

Children and Youth Initiative

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SPEAKER 1: I express my love to Elder Holland. He got me into this job, actually, and it's been this huge blessing in my life. And Reverend Dr. Teal, thank you. Thank you so much. And our musicians have left, but I'll find them later, because they are in our department too, and thank them for their beautiful remarks.

I'm pleased to speak today about the ministry that the Church is really launching here this coming January 1st for children and youth. It'll be a brief summary, and you've seen several things on this before. I don't know that there will be anything particularly new that we'll speak about, but I hope that what happens for us today is that the Spirit of the Lord will enter our hearts regarding how much importance He places on the rising generation.

So much so, that when we fail to do our duty in this regard and actually offend one of these little ones, that it would be better that a millstone were hanged about our neck, and we were drowned in the depths of the sea. I love the rising generation, the children, the youth of the Church. I have nine children of my own—well, I share them with my wife—and we have 19 grandchildren, going on 20.

And I'm very familiar with that sound, and it doesn't even cause me to break stride in a message. I love you. I appreciate the work that you do, the lifting and the blessing that occurs at your hands, often in the middle of long days and apparently fruitless efforts. I bear testimony that there is no seed planted, when done so in the service of the Master, that goes unnoticed or is wasted.

There are two Book of Mormon passages, which I won't reference, that talk about the importance of the rising generation and that it was, in fact, the very fragile nature of the rising generation that put the entire society at risk. And caring for and ministering to the rising generation is not something that the Church can outsource to just anybody. For a long time, we've outsourced that in some measure to the Boy Scouts of America, and it's been a wonderful service.

But at this point in this dispensation, it's become, at the direction of our prophets, seers, and revelators, something that we must take on as a Church that we cannot outsource. I'd like to review with you a slide of several recent interventions or initiatives that have been launched, and I want you to think about the impact on the rising generation of the following initiatives.

The first was in 2012, when the age for missionary service was lowered. Now you think about that for just a minute—I'm not going to remark on all of these points—but think about this in relation to what it's done for children and youth and the rising generation. In 2013, just a few months after the lowering of the age of missionary service, came Come Follow Me, a curriculum designed specifically for youth.

It may be of interest to you to know that no one below the Quorum of the Twelve was aware of either one of these two initiatives that were in preparation for some time prior to their announcement. But yet, it seems that they have come with divine design. In 2015, a great effort was initiated, which continues until today, of improving the Sabbath day, our ability to worship as families and as people on the Sabbath.

Think about the impact on the rising generation. That was a topic in recent leadership meetings that preceded general conference yet again. In 2016, Teaching in the Savior's Way, an effort that was meant to alter the way that we teach and the way that we learn in Church settings and in the home, to try and make it easier for us to really take into our hearts the word of the Lord. In January of 2018, Come, Follow Me for Melchizedek Priesthood and

Relief Society, this initiative that lasted—and you can click that for me, Adam, thank you—that lasted just one year, introduced into our quorums and into our Relief Societies the notion of counseling together about the challenges that we face, and think about that in long term, what that will do—it has done, and will do, for children and youth.

The next one is in April of 2018: changes in the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. This is where high priests and elders quorums came together for the express purpose of giving more resources to the bishop so that he could minister to the needs of children and youth. And also in April of 2018 came ministering, including involving young women in the call to minister to fellow Saints.

In October of 2018, there were expanded responsibilities of elders quorums and Relief Societies that include things like the ward mission leader reporting up through the elders quorum president and the temple and family history leader the same way, instead of to the bishop, giving the bishop a little bit more range to serve the needs of youth. In January of 2019 came the integrated curriculum. We call that Come, Follow Me for Primary and for Sunday School, as well as for individuals and families.

And with that came the reduced schedule on Sunday, providing more time on Sunday for children and youth in the home. So as you think about these things, think about what it's doing for children and youth. The next one occurred just this weekend, where Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women organizations were read tools, so to speak, organizationally to provide additional support for children and youth. And the last one, which comes January 1st, and won't be the last, I don't think, but it comes January 1st in 2020. It's as far as our little line goes, anyway. It will be the entire children and youth effort.

By training, I'm a designer, an instructional designer. That's where I received my postgraduate instruction, and I know what it means to design something and to put steps together, all to build toward some end. I bear testimony that this series of steps were not designed on earth, but they were designed by a loving Heavenly Father who wants to reach out to His sons and daughters, and through us, and giving us the blessing of standing in His place, to actually be His hands and do that ministry. What a wonderful thing that is.

Well, I'd like to show a couple of video clips that you may have seen, or you may not have seen. Some of them—there's a possibility some of you would have seen some of them—of test stakes around the world. We've been working on this effort for the last year, and we've sent video crews out to try and capture something that might look like something that we can actually move forward with. And I'd like to show these two videos back-to-back. Just show them two videos—just in sequence, if you will, please, Adam. Thank you.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- My name is Joshua [INAUDIBLE]. I am a priest in Commerce, Ohio. Filmmaking and video, it makes me happy. It's a way to make people realize that even the mundane things around them can be really beautiful. We, as a quorum, for a while, struggled to get everyone together. So we all sat down at our leader's house, and we threw out activities that we wanted to do and goals we had for the summer.

And right when I threw out I like filmmaking, and everybody immediately was like, "Let's just make a movie." That's the great thing about the initiative, is it lets you focus on not only your personal goals but the goals of others, and everyone can help each other out. And so you're learning teamwork, and you're sharing and teaching, and you're helping each other out while also having fun, and that's going to help you feel like you're part of the quorum.

You're learning skills that are going to be helpful for the rest of your life, and you're also learning how to be more Christlike and compassionate while you try and go for that greater goal of getting back to your Heavenly Father.

- My name is Danielle Patalinghug. I am eight years old, and I live in Cebu City. When I got my book, I wrote in the social I wanted to give food to the homeless people. And then, I drew me and giving food to the homeless people.

- This is an answered prayer. We talked as parents, and we said, “Oh, we should be part of this program. We should work as a team, as a family.” So we have this food business, catering business. So sometimes we have, let’s say, an excess, and she’s like, “OK, let’s go tonight and share this food to the homeless.”

- My dad drove around, and then when we saw some homeless people, we counted how many. And example, there were five, so we took five and gave them to them. And we did it until the food ran out.

- She is so happy and so excited to do it. So that’s how eager she is in helping, especially those who are homeless.

- I wanted to feed them so they could be happy, and they could sleep with a full stomach. My intellectual goal is reading books to my little sisters. It helps them with their reading skills and helping them hearing new words and good habits and safety tips for kids. She really likes it; it’s like she got addicted to the book.

- For us as parents, we need to support them 100 percent. The foremost important role of the parents is to teach them here, at home, and follows what we are learning in the Church.

- Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are happy that I am reading to my little sisters and that I gave food to the homeless people, because it’s a very good thing to do to the homeless people.

[END PLAYBACK]

SPEAKER 1: Future president of the Philippines, I think, but do you get a sense for what this is about? As people lean in and begin to grow, and what happens when an 8-year-old girl is given the opportunity and reinforced by her Church, that she, with her parents’ support obviously, reaches out to feed people who are homeless, what that does for her, what that means.

I’m sure that we cannot begin to fathom the collective good that will occur as room is given for the influence of the Savior in the lives of children and youth. If we look at the next slide, we capture the vision statement. The vision of this program is to strengthen the rising generation’s faith in Jesus Christ and help children, youth, and their families progress along the covenant path as they meet life’s challenges.

We want to help children and youth become worthy disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ through gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development. And those become three main areas that are not mutually exclusive in any way, but areas that help do this. And the outcomes of this, then, are that children and youth will know their eternal identity and purpose. They’ll become acquainted with their Heavenly Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

They’ll deepen their conversion to Jesus Christ, getting His gospel into their hearts and being inspired to choose to follow Him. For the young men, they’ll learn to fulfill Aaronic Priesthood duties. All will participate together in the work of salvation to develop personally, with parental support and leaders assisting as needed, and be worthy to attend the temple and have enduring joy on the covenant path.

I think we’ll skip the next—in view of time, we’ll skip the next little video clip, if you can navigate just to the next slide. Thank you, Adam; appreciate that. We focus on four areas of growth. In the same way that the Savior grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man, while we won’t grow in the same way that He grew, we

can try to do this—follow the same pattern and grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually—and then we apply those.

So that's the balance component, that it's not just any one thing. She said her social goal was feeding the homeless, and her intellectual goal was reading with her sisters. Well, do those not have a spiritual component, as well? And they all—it's all integrated; we don't want to get into a hardening of the categories, as my father would say. But as you go to the next slide, we'll see that we apply that growth as we try and learn the gospel, as we try and serve other people, and as we develop personally and try and acquire the attributes of the Savior—as we do that.

And I think we'll skip a few more slides. Let's go to slide—that's good; play that one. This is an activities piece.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- I am in charge of activity days, ages 8 through 11. And we're implementing the new children and youth initiative. As I learned about how it was based on the Luke 2:52 scripture and that these kids would be making their own goals, I thought that was amazing. We had the kids talk about the different areas of development and the intellectual, the social, the spiritual, and the physical.

And then they did an activity where they just wrote down all the things that they wanted to do in each area, and then they highlighted or circled the one they wanted to start with first.

- My name is Heidi, and this is a vision board. This one is for cooking, because I'm not that good at it. So for my intellectual, I want to learn how to play the piano a little more, and I want to learn how to speak Spanish.

- "How do you feel like this is helping you be more like Christ?" Which I thought they would not know what to answer, but they were really good about that. Some of the really cute ones, they said, "Well, Christ, He knew lots of things. So if I know a thing, I'll be like Him, because He knew things."

- I put this one right here, because I want to, when I get married one day, I want to be sealed in the temple.

- In physical, I want to travel around the world.

- Hockey for physical, then there's scriptures for spiritual.

- What's your goal; how is it bringing you closer to Christ? What steps can you take? Because they just want a goal. And we talked about, you have to choose things to do that will get you there.

- What I got here is for physical: I want to eat healthier and ride a plane one day.

- I just really like the fact that the goal is for those kids to have the responsibility themselves, that they are able to make their own choices and get to know themselves. I think that's the best part about it. They are in charge, and our job is just to lead them on.

[END PLAYBACK]

SPEAKER 1: Adam, can you get us to slide 17? Just keep this. This all is good stuff, but you'll find out about all that stuff in later meetings and other places. The presentation that will follow the break, we'll introduce you to the mobile app called Gospel Learning—Gospel Living, excuse me—Gospel Living, which supports this effort. It will also have resources on the web and resources in print. Some of which have already been distributed, and more of which will be distributed toward the end of the year, before we get to January 1st.

I'd like to just conclude this presentation with my own personal witness. I'm not in charge of anything. I guess I'm supposed to take all the blame for what happens in the Priesthood and Family Department, because that's my job,

to lead that. But we're taking direction from our leaders and trying to present and put together something that would be acceptable to the Lord and bless His children as they move forward.

I bear testimony that the Lord's hand has been in this work. And while you won't, in your day-to-day work, really apply the specific material—use the materials, or apply the specific processes associated with the children and youth development effort, you may in your homes, with your children and with grandchildren. And I just want to bear testimony that God's hand has been in it.

This is built on a foundation of relationships. Relationships first with Deity, relationships with family, relationships with peers. It's built on a foundation of revelation that the whole notion here is to find out what Heavenly Father would like us to do, and where we might be pleasing to Him, and where we might serve Him best, and knowing that only by revelation. And then, on the principle of agency, one that we get to choose, and our Heavenly Father honors that.

And when we use our agency to follow Him, His Spirit is sent in whatever measure we need to accomplish what we're setting out to do in righteous ways, in whatever of the four areas we're talking about. May God bless you and your ministry to a rising generation, which doesn't just end at age 18. It keeps going, and all of the young adults that you serve fit in that category, as well. I bear this witness that Jesus is the Christ, that God is our Heavenly Father, that They live, and They guide and direct our work in this Church this day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.