



Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As he reflected on his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Gary E. Stevenson concluded that his service in the Lord's kingdom and particularly as an Apostle will be more about *leading by serving* than about serving by leading.

"Jesus Christ considered Himself a servant," Elder Stevenson said during a press conference after he was sustained. "We too consider ourselves servants" (see Mark 10:44).

Elder Stevenson's call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came unexpectedly. He feels, however, that his service in the Church—especially as a General Authority Seventy from 2008 to 2012 and as Presiding Bishop since March 2012—has helped prepare him for his new responsibilities.

One of the most important things he has learned in the Lord's service is the great worth of Heavenly Father's children. Elder Stevenson looks forward to the increased opportunities he will have as an Apostle to associate with and testify to God's children throughout the world.

He also looks forward to continued association with those who lead the Lord's Church. "To think of sitting in council and being able to learn from [them], to be tutored by [them], and to feel of their strength and their testimonies of Jesus Christ and His Atonement," he said, "is something that I believe will be a beautiful experience."

Gary E. Stevenson was born on August 6, 1955, to Evan N. and Vera Jean Stevenson. He traces his family roots to Utah's early Latter-day Saint pioneers. He grew up in northern Utah's Cache Valley in a gospel-centered home where he learned the value of hard work and the importance of service. His father, "the bishop of my youth," often invited him along on visits to the many widows living in their ward. Lessons young Gary learned from his father about Christlike care and service left an indelible impression on him that would serve him well as Presiding Bishop.

"The bishops of the Church," he said, "really are my heroes."

Elder Stevenson's service in the Church began in earnest when he was called as a full-time missionary to the Japan Fukuoka Mission, where he developed a lasting love for the Japanese people and their language, which he still speaks fluently. Following his mission he attended Utah State University,

where he met Lesa Jean Higley. They married in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple in 1979 and are the parents of four sons. Elder Stevenson earned a degree in business administration, with an emphasis in marketing. He later cofounded and served as president and chief operating officer of one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers of exercise equipment.

The Stevenson family lived in Japan for several years. In 2004 Elder Stevenson was called as president of the Japan Nagoya Mission. Following his call to the Seventy in 2008, he served as a counselor and president in the Asia North Area. He was serving as Area President in 2011 when a major earthquake struck off the coast of northern Japan, triggering a massive tsunami that killed thousands. That experience proved to be a defining moment in his life.

Elder Stevenson helped shape the response of the Church, which provided food, supplies, support, and longer-term assistance.

"That was a manifestation of the Church of Jesus Christ filling one of its divinely appointed responsibilities of caring for the poor and needy," he recalls. He said it was a sacred privilege to "minister, and bless, and organize assistance."

Elder Stevenson said the Lord has counseled Latter-day Saints to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5). "In that," he said at the press conference, "comes the charge that we feel as members of the Quorum of the Twelve and as Apostles in providing Christlike service." ■

