

STEADFAST & SURE

Gordon B. Hinckley (June 23, 1910–January 27, 2008)

President Gordon B. Hinckley, 15th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, leaves a legacy of love and hope.

With love for the Lord and all people, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) dedicated his life to building up the kingdom of God on earth. Millions will miss and remember him. He charmed listeners with his sense of humor. He taught Church members to “be a little more kind, a little more thoughtful, a little more courteous.”¹ He was inspired to build smaller temples throughout the world, bringing them closer to the members. During his presidency 125 temples were built. He participated in 95 temple dedications or rededications.

He served as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for 20 years, 14 years as a counselor in the First Presidency, and nearly 13 years (since March 1995) as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His prophetic voice guided a worldwide Church with more than 13 million members in 171 nations. But his testimony started simply.

Spiritual Preparation

Gordon B. Hinckley was born on June 23, 1910, in Salt Lake City, Utah. One of the first spiritual experiences he remembered happened when he was five. He had an earache that made him cry from the pain. To comfort him, his father gave him a priesthood blessing. The pain lessened and went away.

As a boy, he started the habit of praying next to his bed before going to sleep. He remembered “thinking of what I had just done in speaking to my Father in Heaven in the name of His Son. I did not have a great knowledge of the gospel. But there was some kind of lingering peace and security in communing with the heavens in and through the Lord Jesus.”²

After graduating from high school, Gordon went to the University of Utah, just as the Great Depression struck the U.S. economy. Factories and businesses closed; many people lost their jobs. Despite limited finances, Gordon continued his university studies. He studied journalism, English, Greek, and Latin.

Serving a Mission

After graduating from college, he had to decide if he would go on a mission. He and his parents knew it was important for him to serve, but during the Depression most young men couldn’t afford a mission. Fortunately, Gordon’s mother had started a savings account for his mission. She died before he got his mission call, but the money she had saved started him on his way.

Shortly after Elder Hinckley arrived in England, he got sick, and “it seemed that everyone was prejudiced against us,” he recalled. “Those first few weeks, because of illness and the opposition which we felt, I was discouraged.” During this difficult time, he wrote a letter to his father, saying that he felt he was wasting his time and money.

His father sent back a short note: “Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work.”³ Elder Hinckley did just that: he



stayed and worked hard.

During his mission, his testimony grew as he read the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. “That knowledge became the foundation of my life, standing on the footings of the answered prayers of my childhood.”⁴

Many years after his mission, President Hinckley testified, “Everything good that has happened to me since then is the result of having served a mission. That had greater effect upon my life in terms of giving me direction than any other experience of my life.”⁵ A few years ago, he said, “How grateful I am for the mission which I was on more than 60 years ago. . . . Going on a mission did something for me . . . that has value every day of my life. I would like to see every boy have the opportunity of a mission.”⁶

His Love of Family and Youth

Two years after returning home from England, he married Marjorie Pay, who grew up living across the street from him. They were married in 1937 and had five children, 25 grandchildren, and 62 great-grandchildren. Sister Hinckley passed away in April 2004.

Let us remember what President Hinckley taught and stood for. He was a special witness for the Savior, His gospel, and His Church. President Hinckley taught us to be faithful, to stand a little taller, to be kinder family members. He taught us to help new members by being a friend, giving them a responsibility in the Church, and nurturing them with the Lord’s word. He encouraged us to follow the Savior’s commandment: “What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? . . . Even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). **NE**

NOTES

1. “Let Us Live the Gospel More Fully,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 103.
2. “My Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 70.
3. “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *New Era*, July 2000, 7.
4. *Ensign*, May 2000, 71.
5. *Church News*, Dec. 7, 2002.
6. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 365.



THE PROPHET

Spoke to YOUTH

President Gordon B. Hinckley loved the youth of the Church. Shortly after he was sustained as President of the Church in 1995, he said to the press: “We are particularly proud of our youth. I think we have never had a stronger generation of young men and women than we have today. . . . They are going forward with constructive lives, nurturing themselves both intellectually and spiritually. We have no fears or doubts concerning the future of this work.”¹

And in general conference he said: “I love the youth of the Church. I have said again and again that I think we have never had a better generation than this. How grateful I am for your integrity, for your ambition to train your minds and your hands to do good work, for your love for the word of the Lord, and for your desire to walk in paths of virtue and truth and goodness.”²



President Hinckley’s Six B’s

One of the most memorable messages given by President Hinckley for teens was the six B’s. In a special fire-side, broadcast around the world in November 2000, President Hinckley taught teens six ways to be:

Be grateful. “Thank the Lord for His marvelous Church. . . . Thank Him for all that it offers you. Thank Him for friends and loved ones, for parents and brothers and sisters, for family. Let a spirit of thanksgiving guide and bless your days and nights. Work at it. You will find it will yield wonderful results.”

Be smart. “The Lord wants you to educate your minds and hands, whatever your chosen field. . . . Become a workman of integrity in the world that lies ahead of you.”

Be clean. “We live in a world that is filled with filth and sleaze, a world that reeks of evil. . . . Avoid evil talk. . . . Don’t waste your time in destructive entertainment. . . . I don’t care what the variety [of illicit drugs] may be. They will destroy you if pursued. . . . In matters of sex . . . you know when you are walking on dangerous ground, when it is so easy to stumble and slide into the pit of transgression. I plead with you to be careful, to stand safely back from the cliff of sin over which it is so easy to fall. Keep yourselves clean.”

Be true. “You who are members of this Church must have a loyalty to it. . . . Be true to your own convictions. You know what is right, and you know what is wrong.”

Be humble. “I believe the meek and humble are those who are teachable. They are willing to learn.”

Be prayerful. “You need His help. . . . You cannot do it alone. You will come to realize that and recognize that more and more as the years pass. So live that in good conscience you can speak with the Lord.”³



TEENS TEXT TO WEAR SUNDAY BEST

Cell phones throughout the world spread the news of the passing of our beloved prophet Gordon B. Hinckley on Sunday evening, January 27. Within hours additional text messages filled the airwaves with teens encouraging each other to dress in their Sunday best instead of casual clothes for school the following day in honor of President Hinckley.

“I wore my white shirt, my very best, to remember the prophet,” said Daniel, a student at a middle school in Salt Lake City, Utah.

One surprised parent in Mesa, Arizona, found her daughter up early and ironing a skirt for Monday’s day at school. She said after her daughter, Mackenzie, received many text messages she and her friends decided to wear church clothes to school in honor of the prophet. So did thousands of others.

President Hinckley’s grandson, James Pearce, explained his understanding of why so many youth wore their best clothing to school. “He loved the youth so much. He really cared about them, and they felt that love. They acknowledged it with their behavior.”

That same spirit was exhibited along the route from the memorial services to the cemetery, as youth and adults waved white handkerchiefs and held up canes as a farewell gesture to the prophet.

From around the World

President Hinckley was the only prophet youth around the world knew while in their teen years. He was beloved and revered. Here are some teens’ and young adults’ feelings about President Hinckley:

I’ve never met President Hinckley, but when I see his picture, I feel good. He is almost like another father to me. I know he is a prophet. The six B’s made a big impression on me. Being clean and being humble struck me and led me to repent of my pride. I tried to follow the prophet.

So-Ra L., 19, Korea

President Gordon B. Hinckley was a true man of faith. His teachings helped me become a better young man—to have more faith and patience, to pray regularly, to be obedient to my parents and to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Gazelem C., 15, Philippines

When I was about nine years old, President Hinckley came to a conference in Geneva, Switzerland. I remember watching him come into the hall, and he radiated love and kindness. I was very excited to see him. President Hinckley was a great example for me. It always impressed me when he spoke to the youth in general conference because I knew what he said came from God. I had great trust in him.

Annina S., 17, Switzerland



President Hinckley’s many teachings

made me feel that he really understood the challenges of young people in this latter day. He always warned young people, reminding us not to go astray.

Yu C., 20, Taiwan

I will never forget how I felt the moment in which President Hinckley arrived at Pacaembu Stadium. I felt the Spirit of God intensely. When President Hinckley was ending his talk, he said to us, “You can leave here, go home, and forget everything that I said here today, but never forget that I love you.” I will never forget those words that have meant so much to me.

Dryele M., 20, Brazil

I love President Hinckley. His quiet dignity makes me feel at peace and reassures me that I am being led by a man of God. When I saw him, I couldn’t help but smile and feel thankful.

Candice M., 15, New Zealand

NOTES

1. Quoted in Jeffrey R. Holland, “President Gordon B. Hinckley: Stalwart and Brave He Stands,” *Liabona*, June 1995 (special edition), 4; *Ensign*, June 1995, 2.
2. “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 70.
3. See “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Liabona*, Apr. 2001, 30–41; *New Era*, Jan. 2001, 4–15; *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.