



TRY THESE SEVEN IDEAS
TO HELP YOU LEARN
MORE FROM THE WORDS
OF THE PROPHETS.

STUDYING GENERAL CONFERENCE

By Matthew Garrett

Have you ever found yourself holding a conference issue of the *Ensign* or visiting conference.lds.org and wondering how to even begin reading it with so many talks to choose from? Our Church leaders have counseled us often to study the words from general conference. In fact, President Thomas S. Monson has said, “I urge you to study the messages, to ponder their teachings, and then to apply them in your life.”¹ He has also promised, “As we read and study [the conference issues], we will be additionally taught and inspired. May we incorporate into our daily lives the truths found therein.”²

But that doesn’t mean it’s easy to just dive into the conference issue. The following tips can help make studying the conference talks in the *Ensign* more meaningful.

1 LOOK FOR INVITATIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

General conference is one way the prophets and apostles invite us to do things to change our lives. Each time you encounter one of these invitations, jot it down (for some examples, see the box at bottom right). As you make a list, you'll get a clearer idea of ways you can become better.

Also look for words of encouragement. Something a Church leader has said may be just what you or a friend needs to hear in a particular situation.

2 WATCH FOR CAUSE-AND-EFFECT STATEMENTS

Cause-and-effect statements include an action and the blessings that come by following it. For example, President Thomas S. Monson said, "A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God."³ In other words, if you are asking Heavenly Father for answers to questions you have, then you will receive them more readily when you show obedience to His commandments.

Such statements that show cause and effect help us because they tell us how to receive specific blessings we need. As you review conference, make a list of the blessings you read about and the things you need to do to receive them (see D&C 130:21 and D&C 59:23). As you do so, take notice of the blessings Heavenly Father wants us to enjoy.

3 PREPARE QUESTIONS

Think of the deep questions you have—about life, your family, friends, your calling,

school, or anything else on your mind. As you study Church leaders' messages, prayerfully ask the Lord for help with the issues you are facing. Sometimes the answer may come directly from the words you read, but at other times the Spirit may prompt you with the guidance or strength you need to deal with your situation because you've studied the words of prophets. Either way, you'll discover that God communicates to us through Church leaders (see D&C 1:38). As you receive answers and promptings, be sure to write them down and apply them in your life.

4 LOOK FOR LISTS

Church leaders frequently explain a series of steps or principles we can follow to accomplish goals or improve our lives. Sometimes these lists are easy to find because they are numbered or bulleted. Sometimes, however, lists may occur as a series in a sentence or spread out over several paragraphs.

For example, President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, recently listed several roles of

RECENT INVITATIONS

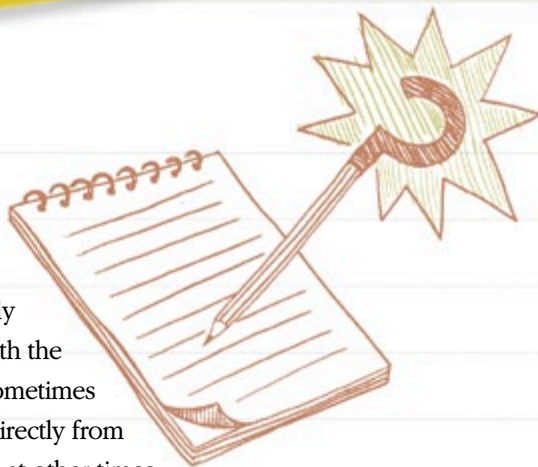
Here are some invitations from President Monson's April 2013 address "Come, All Ye Sons of God."

★ "To each of us comes the mandate to share the gospel of Christ. . . . Lift up your voices and testify to the true nature of the Godhead. Declare your witness concerning the Book of Mormon. Convey the glorious and beautiful truths contained in the plan of salvation."

★ "Study the scriptures each day both individually and with our families."

★ "Young men, I hope you appreciate the sacrifices which your parents so willingly make in order for you to serve [a mission]."

What other invitations can you find in the April 2013 general conference?



Your Conference Experiences

We want to hear about your successes in reviewing general conference as well as any other study tips you may have. Or share with us what you've done to make a specific conference talk part of your life. Write to us by going to newera.lds.org and clicking "Submit Your Work" or by emailing us at newera@ldschurch.org.

YOUR PERSONAL COPY

"I hope you will get your copy of the [*Ensign*] and underline the pertinent thoughts and keep it with you for continual reference. No text or volume outside the standard works of the Church should have such a prominent place on your personal library shelves."

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), "In the World But Not of It" [devotional address at Brigham Young University, May 14, 1968], speeches.byu.edu.



missionaries: "The elders came as comforters, as teachers, as servants of the Lord, as authorized ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁴

A deeper understanding of these roles could come from prayerfully studying each one listed, including finding scriptures about them. You can gain a deeper understanding of the gospel by studying other such lists given at conference.

5 WATCH FOR REPEATED PHRASES AND OVERALL THEMES

Repetition is a great teacher. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught, "Prophets have always taught by repetition; it is a law of learning. . . . We continue to hear messages on similar issues because the Lord is teaching and impressing upon our minds and hearts certain foundational principles of great eternal importance that must be understood and acted upon before we can move on to other things."⁵

Often, the more something is repeated, the more important it is for us at that moment. As you study conference, look for recurring doctrines, themes, and ideas. You might even review notes from

previous conferences to identify topics that are emphasized over time.

6 STUDY PARTICULAR WORDS, SCRIPTURE REFERENCES, AND NOTES

If a word seems unusual or sticks out in your mind, study it. Try to figure out why the speaker chose that specific word and what deeper meaning it has. To study a topic in more depth, read the scripture references and any notes listed at the end of a talk, or look in the "Topic Index" at the front of the *Ensign* to find more talks on the subject. In each May and November *New Era*, you'll also find a list of frequently used scriptures from each conference.

7 SET GOALS TO PRACTICE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

As you study the words of the prophets, set goals that will help you grow. Then keep track of how you're doing by writing in your journal. Measuring your development will make a huge difference in your success. **NE** *Matthew Garrett lives in Washington, USA.*

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, "A Word at Closing," *Ensign*, May 2010, 113.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Closing Remarks," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 109.
3. Thomas S. Monson, "Obedience Brings Blessings," *Ensign*, May 2013, 89.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "And a Little Child Shall Lead Them," *Ensign*, May 2012, 7.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "General Conference—No Ordinary Blessing," *Ensign*, Sept. 2011, 4–5.