

April Conference Notebook

"What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken; . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

Getting More Out of General Conference

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Even though we say “amen” at the end of the last session of general conference, the spiritual feast doesn’t have to end there. It can continue as we study and apply the teachings from that conference. Over the years, prophets have encouraged us to do just that. For example, in 1946, President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) urged members to let the conference talks “be the guide to their walk and talk during the next six months.” He explained, “These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day.”¹

In 1988, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) echoed that counsel when he taught, “For the next six months, your

conference edition of the *Ensign* should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently.”²

In closing the October 2008 general conference, President Thomas S. Monson reaffirmed the importance of studying conference talks. He said: "May we long remember what we have heard during this general conference. The messages which have been given will be printed in next month's *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines. I urge you to study them and to ponder their teachings."³

As you study and ponder the conference messages, what can you do to make them more meaningful in



your life? Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for, receive, and act upon the inspired words:

Prepare to receive inspiration. Whether you watch, listen to, or read the conference talks, you must open your heart and mind to divine inspiration. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that no matter how effectively a speaker may teach, “the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.” He explained that receiving inspiration “requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception.”⁴

The following ideas can help you prepare to be taught by the Spirit:

1. Set aside time and create a distraction-free environment in which you can receive spiritual promptings.
2. Seek divine guidance through prayer.
3. List personal questions or concerns for which you are seeking answers.

Understand the messages. Living prophets and apostles teach, expound, exhort, warn, and testify.

Taking a close look at their talks will help you understand their messages more fully. Here are some effective study methods:

- **Ask questions.** For example: What does the Lord want me to learn from this message? How does this talk enhance my understanding of a gospel principle or a verse of scripture? What stories are used to illustrate gospel principles, and what do I learn from them?
- **Write an outline.** Pay attention to what the speaker’s



WRITE IT AND REFLECT ON IT

“Out of all we have heard,

there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “An Humble and a Contrite Heart,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 103; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 88.



outline seems to be. Divide the talk into sections and write a summary that explains the main idea presented in each section.

- **Identify various elements within the talk.** Take note of such things as doctrines, scriptures, stories, warnings, lists, testimonies, invitations to action, and blessings promised for obeying counsel.

- **Study the talk more than once.**

It is necessary to study gospel truths more than once to grasp their full meaning and significance. Each time you study, make note of new insights you receive.

Act upon what you learn. If you prayerfully study the talks, you will see how the messages apply in your life. You can know how to make meaningful changes by asking questions like, What does the Lord want me to do with what I learn? and What have I learned that will help me in my family, work, or Church calling? Write down impressions so you do not forget them. As you do so, you will be inspired to live the teachings and you will receive the promised blessings.

General conference is the time when the Lord reveals His will through His servants to you. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught of conference talks, “No text or volume outside the standard works of the Church should have such a prominent place on your personal library shelves—not for their rhetorical excellence or eloquence of delivery, but for the concepts which point the way to eternal life.”⁵ ■

NOTES

1. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, 68.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Come unto Christ, and Be Perfected in Him,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 84.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Until We Meet Again,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 106.
4. David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liahona*, Sept. 2007, 17, 20; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61, 64.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, *In the World but Not of It*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (May 14, 1968), 3.

To read, watch, or listen to general conference addresses, visit conference.lds.org.

