



SERVING WITH ALL HIS HEART

Elder Dale G. Renlund, the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has always said yes to serving the Lord.



Conversion is the scriptural phrase for a change of heart (see Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14). Elder Dale G. Renlund knows all about that. As a new Apostle, Elder Renlund teaches the gospel of Jesus Christ to help people have a change of heart.

In his professional career he also helped people have a change of heart—literally. Before serving as a General Authority, he was a heart transplant doctor.

He was known for the good care he showed to his patients and co-workers. One doctor said Elder Renlund “brought out the best in people. He listened well and cared, and he was immensely interested in the success of those who worked with him.”

A Swedish Upbringing

Dale Gunnar Renlund was born in Utah, USA, on November 13, 1952, but he and his family spoke Swedish at home. His parents had moved from Sweden to Utah in 1950 in order to be sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. (There were no temples in Sweden or Europe then.)

When Dale was 11, his father was called to be a building missionary in Sweden, so the family moved back for a time. There, Dale had a memorable spiritual experience.

After reading the Book of Mormon, he prayed and asked if it was true. He recalls, “I had a distinct impression: ‘I’ve been telling you all along that it’s true.’”

A few years after his family returned to Utah, Elder Renlund was called to serve his own full-time mission in Sweden. He describes it as a lot of work but also a wonderful experience: “It was life-changing in terms of commitment and deciding to do the best one can to be a disciple of Christ.”

Marriage and Medical Education

Following his mission, he was an excellent student at the University of Utah, receiving a bachelor’s degree in chemistry and then a medical degree there. After graduating, Elder Renlund was happy to be accepted for further study by Johns Hopkins University, one of the finest medical schools in the United States.

By this time, he had married Ruth Lybbert, whom he met in his ward after his mission. “Aside from the decision to be active in the Church,” Elder Renlund said, “marrying Ruth has been the most amazing thing in my life.” They were married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1977. Their daughter, Ashley, was born in 1980, one week after Dale



graduated from medical school.

To attend Johns Hopkins University, the Renlunds moved to Baltimore, Maryland. In addition to being a busy doctor and a young husband and father, Dale was called to be the bishop of the Baltimore Ward.

Growing through Trials

A year after moving to Baltimore, the Renlunds faced a severe trial: Sister Renlund was diagnosed with cancer. She had to have two surgeries and nine months of chemotherapy. Struggling to take care of Ruth and their daughter, Elder Renlund recalled, “I was hurting, and it seemed as if my prayers wouldn’t go heavenward.”

One time when he brought Ruth home from the hospital, she was weak, but they wanted to pray together. He asked Sister Renlund if she would pray. “Her first words were, ‘Our Father in Heaven, we thank Thee for priesthood power that makes it so that no matter what happens, we can be together forever.’”

In that moment he felt a special closeness to his wife and to God. “What I’d previously understood about eternal families in my mind, I now understood in my heart,” he said. “Ruth’s illness changed the course of our lives.”

Called of God

After Elder Renlund finished his medical training, they moved back to Utah. He had a successful medical career and served as a stake president and then as an Area Seventy in the Utah Area. In April 2009 he was called to be a General Authority Seventy. His first assignment: to serve in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency.

One Sunday in central Congo he asked the members what challenges they were facing. An old gentleman in the back of the room stood and said, “Elder Renlund, how can we have any challenges? We have the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Elder Renlund recalls, “I want to be like these Congolese Saints, who pray for food every day, are grateful every day for food, are grateful for their families. They have nothing, but they have everything.”

On September 29, 2015, President Thomas S. Monson called him to be an Apostle, telling him, “God called you; the Lord made it known to me.”

Elder Renlund said, “I don’t feel qualified, with the exception that I do know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.” **NE**

FAMILY AND AFRICA PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE RENLUND FAMILY; FROM LEFT, PHOTOGRAPH OF STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN, BY THINKSTOCK; ELDER RENLUND AS A CHILD, 1953; WITH HIS FAMILY, 1963; WITH HIS WIFE, RUTH, AND DAUGHTER, ASHLEY, CIRCA 1983; SERVING IN THE AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA PRESIDENCY; WEDDING PHOTOGRAPH © NEWMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, 1977; WITH THE TWO OTHER NEWLY CALLED APOSTLES, ELDERS STEVENSON AND RASBAND, 2015; PHOTOGRAPH AT ROOTSTECH 2016 BY KRISTEN MURPHY, DESERET NEWS