfill the Father’s aspirations for us. His aim is much higher: He wants His sons and daughters to become like Him.



With the gift of God’s grace, the path of discipleship does not lead backward; it leads upward.

It leads to heights we can scarcely comprehend! It leads to exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father, where we, surrounded by our loved ones, receive “of his fulness, and of his glory.”¹⁸ All things are ours, and we are Christ’s.¹⁹ Indeed, all that the Father hath shall be given unto us.²⁰

To inherit this glory, we need more than an unlocked gate; we must enter through this gate with a heart’s desire to be changed—a change so dramatic that the scriptures describe it as being “born again; yea, born of God, changed from [our worldly] and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters.”²¹

Second: Grace Opens the Windows of Heaven

Another element of God’s grace is the opening of the windows of heaven, through which God pours out blessings of power and strength, enabling us to achieve things that otherwise would be far beyond our reach. It is by God’s amazing grace that His children can overcome the undercurrents and quicksands of the deceiver, rise above sin, and “be perfect[ed] in Christ.”²²

Though we all have weaknesses, we can overcome them. Indeed it is by the grace of God that, if we humble ourselves and have faith, weak things can become strong.²³

Throughout our lives, God’s grace bestows temporal blessings and spiritual gifts that magnify our abilities and enrich our lives. His grace refines us. His grace helps us become our best selves.

Who Can Qualify?

In the Bible we read of Christ’s visit to the home of Simon the Pharisee.

Outwardly, Simon seemed to be a good and upright man. He regularly checked off his to-do list of religious obligations: he kept the law, paid his tithing, observed the Sabbath, prayed daily, and went to the synagogue.

But while Jesus was with Simon, a woman approached, washed the Savior’s feet with her tears, and anointed His feet with fine oil.

Simon was not pleased with this display of worship, for he knew that this woman was a sinner. Simon thought that if Jesus didn’t know this, He must not be a prophet or He would not have let the woman touch him.

Perceiving his thoughts, Jesus turned to Simon and asked a question. “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: . . . one owed five hundred pence, . . . the other fifty.

“And when they [both] had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?”

Simon answered that it was the one who was forgiven the most.

Then Jesus taught a profound lesson: “Seest thou this woman? . . . Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; *for she loved much*: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”²⁴

Which of these two people are we most like?

Are we like Simon? Are we confident and comfortable in our good deeds, trusting in our own righteousness? Are we perhaps a little impatient with those who are not living up to our standards? Are we on autopilot, going through the motions, attending our meetings, yawning through Gospel Doctrine class,

and perhaps checking our cell phones during sacrament service?

Or are we like this woman, who thought she was completely and hopelessly lost because of sin?

Do we *love much*?

Do we understand our indebtedness to Heavenly Father and plead with all our souls for the grace of God?

When we kneel to pray, is it to replay the greatest hits of our own righteousness, or is it to confess our faults, plead for God’s mercy, and shed tears of gratitude for the amazing plan of redemption?²⁵

Salvation cannot be bought with the currency of obedience; it is purchased by the blood of the Son of God.²⁶

Thinking that we can trade our good works for salvation is like buying a plane ticket and then supposing we

own the airline. Or thinking that after paying rent for our home, we now hold title to the entire planet earth.

Why Then Obey?

If grace is a gift of God, why then is obedience to God’s commandments so important? Why bother with God’s commandments—or repentance, for that matter? Why not just admit we’re sinful and let God save us?

Or, to put the question in Paul’s words, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Paul’s answer is simple and clear: “God forbid.”²⁷

Brothers and sisters, we obey the commandments of God—out of love for Him!

Trying to understand God’s gift of grace with all our heart and mind gives us all the more reasons to love and obey our Heavenly Father with meekness and gratitude. As we walk the path of discipleship, it refines us, it improves us, it helps us to become more like Him, and it leads us back to His presence. “The Spirit of the Lord [our God]” brings about such “a mighty change in us, . . . that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”²⁸

Therefore, our obedience to God’s commandments comes as a natural outgrowth of our endless love and gratitude for the goodness of God. This form of genuine love and gratitude will miraculously merge our works with God’s grace. Virtue will garnish our thoughts unceasingly, and our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God.²⁹

Dear brothers and sisters, living the gospel faithfully is not a burden. It is a joyful rehearsal—a preparation for inheriting the grand glory of the eternities. We seek to obey our Heavenly Father because our spirits will become more attuned to spiritual things. Vistas are opened that we never knew



existed. Enlightenment and understanding come to us when we do the will of the Father.³⁰

Grace is a gift of God, and our desire to be obedient to each of God's commandments is the reaching out of our mortal hand to receive this sacred gift from our Heavenly Father.

All We Can Do

The prophet Nephi made an important contribution to our understanding of God's grace when he declared, "We labor diligently . . . to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is *by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.*"³¹

However, I wonder if sometimes we misinterpret the phrase "after all we can do." We must understand that "after" does not equal "because."

We are not saved "because" of all that we can do. Have any of us done *all* that we can do? Does God wait until we've expended every effort before He will intervene in our lives with His saving grace?

Many people feel discouraged because they constantly fall short. They know firsthand that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."³² They raise their voices with Nephi in proclaiming, "My soul grieveth because of mine iniquities."³³

I am certain Nephi knew that the Savior's grace *allows* and *enables* us to overcome sin.³⁴ This is why Nephi labored so diligently to persuade his children and brethren "to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God."³⁵

After all, *that is* what we can do! And *that is* our task in mortality!

Grace Is Available to All

When I think of what the Savior did for us leading up to that first Easter



Sunday, I want to lift up my voice and shout praises to the Most High God and His Son, Jesus Christ!

The gates of heaven are unlocked!

The windows of heaven are opened!

Today and forevermore God's grace is available to all whose hearts are broken and whose spirits are contrite.³⁶ Jesus Christ has cleared the way for us to ascend to heights incomprehensible to mortal minds.³⁷

I pray that we will see with new eyes and a new heart the eternal significance of the Savior's atoning sacrifice. I pray that we will show our love for God and our gratitude for the gift of God's infinite grace by keeping His commandments and joyfully "walk[ing] in [a] newness of life."³⁸ In the sacred name of our Master and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See 1 Corinthians 15:55; Mosiah 16:8.
2. 1 Peter 1:3; emphasis added.
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:18; see also verses 13–17.
4. Jacob 4:12.
5. 2 Nephi 25:26.
6. Alma 34:10, 15.
7. Ephesians 3:18–19.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 93:28.
9. Truly we are "little children, and . . . have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and

prepared for [us]" (Doctrine and Covenants 78:17).

10. Romans 3:23.
11. 1 Nephi 15:34; see also 1 Nephi 10:21; Moses 6:57.
12. Mosiah 2:21.
13. See Alma 42:15.
14. Alma 34:15.
15. See Isaiah 1:18.
16. 1 Timothy 2:6.
17. See 2 Peter 1:11.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 76:56.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:59.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
21. Mosiah 27:25.
22. Moroni 10:32.
23. See Ether 12:27.
24. See Luke 7:36–50; emphasis added.
25. Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector illustrates this point clearly (see Luke 18:9–14).
26. See Acts 20:28.
27. Romans 6:1–2.
28. Mosiah 5:2.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
30. See John 7:17.
31. 2 Nephi 25:23; emphasis added.
32. Matthew 26:41; see also Romans 7:19.
33. 2 Nephi 4:17.
34. See 2 Nephi 4:19–35; Alma 34:31.
35. 2 Nephi 25:23.
36. See 3 Nephi 9:19–20.
37. See 1 Corinthians 2:9.
38. Romans 6:4.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf15 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



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

Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom

The faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom.

This is Easter Sunday: a day of gratitude and remembrance honoring our Savior Jesus Christ's Atonement and Resurrection for all mankind. We worship Him, grateful for our freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and our God-given right of agency.

As prophets foretold about these latter days in which we live, there are many confused about who we are and what we believe. Some are "false accusers . . . [and] despisers of those that are good."¹ Others "call evil good, and good evil; [and] put darkness for light, and light for darkness."²

As those around us make choices about how to respond to our beliefs, we must not forget that moral agency is an essential part of God's plan for all His children. That eternal plan, presented to us in the premortal Council in Heaven, included the gift of agency.³

In that Grand Council, Lucifer, known as Satan, used his agency to oppose God's plan. God said: "Because . . . 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."⁴

He continued: "And also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency."⁵

As a result, Heavenly Father's spirit children who chose to reject His plan and follow Lucifer lost their divine destiny.

Jesus Christ, using His agency, said: "Here am I, send me."⁶

"Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."⁷

Jesus, who exercised His agency to sustain Heavenly Father's plan, was identified and appointed by the Father as our Savior, foreordained to perform the atoning sacrifice for all. Similarly, our exercise of agency to keep the commandments enables us to fully understand who we are and receive all of the blessings our Heavenly Father has—including the opportunity to have a body, to progress, to experience joy, to have a family, and to inherit eternal life.

To keep the commandments, we need to know the official doctrine of the Church so we are not diverted from Christ's leadership by the ever-changing whims of individuals.

The blessings we enjoy now are because we made the choice to follow the Savior before this life. To everyone hearing or reading these words, whoever you are and whatever your past may be, remember this: it is not too late to make that same choice again and follow Him.

Through our faith in Jesus Christ, believing in His Atonement, repenting of our sins, and being baptized, we may then receive the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift provides knowledge and understanding, guidance and strength to learn and gain a testimony, power, cleansing to overcome sin, and comfort and encouragement to be faithful in tribulation. These incomparable blessings of the Spirit increase our freedom and power to do what is right, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."⁸

As we walk the path of spiritual liberty in these last days, we must





understand that the faithful use of our agency depends upon our having religious freedom. We already know that Satan does not want this freedom to be ours. He attempted to destroy moral agency in heaven, and now on earth he is fiercely undermining, opposing, and spreading confusion about religious freedom—what it is and why it is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation.

There are four cornerstones of religious freedom that we as Latter-day Saints must rely upon and protect.

The first is freedom to believe. No one should be criticized, persecuted, or attacked by individuals, or governments either, for what he or she believes about God. It is very personal and very important. An early declaration of our beliefs regarding religious liberty states:

“No government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience. . . .

“ . . . The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience [or] suppress the freedom of the soul.”⁹

This fundamental freedom of belief has since been acknowledged by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by other national and international human rights documents.¹⁰

The second cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to share our faith and our beliefs with others. The Lord commands us, “Ye shall teach [the gospel to] your children . . . when thou sittest in thine house.”¹¹ He also said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”¹² As parents, full-time missionaries, and member missionaries, we rely on religious freedom in order to teach the Lord’s doctrine in our families and throughout the world.

The third cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to form a religious organization, a church, to worship peacefully with others. The eleventh article of faith declares, “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” International human rights documents and many national constitutions support this principle.

The fourth cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to live our faith—free exercise of faith not just in the home and chapel but also in public places. The Lord commands us not only to pray privately¹³ but also to go forth and “let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven.”¹⁴

Some are offended when we bring our religion into the public square, yet the same people who insist that their viewpoints and actions be tolerated in society are often very slow to give that same tolerance to religious believers who also wish their viewpoints and actions to be tolerated. The general lack of respect for religious viewpoints is quickly devolving into social and political intolerance for religious people and institutions.

As we face increased pressure to bow to secular standards, forfeit our religious liberties, and compromise our agency, consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about our responsibilities. In the book of Alma we read of Amlici, “a very cunning” and “wicked man” who sought to be king over the people and “deprive them of their rights and privileges,” which “was alarming to the people of the church.”¹⁵ They were taught by King Mosiah to raise their voices for what they felt was right.¹⁶ Therefore they “assembled themselves together throughout all the land, *every man according to his mind*, whether it were for or against Amlici, in separate bodies, having much dispute . . . one with another.”¹⁷

In these discussions, members of the Church and others had the opportunity to come together, experience the spirit of unity, and be influenced by the Holy Ghost. “And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against Amlici, that he was not made king.”¹⁸

As disciples of Jesus Christ we have a responsibility to work together with like-minded believers, to raise our voices for what is right. While members should never claim or even imply that they are speaking for the Church, we are all invited, in our capacity as citizens, to share our personal witness with conviction and love—“every man



[and woman] according to his [or her own] mind.”¹⁹

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination [as for a Mormon]; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

“It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race.”²⁰

Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity. What can you and I do?

First, we can become informed. Be aware of issues in your community that could have an impact on religious liberty.

Second, in your individual capacity, join with others who share our commitment to religious freedom. Work side by side to protect religious freedom.

Third, live your life to be a good example of what you believe—in word and deed. How we live our religion is far more important than what we may say about our religion.

Our Savior’s Second Coming is drawing nearer. Let us not delay in this great cause. Remember Captain Moroni, who hoisted the title of liberty inscribed with the words “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.”²¹ Let us remember the people’s response: exercising their agency, they “came running together” with a covenant to act.²²

My beloved brothers and sisters, don’t walk! Run! Run to receive the blessings of agency by following the Holy Ghost and exercising the freedoms God has given us to do His will.

I bear my special witness on this special Easter day that Jesus Christ used His agency to do our Father’s will.

Of our Savior, we sing, “His precious blood he freely spilt; His life he freely gave.”²³ And because He did, we have the priceless opportunity “to choose liberty and eternal life” through the power and blessings of His Atonement.²⁴ May we freely choose to follow Him today and always, I pray in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:3.
2. Isaiah 5:20.
3. See Moses 6:56.
4. Moses 4:3.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
6. Abraham 3:27.
7. Moses 4:2.
8. 2 Corinthians 3:17.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 134:2, 4.
10. See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948, un.org/en/documents/udhr. Article 18 states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” See also article 9 of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ratified on Sept. 3, 1953, conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm.
11. Deuteronomy 11:19.
12. Mark 16:15.
13. See Matthew 6:6.
14. Matthew 5:16.
15. See Alma 2:1–4.
16. See Mosiah 29:25–26.
17. Alma 2:5; emphasis added.
18. Alma 2:7.
19. Alma 2:5.
20. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 345.
21. Alma 46:12.
22. Alma 46:21.
23. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
24. 2 Nephi 2:27.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf16 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



By Elder Kevin W. Pearson
Of the Seventy

Stay by the Tree

Lehi's vision of the tree of life is a powerful parable on enduring to the end.

Shortly before President Heber J. Grant passed away, one of the Brethren visited his home. Before he left, President Grant prayed, “O God, bless me that I shall not lose my testimony and keep faithful to the end!”¹ After nearly 27 years as President of the Church, this was his fervent prayer. His example is a striking reminder that no one, at any age, is immune from Satan’s influence. Two of Satan’s most powerful tools are distraction and deception.

Enduring to the end is a hallmark of true discipleship and is essential to eternal life. But when trials and challenges come our way, we are often told to simply “hang in there.” Let me be clear: to “hang in there” is not a principle of the gospel. Enduring to the end means constantly coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him.

If enduring to the end is essential to eternal life, why do we struggle to be faithful? We struggle when we are caught between competing priorities. Casual obedience and lukewarm commitment weaken faith. Enduring to the end requires total commitment to the Savior and to our covenants.

Lehi’s vision of the tree of life is a powerful parable on enduring to the end. Please prayerfully study and ponder Lehi’s dream; then liken it unto yourself. As you do, carefully consider

six important principles that help us endure to the end.

1. Don’t Forget to Pray

We begin with Lehi alone “in a dark and dreary waste.”² Each of us experiences periods of darkness and loneliness. “When life gets dark and dreary, don’t forget to pray.”³ Follow President Heber J. Grant’s example. Pray for strength to endure to the end. Ask Heavenly Father, “What more would You have me do?”

2. Come unto Christ and Be Perfected in Him

The tree of life is the central focus in Lehi’s dream. Everything points to the tree of life. The tree represents Christ, who is the clear manifestation of the love of God. The fruit is His infinite Atonement and is great evidence of God’s love. Eternal life with our loved ones is sweeter and more desirable than any other thing. To realize this gift, we must “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”⁴ He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”⁵ We can fill our lives with accomplishment and well-doing, but in the end, if we do not enter into sacred covenants to follow Christ and faithfully keep them, we will have utterly and completely missed the mark.

3. Press Forward with Faith

There is a path that leads to the tree of life, to Christ. It is strait and narrow, strict and exact. God’s commandments



are strict but not restrictive. They protect us from spiritual and physical danger and prevent us from getting lost.

Obedience builds faith in Christ. Faith is a principle of action and power. Consistently following the Savior's example produces spiritual power and capacity. Without the strengthening and enabling power of the Atonement, it's impossible to stay on the path and endure.

"Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ."⁶

4. The Book of Mormon Is Key to Spiritual Survival

Life's journey is challenging. It's easy to be distracted, wander off the path, and get lost. Tribulation is an inevitable and indispensable part of our eternal progression. When adversity comes, don't let something you don't fully understand unravel everything you do know. Be patient, cling to truth; understanding will come. Trials are like great mists of darkness that can blind our eyes and harden our hearts. Unless we are "continually holding fast"⁷ to the word of God and living it, we will become spiritually blinded rather than spiritually minded. Search the Book of Mormon and the words of the living prophets every day, every day, every day! It's the key to spiritual survival and avoiding deception. Without it, we are spiritually lost.

5. Don't Be Distracted and Deceived

To heed is to give careful attention. Heeding those who do not believe in Christ will not help you find Him. Searching #spaciousbuilding for knowledge will not lead you to truth. It's not posted there. Only the Savior has "the words of eternal life."⁸ Everything else is just words. The large and spacious building symbolizes the



"vain imaginations and the pride"⁹ of the world—in other words, distraction and deception. It's filled with well-dressed people who seem to have everything. But they mock the Savior and those who follow Him. They are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."¹⁰ They may be politically correct, but they are spiritually lost.

6. Stay by the Tree

Lehi's message is to stay by the tree. We stay because we are converted unto the Lord. Alma taught, "Behold, he changed their hearts; yea, he awakened them out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God."¹¹ As we yield our hearts to God, the Holy Ghost changes

our very natures, we become deeply converted unto the Lord, and we no longer seek the spacious building. If we stop doing those things that bring about deepening conversion, we regress spiritually. Apostasy is the reverse of conversion.

To all missionaries past and present: Elders and sisters, you simply cannot return from your mission, do a swan dive back into Babylon, and spend endless hours scoring meaningless points on pointless video games without falling into a deep spiritual sleep. Nor can you indulge in online pornography and ignore virtue and chastity without dire spiritual consequences. If you lose the Spirit, you are lost. Don't be distracted and deceived.



True disciples continue to awaken unto God each day in meaningful personal prayer, earnest scripture study, personal obedience, and selfless service. Stay by the tree and stay awake.

Several years ago, Sister Pearson and I were called to preside over the Washington Tacoma Mission. The call was a complete surprise. With some trepidation I met with the chairman and the CEO of the company where I was employed and informed them of my mission call. They were visibly upset with my decision to leave the firm. “When did you make this decision, and why didn’t you discuss it with us earlier?” they demanded.

In a moment of clarity, a profound answer came into my mind. I said, “I

made this decision as a 19-year-old boy, when I made sacred covenants with God in the temple to follow the Savior. I’ve built my entire life on those covenants, and I fully intend to keep them now.”

Once we enter into covenants with God, there is no going back. Giving in, giving up, and giving out are not options. In the kingdom of God, there is a standard of excellence for exaltation. It requires valiant discipleship! There is no room for average or complacent disciples. Average is the enemy of excellence, and average commitment will prevent you from enduring to the end.

If you are struggling, confused, or spiritually lost, I urge you to do the

one thing I know will get you back on track. Begin again to prayerfully study the Book of Mormon and live its teachings every day, every day, every day! I testify of the profound power in the Book of Mormon that will change your life and strengthen your resolve to follow Christ. The Holy Ghost will change your heart and help you see “things as they really are.”¹² He will show you what you need to do next. This is Nephi’s promise to you:

“And I said unto them . . . whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.

“Wherefore, I . . . did exhort them . . . that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things.”¹³

Brothers and sisters, enduring to the end is the great test of discipleship. Our daily discipleship will determine our eternal destiny. Awaken unto God, cling to truth, keep your sacred temple covenants, and stay by the tree!

I bear witness of the resurrected, living Christ. I know that He lives. My greatest desire is that I will be true and faithful to the very end in following His magnificent example. In the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Quoted by John Longden, in Conference Report, Oct. 1958, 70.
2. 1 Nephi 8:7.
3. “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140.
4. Moroni 10:32.
5. John 14:6.
6. 2 Nephi 31:20.
7. 1 Nephi 8:30.
8. John 6:68.
9. 1 Nephi 12:18.
10. 2 Timothy 3:7.
11. Alma 5:7.
12. Jacob 4:13.
13. 1 Nephi 15:24–25.



By Elder Rafael E. Pino
Of the Seventy

The Eternal Perspective of the Gospel

For decisions that affect eternity, having a gospel perspective is essential.

In a revelation given to Moses, we are told of our Heavenly Father's declared intention: "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹ According to that statement, the Father's desire is to give everyone the opportunity to receive a fulness of joy. Latter-day revelations show that our Heavenly Father created a great plan of happiness for all His children, a very special plan so that we can return to live with Him.

Understanding this plan of happiness provides us with an eternal perspective and helps us to truly value the commandments, the ordinances, the covenants, and the trials and tribulations.

One key principle comes from Alma: "Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption."²

It is interesting to note the sequence in the teaching process. Our Heavenly Father first taught Adam and Eve the plan of redemption, and then He gave them commandments.

This is a great truth. Understanding the plan will help people keep the

commandments, make better decisions, and have the right motivation.

During the time that I have served in the Church, I have witnessed the devotion and faithfulness of Church members in different countries, some of which have political, social, or economic conflict. One common factor that I have often found in these faithful members is the perspective that they have of eternity. The eternal perspective of the gospel leads us to understand the place that we occupy in God's plan, to accept difficulties and progress through them, to make decisions, and to center our lives on our divine potential.

Perspective is the way we see things when we look at them from a certain

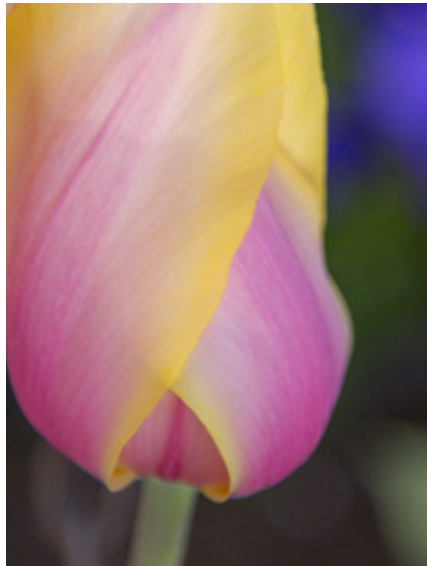
distance, and it allows us to appreciate their true value.

It is like being in a forest and having a tree in front of us. Unless we step back a little, we will not be able to appreciate what a forest really is. I once visited the Amazon jungle in Leticia, Colombia, near the borders of Brazil and Peru. I was not able to appreciate its magnitude until I flew over it and gained perspective.

When our children were little, they used to watch a children's television channel that featured a program called *What Do You See?* The screen would zoom in very closely on something, and the children had to guess what it was as the image gradually widened. Once the entire object was visible, you could easily tell that it was a cat, a plant, a piece of fruit, and so on.

I remember that on one occasion they were watching that program and it showed something very close up that looked very ugly to them, even repulsive; but as the image widened, they realized that it was a very appetizing pizza. Then they said to me, "Daddy, buy us one just like that!" After they understood what it was, something that at first had looked unpleasant to them ended up being something very attractive.

Let me share another experience. In our home our children liked to do jigsaw puzzles. We have probably all had the opportunity to do a puzzle. Some are made up of many small pieces. I remember that one of our children (I won't give his name in order to protect his identity) used to focus on the individual pieces, and when one did not fit in the place where he thought it should, he would become angry and assume it was no good and want to throw it away. He finally learned to do the puzzle when he understood that





of Laman and Lemuel. They had all suffered much difficulty and numerous afflictions; however, their attitudes toward them were very different. Nephi said, “And so great were the blessings of the Lord upon us, that while we did live upon raw meat in the wilderness, our women did give plenty of suck for their children, and were strong, yea, even like unto the men; and they began to bear their journeyings without murmurings.”⁴

Laman and Lemuel, on the other hand, complained bitterly. “And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.”⁵ Not knowing or disregarding “the dealings of . . . God” is one way of losing eternal perspective, and murmuring is just one of the symptoms. Even though Laman and Lemuel witnessed many miracles along with Nephi, they exclaimed, saying: “And we have wandered in the wilderness for these many years; and our women have toiled, being big with child; and they have borne children in the wilderness and suffered all things, save it were death; and it would have been better that they had died before they came out of Jerusalem than to have suffered these afflictions.”⁶

Those were two very different attitudes, even though the difficulties and afflictions they had faced were similar. Obviously, their perspectives were different.

President Spencer W. Kimball wrote the following: “If we looked at mortality as the whole of existence, then pain, sorrow, failure, and short life would be calamity. But if we look upon life as an eternal thing stretching far into the premortal past and on into the eternal post-death future, then all happenings may be put in proper perspective.”⁷

each small piece had its place in the final picture, even when he did not know where it fit at a given moment.

This is one way of contemplating the Lord’s plan. We do not have to concern ourselves with each of its parts separately but rather to try to bring the entire picture into focus, keeping in mind what the final result will be. The Lord knows where each piece belongs so that it fits into the plan. All the commandments are of eternal importance in the context of the great plan of happiness.

It is extremely important that we do not make decisions of eternal value from the perspective of mortality. For decisions that affect eternity, having a gospel perspective is essential.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “Though ‘anchored’ in grand and ultimate hope, some of our tactical hopes are another matter. We may hope for a pay raise, a special date, an electoral victory, or for a bigger house—things which may or may not be realized. Faith in Father’s plan gives us endurance even amid the wreckage of such proximate hopes. Hope keeps us ‘anxiously engaged’ in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes (see D&C 58:27).”³

Not having an eternal perspective, or losing it, can lead us to have an earthly perspective as our personal standard and to make decisions that are not in harmony with the will of God.

The Book of Mormon mentions the attitude that Nephi took and the attitude



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

Elder David B. Haight told a story about the sculptor Michelangelo to illustrate the importance of seeing everything in proper perspective: “As the sculptor was chiseling a block of marble, a boy came every day and watched shyly. When the figure of David emerged and appeared from that stone, complete for all the world to admire, the boy asked Michelangelo, ‘How did you know he was in there?’”⁸

The perspective with which the sculptor saw that block of marble was different than that of the boy who was watching him work. The artist’s vision of the possibilities encased in the stone allowed him to create a work of art.

The Lord knows what He wants to accomplish with each one of us. He knows the kind of reform He wants to achieve in our lives, and we do not have the right to counsel Him. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.⁹

I testify that we have a loving, just, and merciful Heavenly Father, who has prepared a plan for our eternal happiness. I testify that Jesus Christ is His Son and the Savior of the world. I know that President Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

This address was delivered in Spanish.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. Alma 12:32.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “Brightness of Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 35–36.
4. 1 Nephi 17:2.
5. 1 Nephi 2:12.
6. 1 Nephi 17:20.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 15.
8. David B. Haight, “Your Purpose and Responsibility” (Brigham Young University fireside, Sept. 4, 1977), 2–3; speeches.byu.edu.
9. See Isaiah 55:8–9.

Thy Kingdom Come

The thought of His coming stirs my soul. It will be breathtaking! The scope and grandeur, the vastness and magnificence, will exceed anything mortal eyes have ever seen or experienced.

As we were singing, I was deeply moved with the thought that at this very moment hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of believing Saints in more than 150 countries, amazingly in 75 different languages,¹ together we were raising our voices to God, singing:

*Come, O thou King of Kings!
We’ve waited long for thee,
With healing in thy wings,
To set thy people free.²*

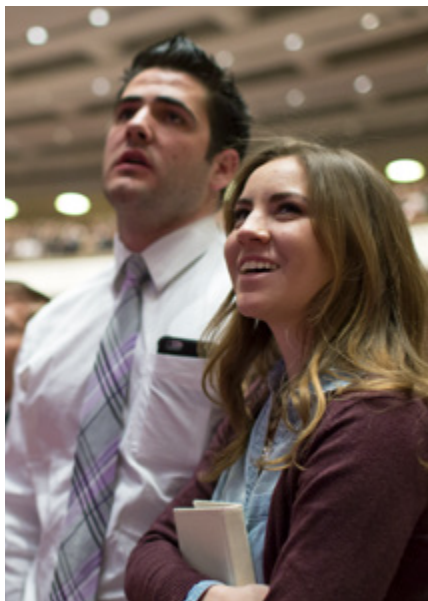
“Come, O thou King of Kings!”³
We are a very large worldwide family of believers, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have taken His name upon us, and each week as we partake of the sacrament, we pledge that we will remember Him and keep His commandments. We are far from perfect, but we are not casual in our faith. We believe in Him. We worship Him. We follow Him. We deeply love Him. His cause is the greatest cause in all the world.

We live, brothers and sisters, in the days preceding the Lord’s Second Coming, a time long anticipated by believers through the ages. We live in days of wars and rumors of wars, days of natural disasters, days when the world is pulled by confusion and commotion.

But we also live in the glorious time of the Restoration, when the gospel is being taken to all the world—a time when the Lord has promised that He “will raise up . . . a pure people”⁴ and arm them “with righteousness and with the power of God.”⁵

We rejoice in these days and pray that we will be able to courageously face our struggles and uncertainties. The difficulties of some are more severe than those of others, but no one is immune. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said to me, “If everything is going perfectly for you right now, just wait.”



Although the Lord reassures us again and again that we “need not fear,”⁶ keeping a clear perspective and seeing beyond this world is not always easy when we are in the midst of trials.

President Thomas S. Monson taught me an important lesson about keeping an eternal point of view.

Eighteen years ago while traveling on a train in Switzerland with President Monson, I asked him about his heavy responsibilities. His response strengthened my faith. “In the First Presidency,” he said, “we do everything we can to move this work forward. But this is the Lord’s work, and He directs it. He is at the helm. We marvel as we watch Him open doors we cannot open and perform miracles we can scarcely imagine.”⁷

Brothers and sisters, seeing and believing the Lord’s miracles in establishing His kingdom on earth can help us see and believe that the Lord’s hand is at work in our own lives as well.

The Lord declared, “I am able to do mine own work.”⁸ We each try to do our part, but He is the grand architect. Under the direction of His Father, He created this world. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”⁹ As we are spiritually awake and alert, we see His hand across the world and we see His hand in our own personal lives.

Let me share an example.

In 1831, with only 600 members of the Church, the Lord declared, “The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.”¹⁰

The prophet Nephi foresaw that in our day there would be “few” members

of the Church when compared to the population of the earth but that they would be “upon all the face of the earth.”¹¹

Three beautiful examples of the Lord’s hand in establishing His kingdom are the temples announced today by President Monson. Only a few decades ago, who could have imagined temples in Haiti, Thailand, and the Ivory Coast?

The location of a temple is not a convenient geographical decision. It comes by revelation from the Lord to His prophet, signifying a great work to be done and acknowledging the righteousness of the Saints who will treasure and care for His house through generations.¹²

My wife, Kathy, and I visited Haiti just two years ago. High on the mountain overlooking Port-au-Prince, we joined with Haitian Saints in commemorating the dedication of the country by then-Elder Thomas S. Monson only 30 years earlier. None of us will ever forget the devastating Haitian earthquake of 2010. With faithful members and a courageous band of missionaries made up almost exclusively of Haitians, the Church in this island nation has continued to grow and strengthen. It lifts my faith to visualize these righteous Saints of God, clothed in white, having the power of the holy priesthood to direct and perform the sacred ordinances in the Lord’s house.

Who could imagine a house of the Lord in the beautiful city of Bangkok? Christians are only 1 percent of this principally Buddhist country. As in Haiti we also find in Bangkok that the Lord has gathered the elect of the earth.

While there a few months ago, we met Sathit and Juthamas Kaivaivatana and their devoted children. Sathit joined the Church when he was 17 and served a mission in his native land. Later he met Juthamas at the institute, and they were sealed in the Manila Philippines Temple. In 1993 the Kaivaivatanas were hit by a truck whose driver had fallen asleep, and Sathit was paralyzed from his chest down. Their faith has never wavered. Sathit is an admired teacher at the International School Bangkok. He serves as the stake president of the Thailand Bangkok North Stake. We see God’s miracles in His wondrous work and in our own personal lives.

The miracle of the Church in the Ivory Coast cannot be told without





the names of two couples: Philippe and Annelies Assard and Lucien and Agathe Affoue. They joined the Church as young married couples, one in Germany and one in France. In the 1980s, Philippe and Lucien felt drawn back to their native African country for

an accomplished mechanical engineer required unusual faith. The two couples met each other for the first time in the Ivory Coast and started a Sunday School. That was 30 years ago. There are now eight stakes and 27,000 members in this beautiful African

country. The Affoues continue to serve nobly as do the Assards, who recently completed a mission to the Accra Ghana Temple.

mindful of every people . . . ; yea, he numbereth his people, and his . . . mercy [is] over all the earth.”¹⁵

Sometimes we can see the hand of the Lord in the lives of others but wonder, “How can I more clearly see His hand in my own life?”

The Savior said:

“Doubt not.”¹⁶

“Be not afraid.”¹⁷

“Not . . . one [sparrow] shall . . . fall [to] the ground without your Father [knowing]. . . .

“Fear . . . not therefore, [for] ye are of more value than many sparrows.”¹⁸

Remember the young man who cried out to the prophet Elisha as they were surrounded by enemies: “Alas, [what] shall we do?”¹⁹

Elisha answered:

“Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

“[Then] Elisha prayed, . . . Lord, . . . open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord [did open] the eyes of the young man; and he [did see that] the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.”²⁰

As you keep the commandments and pray in faith to see the Lord’s hand in your life, I promise you that He will



Above left: President Thomas S. Monson in Haiti for that nation’s dedication in 1983. Above: Ivory Coast pioneers Philippe and Annelies Assard (left) and Lucien and Agathe Affoue. Left: Stake president Sathit Kaivaivatana and his wife, Juthamas, in Bangkok, Thailand.

the purpose of building the kingdom of God. For Sister Assard, who is German, to leave her family and allow Brother Assard to leave his work as

hand in all things.”¹³

God’s miracles are not happening just in Haiti, Thailand, or the Ivory Coast. Look around you.¹⁴ “God is



open your spiritual eyes even wider, and you will see more clearly that you are not alone.

The scriptures teach that we are to “[stand] steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come.”²¹ What is to come? The Savior prayed:

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”²²

We all just sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

Our faith grows as we anticipate the glorious day of the Savior’s return to the earth. The thought of His coming stirs my soul. It will be breathtaking! The scope and grandeur, the vastness and magnificence, will exceed anything mortal eyes have ever seen or experienced.

In that day He will not come “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,”²³ but He will appear “in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels.”²⁴ We will hear “the voice of the archangel, and . . . the trump of God.”²⁵ The sun and the moon will be transformed, and “stars [will] be hurled from their places.”²⁶ You and I, or those who follow us, “the saints . . . from [every quarter] of the earth,”²⁷ “shall be quickened and . . . caught up to meet him,”²⁸ and those who have died in righteousness, they too will “be caught

up to meet him in the midst . . . of heaven.”²⁹

Then, a seemingly impossible experience: “All flesh,” the Lord says, “shall see me together.”³⁰ How will it happen? We do not know. But I testify it will happen—exactly as prophesied. We will kneel in reverence, “and the Lord shall utter his voice, and all the ends of the earth shall hear it.”³¹ “It shall be . . . as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder.”³² “[Then] the Lord, . . . the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people.”³³

There will be unforgettable reunions with the angels of heaven and the Saints upon the earth.³⁴ But most important, as Isaiah declares, “All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God,”³⁵ and He “shall reign over all flesh.”³⁶

In that day the skeptics will be silent, “for every ear shall hear . . . , and every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess”³⁷ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

Today is Easter. We rejoice with Christians all over the world in His glorious Resurrection and in our own promised resurrection. May we prepare for His coming by rehearsing these glorious events over and over in our own minds and with those we love, and may His prayer be our prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in

earth, as it is in heaven.”³⁸ I testify that He lives. “Come, O thou King of Kings.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. While general conference overall is translated into 94 languages, not all languages are transmitted simultaneously, nor for all sessions. For the Sunday afternoon session of this general conference, 75 languages were transmitted live.
2. “Come, O Thou King of Kings,” *Hymns*, no. 59.
3. On Tuesday, March 31, 2015, the First Presidency’s office sent me an email explaining that I would speak on Sunday afternoon, April 5, immediately following the congregational hymn “Come, O Thou King of Kings.” The text of this great Restoration hymn, written by Parley P. Pratt, is a humble plea to the Savior to return to the earth. It embodied the message of my conference talk perhaps more powerfully than any other hymn we sing. I was deeply moved by the significance of believing Saints everywhere joining together on Easter Sunday, raising our voices to God and in unison singing, “Come, O thou King of Kings! We’ve waited long for thee.” Realizing that I personally had no input on the music selection for general conference, I wondered if those responsible for the music had read my conference talk entitled “Thy Kingdom Come” and then chosen this hymn about the Second Coming of the Savior. I later learned that the Tabernacle Choir directors had recommended the hymn to the First Presidency in early March, weeks prior to my talk being sent to the First Presidency for translation. The last time that “Come, O Thou King of Kings” was sung as a congregational hymn in general conference was October 2002. We each try to do our part, but He is the grand architect.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
5. 1 Nephi 14:14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 10:55.
7. Personal experience, May 1997.
8. 2 Nephi 27:20.
9. John 1:3.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
11. 1 Nephi 14:12.
12. In the fall of 2001, while living in Brazil, I enthusiastically shared with President James E. Faust of the First Presidency many impressive facts about the Saints living in the city of Curitiba, hoping he would pass the information on to President Gordon B. Hinckley. President Faust stopped me midsentence. “Neil,” he said, “we don’t



By Elder Jorge F. Zeballos
Of the Seventy

lobby the President. The decision of where to build a temple is between the Lord and His prophet.” The Curitiba Brazil Temple was dedicated in 2008.

- 13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
- 14. One of the great miracles of the Lord's hand is the movement of His kingdom across the United States into cities and towns in every state. Here is one example. In May 2006 I was assigned to a stake conference in Denton, Texas. I stayed in the home of the stake president, President Vaughn A Andrus. Sister Andrus told me of the early Church in Denton, beginning with her parents, John and Margaret Porter. There was only a Sunday School in the beginning. But the Porters shared the gospel with the Ragsdales, who in turn shared it with the Nobles and the Martinos. The missionaries, of course, added their important contribution. Many families joined the Church. Others from the west moved to Denton. Today, where there was a small branch, there are now four stakes, and one of the Martinos' sons, Elder James B. Martino, who joined the Church when he was 17, serves as a General Authority of the Church.
- 15. Alma 26:37.
- 16. Matthew 21:21.
- 17. Mark 5:36.
- 18. Matthew 10:29, 31.
- 19. 2 Kings 6:15.
- 20. 2 Kings 6:16–17.
- 21. Mosiah 4:11.
- 22. Matthew 6:9–10; see also Doctrine and Covenants 65:6.
- 23. Luke 2:12.
- 24. Doctrine and Covenants 45:44.
- 25. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
- 26. Doctrine and Covenants 133:49.
- 27. Doctrine and Covenants 45:46.
- 28. Doctrine and Covenants 88:96.
- 29. Doctrine and Covenants 88:97.
- 30. Doctrine and Covenants 101:23.
- 31. Doctrine and Covenants 45:49.
- 32. Doctrine and Covenants 133:22.
- 33. Doctrine and Covenants 133:25.
- 34. See Moses 7:63.
- 35. Isaiah 52:10.
- 36. Doctrine and Covenants 133:25.
- 37. Doctrine and Covenants 88:104.
- 38. Matthew 6:10.

If You Will Be Responsible

Let us press forward by learning our duty, making correct decisions, acting according to those decisions, and accepting the will of our Father.

I was only 12 years old when the missionaries arrived for the first time to preach in the city where I was born in northern Chile. One Sunday, after I had been attending the small branch for six months, a missionary offered me the bread as he was passing the sacrament. I looked at him and softly said, “I can’t.”

“Why not?” he replied.



I told him, “Because I am not a member of the Church.”¹

The missionary couldn’t believe it. His eyes were shining. I suppose he thought, “But this young man is in every single meeting! How can he not be a member of the Church?”

The following day, the missionaries were in my home, and they did everything they could to teach my whole family. But since my family was not interested, it was only my weekly Church attendance for more than six months that made the missionaries feel confident enough to continue. Finally, the great moment I had been waiting for came when they invited me to become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. The missionaries explained to me that since I was a minor, I would need my parents’ permission. I went with the missionaries to see my father, thinking that his loving answer would be “Son, when you are of legal age, you will be able to make your own decisions.”

While the missionaries spoke with him, I prayed fervently for his heart to be touched so he would give me the permission I wanted. His answer to the missionaries was the following: “Elders,



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf17 to watch this talk or to find media to share.



over the past six months, I have seen my son Jorge get up early every Sunday morning, put on his best clothes, and walk to church. I have seen only a good influence from the Church in his life.” Then, addressing me, he surprised me by saying, “Son, if you will be responsible for this decision, then you have my permission to be baptized.” I hugged my father, gave him a kiss, and thanked him for what he was doing. The next day I was baptized. Last week was the 47th anniversary of that important moment in my life.

What responsibility do we have as members of the Church of Jesus Christ? President Joseph Fielding Smith expressed it as follows: “We have these two great responsibilities. . . . First, to seek our own salvation; and, second, our duty to our fellow men.”²

These, then, are the main responsibilities that our Father has assigned to us: seeking our own salvation and that of others, with the understanding that in this statement, *salvation* means reaching the highest degree of glory that our Father has provided for His obedient children.³ These responsibilities that have been entrusted to us—and which we have freely accepted—must define our priorities, our desires, our decisions, and our daily conduct.

For someone who has come to understand that, because of the

Atonement of Jesus Christ, exaltation is truly within reach, failing to obtain it constitutes damnation. Thus, the opposite of salvation is damnation, just like the opposite of success is failure. President Thomas S. Monson has taught us that “men cannot really long rest content with mediocrity once they see excellence is within their reach.”⁴ How, then, could we be content with anything short of exaltation if we know that exaltation is possible?

Allow me to share four key principles that will help us fulfill our desire to be responsible to our Father in Heaven as well as respond to His expectation that we become as He is.

1. Learning Our Duty

If we are to do God’s will, if we are to be responsible to Him, we must begin by learning, understanding, accepting, and living according to His will for us. The Lord has said, “Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”⁵ Having the desire to do what is right is not enough if we do not make sure to understand what our Father expects from us and wants us to do.

In the story of Alice in Wonderland, Alice does not know which way to go, so she asks the Cheshire Cat, “Would

you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

The cat replies, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

Alice says, “I don’t much care where.”

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” says the cat.⁶

However, we know that the path that leads to the “tree, whose fruit [is] desirable to make one happy”⁷—“the way, which leadeth unto life”—is narrow. It takes effort to journey along the path, and “few there be that find it.”⁸

Nephi teaches us that “the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”⁹ Then he adds that “the Holy Ghost . . . will show unto you all things what ye should do.”¹⁰ Thus, the sources that allow us to learn our duty are the words of Christ that we receive through ancient and modern prophets and the personal revelation that we receive through the Holy Ghost.

2. Making the Decision

Whether we have learned about the Restoration of the gospel, a particular commandment, the duties associated with serving in a calling, or the covenants we make in the temple, the choice is ours whether or not we act according to that new knowledge. Each person chooses freely for himself or herself to enter into a sacred covenant such as baptism or the temple ordinances. Because swearing oaths was a normal part of people’s religious lives in antiquity, the old law stated that “ye shall not swear by my name falsely.”¹¹ However, in the meridian of time, the Savior taught a higher way of keeping our commitments when He said that *yes* meant yes and *no* meant no.¹² A person’s word ought to be sufficient to establish his or her truthfulness and commitment toward someone else—and even more so when that someone



else is our Father in Heaven. Honoring a commitment becomes the manifestation of the truthfulness and honesty of our word.

3. Acting Accordingly

After learning our duty and making the decisions that are associated with that learning and understanding, we must act accordingly.

A powerful example of the firm determination to meet His commitment with His Father comes from the Savior's experience of having a man sick with palsy brought to Him to be healed. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."¹³ We know that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is essential to receiving forgiveness for our sins, but during the episode of the healing of the man with palsy, that grand event had not yet taken place; the Savior's suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross had not yet happened. However, Jesus not only blessed the man with palsy with the ability to stand up and walk, but He also granted him forgiveness for his sins,

thereby giving an unequivocal sign that He would not fail, that He would fulfill the commitment He had made with His Father, and that in Gethsemane and on the cross He would do what He had promised to do.

The path that we have chosen to walk is narrow. Along the way are challenges that will require our faith in Jesus Christ and our best efforts to stay on the path and press forward. We need to repent and be obedient and patient, even if we do not understand all the circumstances that surround us. We must forgive others and live in accordance with what we have learned and with the choices we have made.

4. Willingly Accepting the Father's Will

Discipleship requires us not only to learn our duty, make correct decisions, and act in accordance with them, but also essential is our developing the willingness and the ability to accept God's will, even if it does not match our righteous desires or preferences.

I am impressed by and admire the attitude of the leper who came to the

Lord, "beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."¹⁴ The leper did not demand anything, even though his desires might have been righteous; he was simply willing to accept the will of the Lord.

Some years ago a dear, faithful couple who are friends of mine were blessed with the arrival of a long-yearned-for son, for whom they had been praying for a long time. That home was filled with joy while our friends and their daughter, who was their only other child back then, enjoyed the company of the newly arrived little boy. One day, however, something unexpected happened: the little boy, who was only about three years old, suddenly went into a coma. As soon as I learned of the situation, I called my friend to express our support at that difficult time. But his reply was a lesson to me. He said, "If it is the Father's will to take him to Him, then it is all right with us." My friend's words contained not the slightest degree of complaint, rebelliousness,



By Elder Joseph W. Sitati
Of the Seventy

or discontent. Quite the contrary, all I could feel in his words was gratitude to God for having allowed them to enjoy their little son for that brief time, as well as his total willingness to accept the Father's will for them. A few days later, that little one was taken to his celestial mansion.

Let us press forward by learning our duty, making correct decisions, acting according to those decisions, and accepting the will of our Father.

How grateful and happy I am for the decision that my father let me make 47 years ago. Over time, I have come to understand that the condition he gave me—to be responsible for that decision—meant being responsible to my Heavenly Father and seeking my own salvation and that of my fellowmen, thereby becoming more as my Father expects and wants me to become. On this very special day, I testify that God our Father and His Beloved Son live. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

This address was delivered in Spanish.

NOTES

1. Please note that “although the sacrament is for Church members, the bishopric should not announce that it will be passed to members only, and nothing should be done to prevent nonmembers from partaking of it” (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 20.4.1).
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* (2013), 294.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:21–23.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “To the Rescue,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 49; *Liahona*, July 2001, 58.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
6. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1920), 89.
7. 1 Nephi 8:10.
8. Matthew 7:14.
9. 2 Nephi 32:3.
10. 2 Nephi 32:5.
11. Leviticus 19:12.
12. See Matthew 5:37.
13. Mark 2:5.
14. Mark 1:40.

Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Subdue the Earth

Heavenly Father has charged and blessed us to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth that we might become like Him.

Thank you, Tabernacle Choir, for that sweet tribute to the Savior of the world.

In the day that God the Father called upon His Only Begotten Son to make man in Their image and likeness, He blessed His children, saying, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion . . . over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”¹ Thus, our mortal journey began with both a divine charge and a blessing. A loving Father gave us the charge and the blessing to be fruitful and to multiply and to have dominion so that we can develop and become even as He is.

Brothers and sisters, this afternoon I invite your faith and prayers as I share some thoughts with you about three fundamental attributes of our divine nature. My prayer is that we might all more fully recognize and fulfill our sacred responsibility—our Father's charge—to develop our divine nature so that we may navigate our journey more successfully and obtain our divine destiny.

First, God Charged Us to Be Fruitful

An important part of being fruitful that is sometimes overlooked is that of bringing forth the kingdom of God upon the earth. The Savior taught:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. . . .

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”²

We become fruitful as we abide in Christ and as we “take upon [ourselves His] name [and] . . . serve him to the end”³ by helping others come unto Him.

In our day, living prophets and apostles continue to lift their voices to invite each one of us to become fully engaged in the work of salvation according to our abilities and opportunities.

The starting point of a response that yields much fruit is to “be meek and

lowly in heart.”⁴ We can then more fully come unto Christ as we yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and keep all the covenants we have made.⁵ We can seek and receive the gift of charity and have power to invite our own families, our ancestors, and our member and nonmember neighbors and friends to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Laboring in the spirit of charity is not a duty but a joy. Challenges become opportunities to build faith. We become “witnesses of [the goodness of] God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death.”⁶

All of us can and should become fully engaged in the work of salvation. The Savior has given us the following responsibility with a promise: “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”⁷

Second, God Charged Us to Multiply

Our physical bodies are a blessing from God. We received them for the purposes of fulfilling Heavenly Father’s work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”⁸ The body is the means by which we can attain our divine potential.

The body enables Heavenly Father’s obedient spirit children to experience life on earth.⁹ Bearing children gives other spirit children of God the opportunity to also enjoy life on earth. All who are born in mortality have the opportunity to progress and to be exalted if they obey God’s commandments.

Marriage between a man and a woman is the institution that God ordained for the fulfillment of the



charge to multiply. A same-gender relationship does not multiply.

A legal and lawful marriage sealed in the temple and in which the sealing covenants are honored gives parents and their children the opportunity for the best experience of love and preparation for a fruitful life. It offers them the ideal environment in which they can live their covenants made with God.

Because of His love for us, Heavenly Father has provided that all His faithful children who do not or are not able to enjoy the blessings of a covenant marriage and children or a fulness of those blessings for reasons not of their making will, in the Lord’s appointed time, enjoy these blessings.¹⁰

Living prophets and apostles have counseled all who have the

opportunity to enter into the covenant of eternal marriage to proceed in wisdom and faith. We should not put off the time of that sacred day because of worldly pursuits or hold our expectations of a suitable companion at a level that disqualifies every possible candidate.

The promise to all who are sealed in the covenant of eternal marriage and who are fruitful through keeping their covenants is that the adversary will never have power to undermine the foundation of their eternal companionship.

Third, God Charged Us to Subdue the Earth

To subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing is



to control these things so they fulfill the will of God¹¹ as they serve the purposes of His children. Subduing includes gaining mastery over our own bodies.¹² It does *not* include being helpless victims of these things or using them contrary to the will of God.¹³

Developing the ability to subdue the things of the earth begins with humility to recognize our human weakness and the power available to us through Christ and His Atonement. For “Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”¹⁴ This power becomes available to us as we choose to act in obedience to His commandments. We increase our ability by seeking the gifts of the Spirit and by developing our talents.

I was born and raised in humble circumstances typical to many families in Africa. I gained the ability to lift myself from those circumstances by seeking and obtaining, with the caring help of my parents, a good education. Developing a vision of what I could become was essential to my progress. Later, as a young couple, my wife, Gladys, and I found the restored gospel, which continues to bless our lives with spiritual direction. Like every family, we have our trials and challenges. But as we look to the Lord for help, we have found answers that bring peace and comfort, and we do not feel overwhelmed by these things.

The challenges facing human society today, including immorality, pornography, armed conflict, pollution, substance abuse, and poverty, flourish because many in the world have turned themselves over by choice “to the will of the devil and the flesh”¹⁵ rather than to the will of God. “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”¹⁶

However, God invites *all* His children to obtain His help to overcome and endure the challenges of this life with these words:

“I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.

“. . . If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, . . . ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.”¹⁷

Faithful Latter-day Saints who understand their divine potential and rely wholeheartedly on the power available through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ are strengthened in their natural weakness and “can do all things.”¹⁸ They are enabled to overcome the enticings of evil that have put many under bondage to the adversary. Paul taught that:

“God is faithful, [and] 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.”¹⁹





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

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”²⁰

Heavenly Father has charged and blessed us to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth that we might become like Him. He has made help available that we may each, according to our individual choosing, actually grow to become like Him. I pray that we might all live our lives such that we will be guided by the vision of our divine nature, claim all our divine privileges, and fulfill our divine destiny.

I testify of the living reality of God the Father and of His Beloved Son, our Savior Jesus Christ; of His glorious plan of happiness; and of the keys He has caused to be bestowed upon a living prophet on earth today, even Thomas S. Monson, whom we love and sustain. I pray that we may have power to enjoy the fulness of His blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Moses 2:28; see also Moses 2:26–27; Genesis 1:26–28.
2. John 15:5, 7–8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
4. Moroni 7:44.
5. See Mosiah 3:19.
6. Mosiah 18:9.
7. John 15:16.
8. Moses 1:39.
9. See Moses 5:10–11.
10. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3; Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96–97.
11. See Jacob 2:18–19.
12. See 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Galatians 5:16–25; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; 2 Timothy 2:22.
13. See Jacob 2:12–16, 20–21.
14. Moroni 7:33.
15. 2 Nephi 10:24.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16.
17. Moses 6:51–52.
18. Alma 26:12.
19. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
20. Hebrews 2:18.

The Sabbath Is a Delight

How can you ensure that your behavior on the Sabbath will lead to joy and rejoicing?

Dear brothers and sisters, these two days of conference have been glorious. We have been uplifted by inspiring music and eloquent prayers. Our spirits have been edified by messages of light and truth. On this Easter Sunday, we again unitedly and sincerely thank God for a prophet!

The question for each of us is: because of what I have heard and felt during this conference, how will I change? Whatever your answer might be, may I invite you also to examine your feelings about, and your behavior on, the Sabbath day.

I am intrigued by the words of Isaiah, who called the Sabbath “a delight.”¹ Yet I wonder, is the Sabbath really a delight for you and for me?

I first found delight in the Sabbath many years ago when, as a busy surgeon, I knew that the Sabbath became a day for personal healing. By the end of each week, my hands were sore from repeatedly scrubbing them with soap, water, and a bristle brush. I also needed a breather from the burden of a demanding profession. Sunday provided much-needed relief.

What did the Savior mean when He said that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”?²

I believe He wanted us to understand that the Sabbath was His gift to us, granting real respite from the rigors of daily life and an opportunity for spiritual and physical renewal. God gave us this special day, not for amusement or daily labor but for a rest from duty, with physical and spiritual relief.

In Hebrew, the word *Sabbath* means “rest.” The purpose of the Sabbath dates back to the Creation of the world, when after six days of labor the Lord rested from the work of creation.³ When He later revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses, God commanded that we “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”⁴ Later, the Sabbath was observed as a reminder of the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt.⁵ Perhaps most important, the Sabbath was given as a perpetual covenant, a constant reminder that the Lord may sanctify His people.⁶

In addition, we now partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath day in remembrance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.⁷ Again, we covenant that we are willing to take upon us His holy name.⁸

The Savior identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath.⁹ It is His day! Repeatedly, He has asked us to *keep*



fulness of the earth is yours.”¹³

Imagine the scope of that statement! The fulness of the earth is promised to those who keep the Sabbath day holy.¹⁴ No wonder Isaiah called the Sabbath “a delight.”

How can you ensure that your behavior on the Sabbath will lead to joy and rejoicing? In addition to your going to church, partaking of the sacrament, and being diligent in your specific call to serve, what other activities would help to make the Sabbath a delight for you? What sign will you give to the Lord to show your love for Him?

The Sabbath provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen family ties. After all, God wants each of us, as His children, to return to Him as endowed Saints, sealed in the temple as families, to our ancestors, and to our posterity.¹⁵

We make the Sabbath a delight when we teach the gospel to our children. Our responsibility as parents is abundantly clear. The Lord said, “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion . . . that teach them *not* to understand the doctrine of repentance,

the Sabbath¹⁰ or to *hallow* the Sabbath day.¹¹ We are under covenant to do so.

How do we *hallow* the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things *not* to do on the Sabbath. It wasn’t until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a *sign* between me and my Heavenly Father.¹² With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don’ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, “What *sign* do I want to give to God?” That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.

Though the doctrine pertaining to the Sabbath day is of ancient origin, it has been renewed in these latter days as part of a new covenant with a promise. Listen to the power of this divine decree:

“That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High. . . .

“And on this day . . . let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, . . . that thy joy may be full. . . .

“And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, . . . the





faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”¹⁶

Years ago the First Presidency stressed the importance of quality family time. They wrote:

“We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”¹⁷

When I ponder this counsel, I almost wish I were a young father once again. Now parents have such wonderful

resources available to help them make family time more meaningful, on the Sabbath and other days as well. They have LDS.org, Mormon.org, the Bible videos, the Mormon Channel, the Media Library, the *Friend*, the *New Era*, the *Ensign*, the *Liahona*, and more—much more. These resources are so very helpful to parents in discharging their sacred duty to teach their children. No other work transcends that of righteous, intentional parenting!

As you teach the gospel, you will learn more. This is the Lord’s way of helping you to comprehend His gospel. He said:

“I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

“Teach ye diligently . . . , that you may be instructed more perfectly . . . in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.”¹⁸

Such study of the gospel makes the Sabbath a delight. This promise pertains regardless of family size, composition, or location.

In addition to time with family, you can experience true delight on

the Sabbath from family history work. Searching for and finding family members who have preceded you on earth—those who did not have an opportunity to accept the gospel while here—can bring immense joy.

I have seen this firsthand. Several years ago, my dear wife Wendy determined to learn how to do family history research. Her progress at first was slow, but little by little she learned how easy it is to do this sacred work. And I have never seen her happier. You too need not travel to other countries or even to a family history center. At home, with the aid of a computer or mobile device, you can identify souls who are yearning for their ordinances. Make the Sabbath a delight by finding your ancestors and liberating them from spirit prison!¹⁹

Make the Sabbath a delight by rendering service to others, especially those who are not feeling well or those who are lonely or in need.²⁰ Lifting their spirits will lift yours as well.

When Isaiah described the Sabbath as “a delight,” he also taught us how to make it delightful. He said:

“If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call



the sabbath a delight, . . . and shalt honour [the Lord], not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

“Then shalt thou delight thyself *in the Lord.*”²¹

Not pursuing your “own pleasure” on the Sabbath requires self-discipline. You may have to deny yourself of something you might like. If you choose to delight yourself *in the Lord*, you will not permit yourself to treat it as any other day. Routine and recreational activities can be done some other time.

Think of this: In paying tithing, we return one-tenth of our increase to the Lord. In keeping the Sabbath holy, we reserve one day in seven as His. So it is our privilege to consecrate both money and time to Him who lends us life each day.²²

Faith in God engenders a love for the Sabbath; faith in the Sabbath engenders a love for God. A sacred Sabbath truly is a delight.

Now, as this conference comes to a close, we know that wherever we live we are to be examples of the believers

among our families, neighbors, and friends.²³ True believers keep the Sabbath day holy.

I conclude with the farewell plea of Moroni, as he closed the Book of Mormon. He wrote, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then . . . are ye sanctified in Christ.”²⁴

With love in my heart, I leave this with you as my prayer, testimony, and blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 58:13.
2. Mark 2:27.
3. See Genesis 2:2–3.
4. Exodus 20:8; see also Deuteronomy 5:12; Mosiah 13:16; 18:23.
5. See Deuteronomy 5:14–15. People who choose to work seven days a week are essentially in bondage—to work or perhaps to money, but they are slaves nevertheless. A millionaire who works seven days a week is a rich slave.
6. See Exodus 31:13, 16.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:12. Prior to His Crucifixion, the Lord introduced the sacrament among His disciples at the Feast of the Passover (see Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24). The resurrected Lord

instituted the sacrament in remembrance of His Atonement among the people of ancient America (see 3 Nephi 18:1–12; Moroni 4:1–3; 5:2) and restored it in modern times (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79). Partaking of the sacrament renews our covenant made at baptism to keep His commandments (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:68).

8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77.
9. See Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5.
10. See Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 26:2; Doctrine and Covenants 68:29.
11. See Ezekiel 20:20; 44:24.
12. See Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–10, 13, 15–16.
14. See Leviticus 26:2–4.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; emphasis added; see also Moses 6:58–62.
17. First Presidency letter, Feb. 11, 1999; quoted in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.4.1.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77–78.
19. See Isaiah 61:1; Doctrine and Covenants 128:22; 138:57–59.
20. See Matthew 25:35–40.
21. Isaiah 58:13–14; emphasis added.
22. See Mosiah 2:21.
23. See 1 Timothy 4:12.
24. Moroni 10:32–33.



Share This Message

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr15Conf18 to watch this talk or to find media to share.

The following list of selected experiences related during general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

Speaker	Story
Neil L. Andersen	(119) Then-Elder Thomas S. Monson tells Neil L. Andersen that the Lord opens doors and performs miracles. The faith of a couple in Thailand stays strong after the husband is paralyzed. After meeting in the Ivory Coast, two Latter-day Saint couples build the kingdom of God there.
Wilford W. Andersen	(54) A Native American man tells a doctor that he can teach the doctor to dance but that he must hear the music.
David A. Bednar	(46) As a small boy, David A. Bednar fears he is going to prison after breaking a store window.
Linda K. Burton	(29) A father tells his children they will be safe if they stay inside a string fence around their yard. The Lord guides a sister in creating with her husband a home where the Spirit is welcome.
Gérald Caussé	(98) After living 22 years in the Paris area, the Caussé family realize they have never visited the Eiffel Tower. Three African men walk more than 300 miles (480 km) to attend a district conference, pay tithing, and obtain copies of the Book of Mormon.
D. Todd Christofferson	(50) D. Todd Christofferson encourages and prays for a woman who feels inadequate as a mother.
L. Whitney Clayton	(36) A seven-year-old girl who survives a plane crash stumbles toward a light in the distance until she reaches safety.
Quentin L. Cook	(62) The uncle of Quentin L. Cook is killed in action during World War II. A Samoan Church member desiring to pray about his illness sees a doctor to find out what's wrong.
Cheryl A. Esplin	(8) Cheryl A. Esplin attends a meeting where sisters learn that truth and the Holy Ghost give their homes and families power to withstand evil. The sister of Cheryl A. Esplin's great-grandfather receives a powerful impression about sharing her testimony.
Henry B. Eyring	(17) The Holy Ghost brings comfort and strength to the grieving parents of a little boy who died in an accident. (22) Henry B. Eyring feels blessed that his fast offering may help Saints in Vanuatu devastated by a tropical storm. A sister expresses gratitude for fast offerings that sustained her and other Church members during a civil war in Sierra Leone. (84) While 13-year-old Henry B. Eyring is collecting fast offerings, a man tells him to go away. Henry B. Eyring is inspired to bless an injured child to live. The Holy Ghost inspires a dying man to serve in his calling and allows him to feel his bishop's heavy load.
Larry M. Gibson	(77) The father of Larry M. Gibson gives him a silver dollar to remind him of his eternal destiny. Larry M. Gibson walks 50 miles (80 km) in 19 hours with his sons.
Jeffrey R. Holland	(104) A young man saves his older brother from falling from a canyon wall by grabbing his wrists and pulling him to safety.
Thomas S. Monson	(88) As a deacon, Thomas S. Monson feels blessed when he takes the sacrament to an ill man. Thomas S. Monson develops a love for the Book of Mormon after visiting the gravesite of Martin Harris. While in the navy, Thomas S. Monson gives a priesthood blessing to a friend, who is healed. (91) After praying in the temple about returning to his mission, a young man receives assurance from a returned missionary who served in the same mission.
Brent H. Nielson	(101) Brent H. Nielson and members of his family patiently love a less-active family member back into the Church.
Bonnie L. Oscarson	(14) A young woman in Italy in 1850 stands up to a mob. Bonnie L. Oscarson's daughter defends motherhood at her children's school.
Boyd K. Packer	(26) Boyd K. Packer waits outside the college classroom of his future wife, Donna Smith, for her to give him a cookie and a kiss.
Kevin W. Pearson	(114) President Heber J. Grant prays that he can stay faithful to the end. Kevin W. Pearson leaves his employment to accept a call as a mission president.
Rafael E. Pino	(117) Rafael E. Pino's children learn to appreciate perspective from a television show and a jigsaw puzzle. A boy asks Michelangelo how he knew the figure of David was in a block of marble.
Dale G. Renlund	(56) A mother in South Africa teaches her daughter tolerance. A missionary receives an impression that helps him be patient with his companion.
Michael T. Ringwood	(59) Michael T. Ringwood learns on his mission and in seminary that the service that counts most is usually recognized only by God.
Joseph W. Sitati	(126) Joseph W. Sitati lifts himself from humble circumstances by obtaining a good education.
Ulisses Soares	(70) A deacon warns his classmates about pornography. Ulisses Soares learns on his mission that evil cannot thwart the power of a disciple's testimony.
Carole M. Stephens	(11) Carole M. Stephens visits with a Native American sister in Arizona, USA, who considers herself a grandmother to everyone.
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	(80) A governor in Russia assembles peasants and shop facades to impress visiting ambassadors. Stake leaders set goals that focus on their ministry.
Rosemary M. Wixom	(93) A less-active sister rekindles her faith after studying the gospel, reading the Book of Mormon, and receiving support from family and ward members.
Jorge F. Zeballos	(123) The father of 12-year-old Jorge F. Zeballos allows him to join the Church. A faithful couple accepts Heavenly Father's will when their baby dies.



Making Conference Part of Our Lives

Consider using some of these activities and questions as a starting point for family discussion or personal pondering.

For Children

- Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared a story of feeling afraid after he accidentally broke a window of a store near his home (page 46). Then he taught that when we look to Jesus Christ and follow Him, we can feel peace instead of fear. What can you do each day to help your children look to the Savior? How can you teach them to press forward in Christ even when times are difficult?
- Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, told about a family that moved into a new house that had no fence around the yard (page 29). The father marked the yard boundaries with string and told his children they would be safe if they stayed inside the line.

The children obeyed, even when a ball bounced past the string. How can parents help children be safe? What blessings come from listening to our parents? What boundaries does Heavenly Father give us?

- Bishop Gérald Caussé, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, told a story about three men in Africa who walked two weeks on muddy paths to attend a district meeting (page 98). They stayed for a week so they could take the sacrament before heading home. Then they carried boxes filled with copies of the Book of Mormon on their heads to give to people in their village. Do you think of the gospel as a wonderful thing? What sacrifices are you willing to make to live the gospel?

For Youth

- Many talks this conference highlighted the importance of the family and the home. For example, Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president, asked Church members to “defend the home as a place which is second only to the temple in holiness” (page 14). What can you do to defend the home? How can you help make your home a sacred place?
- Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that our attitude and conduct on the Sabbath are a sign between Heavenly Father and us (page 129). As you read Elder Nelson’s talk, you could think about this coming Sunday and ask yourself, “What sign do I want to give God?”
- Elder Ulisses Soares of the Seventy talked about a deacon who followed the example of Captain Moroni (page 70). When the young man saw some classmates looking at pornographic images on their cell phones, he told them they were doing wrong and that they should stop. One friend did stop. How can we receive strength to choose the right? How do we know what is safe for us to enjoy?
- Electronic devices can feel empowering because they give access to nearly unlimited information and media. But have you ever stopped and wondered if *they* control *you*? Elder José A. Teixeira of the Seventy said, “It is refreshing to put aside our electronic devices for a while” (page 96). Give it a try. Pick a day sometime soon to go device free. It might seem like the last thing you’d want to do, but you’ll be surprised by how much more time you’ll spend talking and making memories with friends and family.

- Fasting is one of the best ways to get serious about spiritual power. President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, reminded us that fasting and prayer strengthened Jesus against Satan’s temptations while the Savior was in the wilderness (page 22). Next fast Sunday, try following Jesus’s example and fast with a purpose. You’ll receive divine help and protection too.

For Adults

- Several conference speakers addressed the importance of marriage and family in society and in the plan of salvation. You could answer the five questions Sister Burton asks on page 31 and prayerfully ponder how you can better lift and love those closest to you. As a family, discuss how you can better center your home on Jesus Christ and how you can better support each other.
- President Thomas S. Monson reminded us of the blessings that come from temple worship, including spirituality, peace, and the strength to overcome temptations and trials (page 91). “As we attend the temple,” he said, “there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart.” What can you do to make your temple attendance more meaningful?
- Faith in Jesus Christ is a principle of action. “We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay

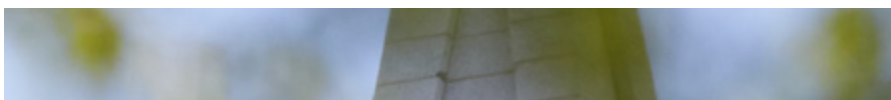
tithing,” said Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy. “We actively choose to believe” (page 36). As you read his talk and the talks by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (page 32); Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president (page 93); Bishop Gérald Caussé (page 98); and Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy (page 114), consider making a list of ways to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. Then make



a list of the promised blessings that come from increased faith.

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Savior’s Atonement and Resurrection constitute “the most majestic manifestation of pure love ever to be demonstrated in the history of this world” (page 104). How can your thoughts, words, and actions better reflect your appreciation for what the Savior has done?
- President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, explained the miraculous gift of grace and the importance of obedience and repentance. “Trying to understand God’s gift of grace with all our heart and mind gives us all the more reasons to love and obey our Heavenly Father with meekness and gratitude,” he said (page 107). Consider continuing your study of grace by reading Romans 3:23; 6:1–4; 2 Nephi 25:23, 26; Mosiah 2:21; 5:2; 27:25; Alma 34:10, 15; Ether 12:27; and Moroni 10:32. ■





Three Temples Announced

Temples are planned for Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Abidjan, Ivory Coast; and Bangkok, Thailand, President Thomas S. Monson announced during the Sunday morning session of general conference. In each case, the temple will be the first to be built in its country. Exact locations of the temples will be announced at a later date.

“What marvelous blessings are in store for our faithful members in these

areas and, indeed, wherever temples are located throughout the world,” President Monson said.

Port-au-Prince Haiti Temple

Haiti is home to more than 20,000 Latter-day Saints in a nation of approximately 10 million people. Missionary work officially began in 1980. The nearest temple is the Santo Domingo Dominican Republic Temple. Although

located on the same island, that temple is almost a day’s journey away.

Abidjan Ivory Coast Temple

Ivory Coast (Côte d’Ivoire) is home to more than 27,000 Church members in a nation of approximately 20 million people. Missionary work officially began in 1988. The nearest temple is the Accra Ghana Temple, which is 340 miles (550 km) away from Abidjan.

Bangkok Thailand Temple

Thailand is home to about 19,000 Latter-day Saints in a nation of approximately 67 million. The Church was formally organized in Thailand in 1966. The Bangkok Thailand Temple will serve Latter-day Saints in Thailand, as well as all of Southeast Asia. Currently, the nearest temple to Thailand is the Hong Kong China Temple, more than 1,000 miles (1,610 km) away.

Additional Temple News

Open houses, cultural celebrations, and opening dates for five temples have been announced for 2015 in Córdoba, Argentina; Payson, Utah, USA; Trujillo, Peru; Indianapolis, Indiana, USA; and Tijuana, Mexico. The remodeled Mexico City Mexico Temple will also be rededicated in 2015.

For the past two years, the Church has concentrated its efforts on completing previously announced temples. In addition to the 3 announced temples, there are 144 temples in operation, 5 being renovated, 13 under construction, and 13 previously announced in various states of preparation before construction begins. ■

New Leaders Sustained

Five new General Authorities were sustained during general conference, to serve in the First Quorum of the Seventy. They are Elder Kim B. Clark, Elder Allen D. Haynie, Elder Von G. Keetch, Elder Hugo Montoya, and Elder Vern P. Stanfill.

A new Young Men general presidency was also sustained. Stephen W. Owen will serve as president; Douglas D. Holmes, first counselor; and M. Joseph Brough, second counselor.

A new counselor in the Primary general presidency was also sustained. Mary R. Durham was called to serve as the second counselor. Rosemary M. Wixom will continue to serve as president, and Cheryl A. Esplin, who previously served as second counselor, will now serve as first counselor.

Biographies of newly called leaders can be found on pages 140–44. ■



President Eyring at Vatican Summit

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, called for a “renaissance of happy marriages” during an international interreligious summit at Vatican City hosted by the Catholic Church on November 18, 2014. The event, titled “The Complementarity of Man and Woman,” brought together religious leaders from 14 faiths and 23 countries.

“A man and a woman, united in marriage, have a transcendent power to create happiness for themselves, for their family, and for the people around them,” President Eyring said. ■

Book of Mormon in 110 Languages

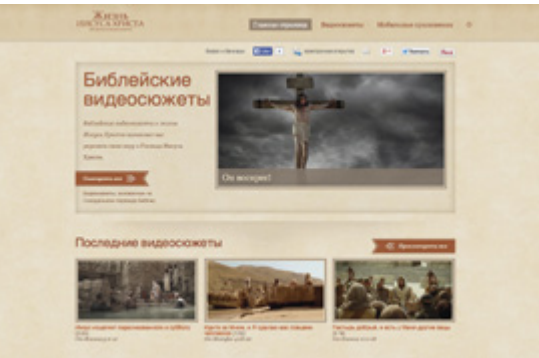
With recent publication in the Kosraean language, the Book of Mormon has now been translated into 110 languages. Kosrae is an island in the Federated States of Micronesia.

Printed copies of the Kosraean Book of Mormon will be available in July 2015. Digital versions became available on LDS.org, as well as in the Gospel Library and Book of Mormon mobile apps, in March. The Church is now releasing digital versions of scriptures at the same time text for books is sent to the printer. This makes the newly translated scriptures available to members much earlier.

Several new translations of the scriptures will be announced over the next two years. Three new translations of the Book of Mormon and five additional translations of the triple combination (the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price published in one edition) will be published in 2015 alone. Members speaking those languages will be

informed as digital versions are published. ■





Strengthen Faith with Bible Videos

You can help strengthen faith in Jesus Christ this year—your own and that of others—by watching and sharing *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos* at BibleVideos.org and on the Bible Videos app.

These faith-building resources are offered freely to other churches in an effort to share the message of the Savior as widely as possible throughout the world, to help viewers feel His love and to inspire them to want to be more like Him.

Of the 92 Bible videos the Church has produced over the past three years, more than half have been translated from English into Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, Russian, German, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. ■

Q&A with Elder and Sister Bednar

Youth around the world are invited to participate in a live, interactive Face to Face question-and-answer session with Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and his wife, Susan.

Youth can join in the interactive chat on May 12, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time, by watching the live stream on LDS.org, the LDS Youth Facebook page, the Youth Activities site (lds.org/youth/activities), or the Mormon Channel's YouTube page. The broadcast will also be translated live in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, French, Russian, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese.

Youth are encouraged to submit questions at the Youth Activities site both before and during the event; they



can also follow the conversation with #LDSface2face.

“We encourage the youth, as they prepare for this event, to seek the Spirit’s guidance in pondering what questions they might ask,” Elder Bednar said. “As we have the Spirit with us, we will all learn together.” ■

Devotional for Young Adults

Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak during a worldwide devotional for young adults to be broadcast on Sunday, May 3, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time. The broadcast is the second of three worldwide devotionals planned for 2015.

All young adults (ages 18–30) and students finishing high school or the equivalent are invited to participate. The broadcast will be available on the Church satellite system, the Internet, and other media. Additional material based on the devotionals is also available at devotionals.lds.org. ■

Websites Feature Service

What are Latter-day Saints doing to better the communities in which they live? Find out by going to MormonNewsroom.org. Here are some examples from recent postings on the international Newsroom websites.

New Zealand and Vanuatu

When Cyclone Pam struck the small Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, Latter-day Saints in Auckland, New Zealand—with aid from Church Humanitarian Services—rallied to help those devastated by the storm. They packed 2,000 boxes of food to help as many of the affected population as possible. Each container was filled with flour, rice, canned fruit, beans, corned beef, fish, crackers, raisins, noodles, chocolate milk powder, and a can opener. The containers can

also be used for other purposes, such as carrying water.

Dominican Republic and Canada

In the Dominican Republic and Canada, Latter-day Saint women joined in commemorating International Women's Day, an event sponsored by the United Nations. More than 1,200 women gathered in Church meetinghouses in several areas of the Dominican Republic to honor women for their many contributions in the world. Religious, civic, and military leaders participated in the event, which included a program of music and speeches. In Canada, Latter-day Saint women also marked the day by sharing information about the Relief

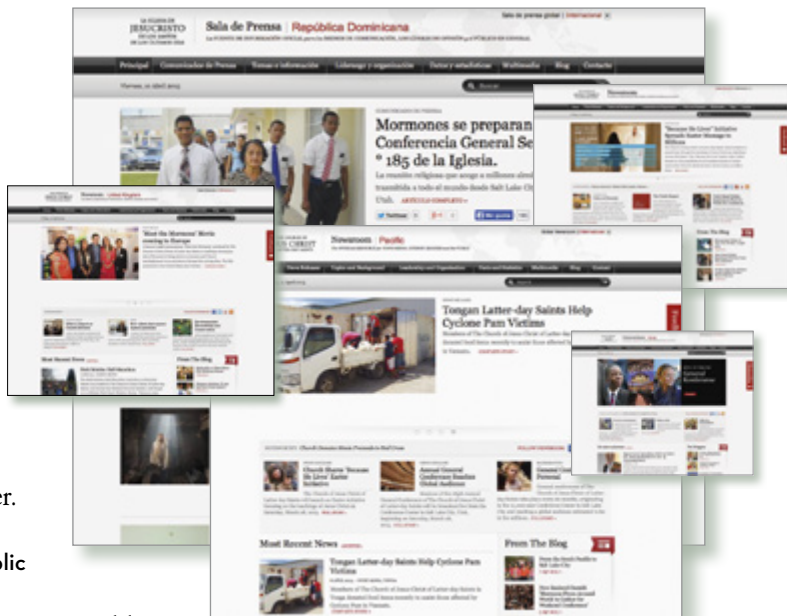
Society, noting that it is a “tremendous vehicle for service around the globe.”

United Kingdom

Their original goal was to sew 100 dresses for needy children in Africa, but when they were finished, the women of the Coventry Ward in England had made more than 230. The simple dresses, made from pillowcases, are easy to complete. One sister, who had not previously sewn, was able to make 3 of them.

Arkansas, USA

More than 600 people attended an interfaith community devotional on the topic of religious freedom hosted by the Little Rock Arkansas Stake, including representatives from the Catholic, Methodist, and Islamic communities and an Evangelical radio personality. The multi-faith event also included a videotaped message from the state lieutenant governor and a closing prayer from a state senator, both Baptists. Organizers said the event built “bridges of understanding.” ■



An Easier-to-Use LDS.org

LDS.org will get a new menu structure and streamlined navigation this May, the latest of the Church's continuing improvements to make its official website more personalized and easier to use.

Developers and designers combined years of user feedback with

additional research to create a more intuitive menu. Testing has shown that the new navigation makes finding content and resources significantly easier.

A video tour of LDS.org is also provided, to help members adjust to the new organization. ■



Elder Kim B. Clark

First Quorum of the Seventy

First Vision Accounts

Four firsthand accounts of the First Vision, written by Joseph Smith, are now available in 10 languages. They can be accessed at josephsmithpapers.org, where an online viewer also provides access to original documents and journals. ■



A lifetime of education—as a student and a teacher—will benefit Elder Kim Bryce Clark in his new assignment in the First Quorum of the Seventy. Sustained on April 4, 2015, Elder Clark will begin his service just weeks after he finishes his assignment as president of Brigham Young University–Idaho.

“I have been in school since I was five years old,” the newly called Seventy said. “I love learning and teaching.”

He was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on March 20, 1949, to Merlin and Helen Mar Clark, the eldest of three children. He spent his childhood in Salt Lake City until age 11, when his father took a job in Spokane, Washington.

Although he had planned to attend Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, as a junior in high school he felt he needed to explore other options and decided to apply to Harvard University in Massachusetts—a place that would eventually become his home for more than three decades.

After his freshman year of study at Harvard, Elder Clark served in the South German Mission from 1968 to 1970. Upon his return he attended BYU, where he soon met Sue Lorraine Hunt in his ward. They were married a few months later on June 14, 1971. They are the parents of seven children.

Right after they were married, the couple moved to the Boston, Massachusetts, area, where Elder Clark again enrolled at Harvard. There he earned a bachelor of arts degree, a master of arts degree, and a PhD—all in economics. Elder Clark became a member of the Harvard Business School faculty in 1978 and was later named as the school’s dean in 1995. In 2005 he was named the president of BYU–Idaho, where he served for nearly a decade.

Elder Clark has served as an elders quorum president, ward executive secretary, bishop’s counselor, bishop, high councilor, stake mission president’s counselor, and Area Seventy. ■

Teachings for Our Time

From May 2015 through October 2015, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays should be prepared from one or more talks given in the April 2015 general conference. In October 2015, talks may be selected from either the April 2015 or the October 2015 general conference. Stake and district presidents should choose which talks will be used in their areas, or they may delegate this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study the selected talks beforehand. Conference talks are available in many languages at conference.lds.org. ■



Elder Allen D. Haynie

First Quorum of the Seventy

Elder Allen Decker Haynie was sustained as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy on April 4, 2015.

Elder Haynie was born on August 29, 1958, to Van Lloyd and Sarah Lulu Lewis Haynie.

He was born in Logan, Utah, but spent much of his youth in other cities in northern Utah and in the Silicon Valley of California. He attended five different elementary schools, two junior high schools, and finally attended a high school in Bountiful, Utah.

This diversity in experience “taught me a great lesson about learning to appreciate everybody,” he said, “because it seemed that every year I was changing locales and having to make friends all over again. One of the things I love about the Church is that it gives us an opportunity to associate with people and find value in their differing backgrounds, experience, talents, and abilities.”

He served in the Argentina Cordoba Mission from 1977 to 1979.

With a bachelor’s degree in political science from Brigham Young University, Elder Haynie went on to obtain a juris doctorate from the university’s J. Reuben Clark Law School in 1985.

He fulfilled a yearlong judicial clerkship on the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Diego, California, before joining the law firm of Latham and Watkins, practicing out of the San Diego office. About five years ago he and his brother formed their own law firm.

Elder Haynie has also served as elders quorum president, ward Young Men president, seminary teacher, high councilor, bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy.

He met Deborah Ruth Hall while attending BYU, and the two were married on December 19, 1983, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of six children.

Becoming emotional when talking about his testimony, Elder Haynie said he first read and marked the Book of Mormon when he was 12. “I don’t have a memory of not believing; I don’t have a memory of not praying.” ■



Elder Von G. Keetch

First Quorum of the Seventy

A defining moment of Elder Von G. Keetch’s life came as he was completing a judicial clerkship with Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Justice Antonin Scalia of the United States Supreme Court and preparing to enter full-time law practice.

He could have worked in any city in the United States for a multitude of big law firms. Instead, he and his wife, Bernice Pymm Keetch, prayed for inspiration to know what they should do. After a period of searching, the couple returned to Salt Lake City, Utah, where he went to work for the law firm of Kirton McConkie.

At the time, Elder Keetch thought he might be sacrificing his ability to work on cutting-edge legal cases in order to be near family. Instead, as the chief outside legal counsel for the Church, Elder Keetch argued constitutional issues and precedent-setting cases on religious liberty. He has represented almost every major religious denomination in the country. “I have loved being able to work for such a great client and being able to work on such great issues,” he said.

Born on March 17, 1960, in Provo, Utah, to Gary and Deanne Keetch, Elder Keetch is the oldest of four children. His family lived in Orem, Utah, before moving to Pleasant Grove, Utah—where he and his future wife would serve on their high school seminary council together.

Elder Keetch served in the Germany Dusseldorf Mission and came to love the German people. After returning from the mission field, he married Bernice Pymm in the Salt Lake Temple on November 21, 1981; they have six children. Elder Keetch graduated from Brigham Young University in 1984 with a degree in political science and received a law degree from the university in 1987.

Through the years, Elder Keetch, who was sustained on April 4, 2015, to the First Quorum of the Seventy, has served in bishoprics, on high councils, as a stake president, and as an Area Seventy. ■



Elder Hugo Montoya

First Quorum of the Seventy

Elder Hugo Montoya was understandably overwhelmed when he was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy. He found comfort in President Thomas S. Monson’s gentle words during a training meeting for new General Authorities: “You are here because you love the Savior.” Elder Montoya felt uplifted, knowing his new calling placed him on the Lord’s errand.

“I love the Savior, and I will go wherever I am asked to go,” he said. “I will do whatever I am asked to do. I will say whatever I am asked to say.” Elder Montoya was sustained during the Saturday afternoon session of the Church’s 185th Annual General Conference.

Elder Montoya also finds strength in his family’s legacy of faith. His great-grandfather Rafael Monroy is a pivotal figure in the history of the Church in Mexico. In 1915 Brother Monroy and a fellow member, Vicente Morales, were arrested by a group of revolutionaries during the Mexican Revolution. Both men were told they would be released if, among other demands, they renounced their religion.

The two refused and were shot to death by firing squad.

Elder Montoya said his great-grandfather’s example remains a powerful influence in his life. “I’ve learned that feelings of fear can be overcome by feelings of faith and testimony when you know you are doing the right things.”

Elder Montoya was born on April 2, 1960, in Fresno, California, to Abel Montoya and Maclovía Monroy. He has lived most of his life in Mexico.

He married María del Carmen Balvastro in Hermosillo; they were sealed in the Mesa Arizona Temple on April 6, 1983. They have five children.

After laboring as a full-time missionary in the Mexico City North Mission from 1979 to 1981, he served as ward Young Men president, high councilor, bishop, stake president, area auditor, and Area Seventy.

He graduated from Sonora State University in 1986 with an agricultural engineering degree and has worked in several management positions with Xerox and as a Church institute teacher. ■



Elder Vern P. Stanfill

First Quorum of the Seventy

Elder Vern Perry Stanfill believes there is no such thing as a coincidence. He believes that there are intersections in this life between people for a purpose and that the Lord can inspire His children to be a blessing to others.

Elder Stanfill enjoys ministering to others in the gospel, especially working with people one-on-one.

Born on August 8, 1957, to Jed and Peggy Stanfill, Elder Stanfill grew up on a cattle ranch near Townsend, Montana. He learned the value of hard work and cultivated a testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ. The third of four children, Elder Stanfill has two older brothers and a younger sister who have faithfully served in the Church.

“The hand of the Lord is present in our lives despite our weaknesses,” he said. “My wife and I are not perfect people. We don’t have a perfect family. We are just ordinary people who have tried to live our lives day by day and allow the Lord to be part of it.”

After serving a full-time mission in Toulouse, France, and pursuing a degree in agricultural economics at Brigham Young University, he met and married Alicia Cox. They were married on December 17, 1980, in the Salt Lake Temple.

After graduation, the Stanfills moved back to Montana so he could help manage the family ranch, dealing in cattle, hay, and grain operations. He sold the business in 1998 and began managing a portfolio of real estate and financial instruments, as well as structuring philanthropic and estate matters.

Elder Stanfill has been involved in aviation for both business and pleasure and holds both commercial fixed wing and rotorcraft ratings.

In addition to raising four daughters with his wife, Elder Stanfill had opportunities to serve in the Church as an elders quorum president, bishop, high councilor, stake president, and Area Seventy. He was serving in the Sixth Quorum of the Seventy at the time of his call to the First Quorum. ■



Mary R. Durham

*Second Counselor in the
Primary General Presidency*

While balancing the demands of home life, Church callings, career, and other responsibilities throughout her married life, Mary Richards Durham has noticed that when she and her husband put the Lord first, everything falls into place. “It’s a sweet thing. If you trust, the Lord blesses you,” she said.

It is a theme she has seen repeated many times. She was called to serve as the ward Young Women president while her husband served in the stake presidency. Later they served together as her husband presided over the Japan Tokyo Mission from 2000 to 2003. Now she will serve as the second counselor in the Primary general presidency as her husband begins his service as an Area Seventy.

“As we are yoked with each other and with the Lord, everything goes easier,” she said.

Mary Lucille Richards was born on March 15, 1954, in Portsmouth, Virginia, to L. Stephen Richards Jr. and Annette Richards. While her father pursued his medical degree, the family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, before settling in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Nurtured by the faith and love of her parents and a large extended family, she came to know that the gospel is true. “It was a happy experience to live the gospel. It wasn’t hard. It was fun,” Sister Durham said.

As a young woman, she was impressed with the importance of finding a worthy young man to marry and made it a matter of daily prayer and weekly fasting. After high school she attended Brigham Young University on a dance scholarship and met Mark Durham, who was attending the University of Utah. “I immediately recognized his goodness,” she said.

The couple married in June 1974 in the Salt Lake Temple. They have seven children.

Sister Durham has served as a stake Relief Society president, counselor in a ward Relief Society presidency, Gospel Doctrine instructor, ward Young Women president, and, most recently, as a member of the Primary general board. ■



Stephen W. Owen

Young Men General President

When Stephen W. Owen was 14 years old, his neighbor hired him to cut the grass in his spacious yard and weed his garden every week. “It took me three days to mow that lawn,” said a smiling Brother Owen, who was sustained on April 4, 2015, as the Young Men general president.

When young Stephen finally finished, his wise employer asked him to join him for a walk through the garden in order to point out a weed or two that had been overlooked.

“He told me that I needed to pull every weed,” he said. “That was my first job and it helped me understand what it meant to be duty-bound.”

Brother Owen would learn lessons that year that went far beyond lawn and garden care. For one, he discovered that satisfaction is found in doing hard things the right way. He also learned the value of mentors.

The neighbor expected only the best from Stephen. “It was like he was saying to me, ‘I know who you can become, and I want to help you.’”

Every young man in the Church, he added, needs such mentors to help him become the best priesthood holder he can be. “I have a lot of empathy for the youth,” he said. “I love them and I know this is a critical time that will set the pattern for the rest of their lives.”

Brother Owen served in the Texas San Antonio Mission and later served as Scoutmaster, ward Young Men president, bishop, high councilor, and stake president.

The Holladay, Utah, native also presided over the California Arcadia Mission from 2005 to 2008, where he served with his wife, Jane Stringham Owen. They were married on December 28, 1979, in the Provo Utah Temple. They have five children.

He was born on March 22, 1958, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Gordon and Carolyn Owen. He graduated from the University of Utah with a finance degree and is the president of Great Harvest Bread Company in Provo, Utah. ■



Douglas D. Holmes

*First Counselor in the
Young Men General Presidency*

This generation of youth have a greater capacity for obedience than any previous generation. I think that's part of the Lord's timetable and preparation for the days we live in," said Brother Douglas D. Holmes, who was sustained on April 4, 2015, as the first counselor in the Young Men general presidency.

Brother Holmes was born on February 27, 1961, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Dee W. and Melba Howell Holmes and grew up in Cottonwood Heights, Utah.

After serving in the Scotland Glasgow Mission from 1980 to 1982, Brother Holmes received a bachelor's degree in family science from Brigham Young University in 1986 and went on to earn a master of business administration degree from the university's Marriott School of Management.

After graduation, he was a management consultant for three years and then undertook a successful career in the telecommunications industry, becoming executive vice president of strategy and corporate development for the Media One group. From 2000 until his calling as a mission president in 2010 and again from 2013, he has been self-employed in investment and real estate development.

He has devoted much of his time and talents to nonprofit organizations, serving on the boards of the United Way of Davis County, Utah; Parents for Choice in Education; the Safe Harbor Women's Shelter in Davis County; and the Academy for Creating Enterprise.

He has served as ward mission leader, ward Young Men president, bishop, and most recently as a counselor in a stake presidency. He presided over the Michigan Detroit Mission from 2010 to 2013.

He married Erin Sue Toone on June 22, 1985, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of six children.

"We've seen the power of the word in our lives, whether it's been the word of the prophets or the word of the scriptures or the whisperings of the Holy Ghost," Brother Holmes said. ■



M. Joseph Brough

*Second Counselor in the
Young Men General Presidency*

During the three years M. Joseph Brough served as president of the Guatemala Guatemala City Central Mission (from 2011 to 2014), he lost both his father and his father-in-law.

Although his wife could have returned to the United States for the funerals, the couple decided in both cases that she should stay in Guatemala and continue with their missionary work. "We knew we were better off staying and working as well as we could," said Brother Brough, called on April 4, 2015, as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency. "That was exactly what her father and my father would expect of us."

Brother Brough was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on December 11, 1963, to Monte J. and Ada B. Brough. He spent his youth in Farmington, Utah, and Robertson, Wyoming. The family moved to Minnesota when Joseph's father, who would later serve as a member of the Seventy, was called as a mission president. Joseph was a senior in high school when his father completed his service as a mission president. Instead of returning to high school, Joseph took the high school equivalency exam and went straight to Weber State University in Ogden, Utah.

His parents, however, insisted he graduate from seminary with a four-year certificate. It was while attending seminary at Davis High School that he met his future wife, Emily Jane Thompson. They were married on April 25, 1985, in the Salt Lake Temple; they are the parents of four children.

Before the couple married, Brother Brough served as a missionary in the Guatemala Quetzaltenango Mission. His mission president, Jorge H. Perez, became a "most influential man in my life," he said.

The founder and owner of Rotational Molding of Utah, he earned a bachelor's degree in finance and a master of business administration from the University of Utah. In the Church he has served as a bishop, ward Young Men president and high counselor. ■



Before Thee, Lord, by Annette Everett

*“Before thee, Lord, I bow my head
And thank thee for what has been said.
My soul vibrates; my poor heart sings
When thy sweet Spirit strikes the strings.
How sweet thy word I’ve heard this day!
Be thou my guide, O Lord, I pray.
May I in patience do my part.
Seal thou the word upon my heart.”*
(Hymns, no. 158)



“May our Heavenly Father bless us that we may have the spirit of temple worship, that we may be obedient to His commandments, and that we may follow carefully the steps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the 185th Annual General Conference of the Church. “I testify that He is our Redeemer. He is the Son of God. He it is who came forth from the grave that first Easter morning, bringing with Him the gift of everlasting life for all of God’s children.”

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS