

# Baptism Comes First



*Elder David B. Haight served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for 28 years. In this October 1976 general conference address, he encourages Latter-day Saints to share the gospel so that others can enjoy the blessings of a “forever family.”*

*What about the millions of our Heavenly Father’s children who, if they were baptized, could receive blessings which would lead to becoming an eternal family?*

**BY ELDER DAVID B. HAIGHT (1906–2004)**  
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**T**he family home evening manual . . . has a most inspiring first lesson. The theme is “Families Are Forever.”

Families are instructed to place a number of items on a table, among which are a marriage certificate, a temple recommend, a picture of a temple, and a baptismal certificate. . . .

Church members know that all of these items placed on the table have a relationship to temple marriage and the possibility of a

“forever family.” . . . I would like to highlight one of those items on the table—the baptismal certificate.

A “forever family” requires that couples possess baptismal certificates, be worthy members of the Church to qualify for temple recommends, and possess a marriage certificate signifying a celestial marriage. Now what about the millions of our Heavenly Father’s children who, if they were baptized, could receive blessings which would lead to becoming an eternal family?

Our full-time missionaries are having increasing success in all parts of the world in bringing souls into the waters of baptism. But their success could be multiplied many times if they had the enthusiastic cooperation of the members of the Church. It would



seem most members of the Church have a built-in reluctance to share the gospel with their friends and neighbors. Many of us take pride in referring to the growth of the Church or the success of the worldwide missionary effort but have never fellowshipped an acquaintance or a neighbor. When returning mission presidents are asked, “How could you have had more conversions in your mission?” we hear the same reply: “If only we could get the members to assist the missionaries by preparing their friends and neighbors to receive the elders.”


Have we forgotten our obligation? Have we forgotten what the Lord said?

“Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor. Therefore, they are left without excuse” (D&C 88:81–82). . . .

[Our missionaries] are trained to teach the gospel, to teach in an orderly, inspired manner, which hopefully leads to baptism. To a missionary, every hour is precious and must be productive. Do you realize missionaries baptize about one person for every 1,000 homes they tract? These same missionaries will baptize 600 people for every 1,000 who are taught in the homes of members—600 times more converts when members participate with conviction.

More of these exciting young servants of the Lord are in your wards and branches than ever before. Missionaries are going out better trained, better prepared, with higher hopes and aspirations. Every family that has accepted the gospel is obligated to share it with its neighbor. We can interest people in the gospel by just being natural and sincerely showing our love for them. . . .

On an airplane flight, a friend of mine engaged a lady in conversation. He told her about his trip to Anderson, South Carolina, to visit a fourth cousin because he was seeking information concerning some of his ancestors. He



**A** friend of mine asked a fellow passenger, “Would you like to know why I am interested in my ancestors who died long ago?”

asked this lady sitting next to him, “Would you like to know why I am interested in my ancestors who died long ago?”

“Yes, I would,” she replied.

“I was trying to find information about my forebears so I could perform certain work for them in the temple. Do you know where the Savior was during the three days His body lay in the tomb following the Crucifixion?”

“No. Where?”

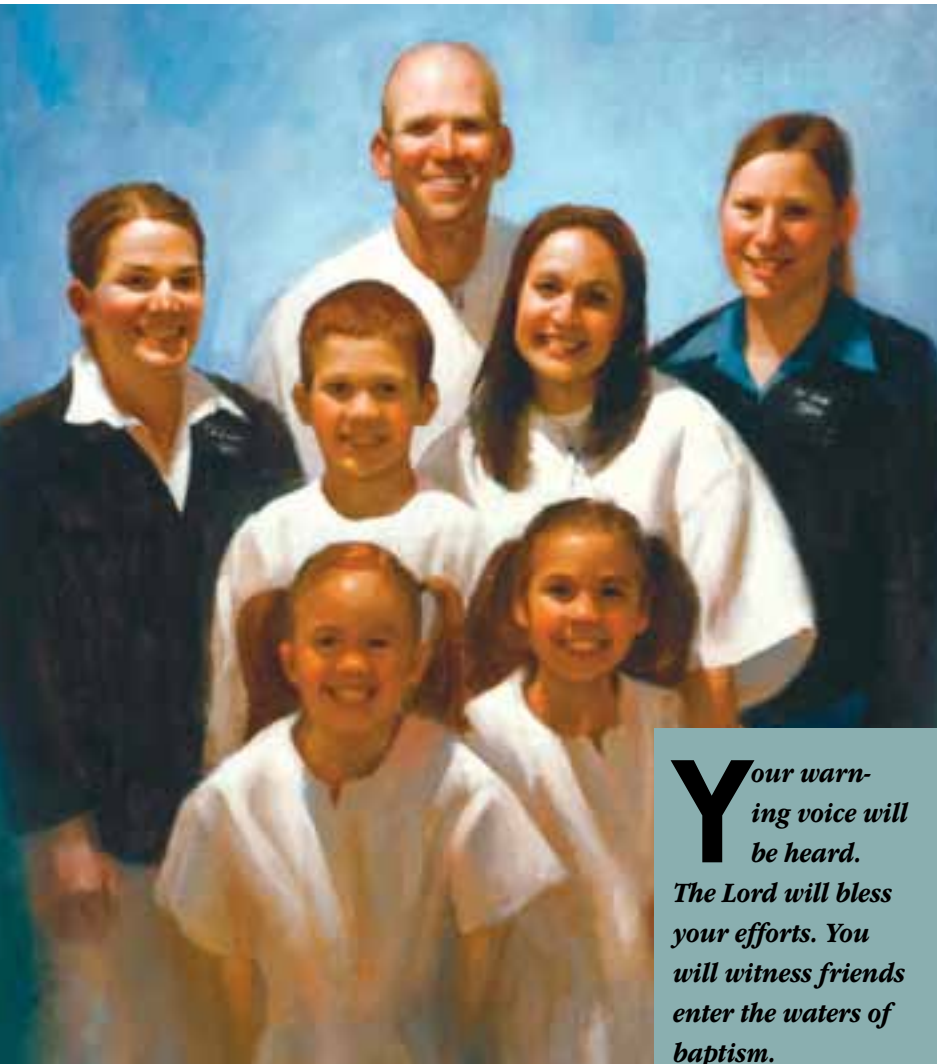
He continued, “Peter, the Apostle, said Christ preached to the spirits in prison who were disobedient in the days of Noah.” And then he said, “Now, do you think the Savior of the world would spend three days preaching to such people if they could not do anything about it?”

“No, I don’t. I have never thought of that,” she said.

He proceeded to explain baptism for the dead and the Resurrection. He quoted Paul: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:29).

“Do you remember the phrase ‘until death do you part’ being used when you were married? Your marriage contract ends when either of you dies.”

She replied, “I guess that’s right, but I had never thought of it that way.”



**Y**our warning voice will be heard.

*The Lord will bless your efforts. You will witness friends enter the waters of baptism.*

He continued, “My wife died the forepart of last month, but she is my wife eternally. We were married by one having the priesthood authority to bind in heaven that marriage performed here on earth. We belong to each other eternally; and furthermore, our children belong to us forever.”

Just before landing he said to her, “Do you know why we met? It is so you too can learn about the gospel and be sealed to your husband, your children, and your progenitors for eternity—to become an eternal family.”

Soon after this incident, he mailed a copy of Elder LeGrand Richards’s book, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, to this lady and her family and tucked his name card inside. The name of this woman eventually found its way to some full-time lady missionaries laboring in her

city in Pennsylvania. After the missionaries’ first contact with her, they wrote, “The lady we called upon was extremely gracious. You should have seen the light in her eyes when she met us. [The gentleman she met on the plane] had planted a most fertile seed with his testimony and confidence that he and his loved ones would be together after this life. As missionaries we felt at peace. We were impressed that the Lord would attend our efforts because this family was prepared.”

Now to you I would say, do you remember the essentials of a “forever family”: baptismal certificates, temple recommends, marriage certificate? But first your friends and neighbors must have a baptismal certificate. . . .

The Lord declared:

“For all men must repent and be baptized. . . .

“And by your hands I will work a marvelous work among the children of men, unto the convincing of many of their sins, that they may come unto repentance, and . . . may come unto the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 18:42, 44).

If you will involve your whole family—pray as a family for success; select a family

to fellowship; set goals and dates for accomplishment; commit yourselves to do whatever is appropriate; then fast and pray, and then pray and fast—I promise you that your warning voice will be heard. This is the day when the harvest is ripe, the press is full. The Lord will bless your efforts. You will witness friends enter the waters of baptism.

The lives you touch may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel. Families are forever, I testify to you in all humility, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*From an October 1976 general conference address; citations, punctuation, paragraphing, and capitalization standardized.*