



By President
Thomas S. Monson

FOLLOW THE Prophets

I served in the United States Navy toward the end of World War II. I was a seaman, the lowest possible rank in the navy. Then I qualified to be Seaman First Class, after which I qualified to be Yeoman Third Class.

World War II ended, and I was later discharged. But I made a decision that if ever I went back into the military, I wanted to serve as a commissioned officer. I thought, "No more mess kitchens for me, no more scrubbing the decks, if I can avoid it."

After I was discharged, I joined the United States Naval Reserve. I went to drill every Monday night. I studied hard that I might qualify academically. I took every kind of examination imaginable: mental, physical, and emotional. Finally, there came the beautiful news: "You have been accepted to receive the commission of an ensign in the United States Naval Reserve."

I gleefully showed it to my wife, Frances, and said, "I made it! I made it!" She hugged me and said, "You've worked hard enough to achieve it."

But then something happened. I was called to be a counselor in my ward bishopric. The bishop's council meeting was on the same evening as my navy drill meeting. I knew there was a terrible conflict. I knew that I didn't have the time to pursue the Naval Reserve *and* my bishopric duties. What was I to do? A decision had to be made.

I prayed about it. Then I went to see the man who was my stake president when I was a boy, Elder Harold B. Lee

(1899–1973), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I sat down across the table from him. I told him how much I valued that commission. In fact, I showed him the copy of the letter of appointment I had received.

After pondering the matter for a moment, he said to me, "Here's what you should do, Brother Monson. You write a letter to the Bureau of Naval Affairs and tell them that because of your call as a member of the bishopric, you can't accept that commission in the United States Naval Reserve."

My heart sank. He added, "Then write to the commandant of the Twelfth Naval District in San Francisco indicating that you would like to be discharged from the reserve."

I said, "Elder Lee, you don't understand the military. Of course they will decline to give me that commission if I refuse to accept it, but the Twelfth Naval District isn't going to let me off. With a war brewing in Korea, a noncommissioned officer will surely be called up. If called back, I would rather go back as a commissioned officer, but I won't if I don't accept this commission. Are you sure this is the counsel you want me to receive?"

Elder Lee put his hand on my shoulder and in a fatherly way said, "Brother Monson, have more faith. The military is not for you."

I went home. I placed a tear-stained commission back in its envelope with its accompanying letter and declined to accept it. Then I wrote a letter to the Twelfth Naval District



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and requested a discharge from the Naval Reserve.

My discharge from the Naval Reserve was in the last group processed before the outbreak of the Korean War. My headquarters outfit was activated. Six weeks after I was called to be a counselor in the bishopric, I was called to be the bishop of my ward.

I would not hold the position in the Church I hold today had I not followed the counsel of a prophet, had I not prayed about that decision, had I not come to an appreciation of an important truth: the wisdom of God oftentimes appears as foolishness to men.¹ But the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that when God speaks and His children obey, they will always be right.

It has been said that history turns on small hinges, and so do our lives. Decisions determine destiny. But we are not left unaided in our decisions.

If you want to see the light of heaven, if you want to feel the inspiration of Almighty God, if you want to

have that feeling within your bosom that your Heavenly Father is guiding you, then follow the prophets of God. When you follow the prophets, you will be in safe territory. ■

NOTE

1. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

Not many members of the Church will receive one-on-one counsel from an Apostle, as President Monson did. But we can still be blessed as we follow the teachings of prophets and apostles. Consider reading President Monson's addresses from the last general conference (remember his opening and closing remarks too). Look for specific directions or calls to action. You could discuss what you learn with those you visit and consider ways to apply President Monson's counsel.

For ideas on how to teach this message to youth and children, see page 6.

Counsel for Hard Choices

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, told about a time when he followed prophetic counsel. During one general conference, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) urged members to get out of debt—specifically mortgage debt.

President Eyring said: “I turned to my wife after the meeting and asked, ‘Do you think there is any way we could do that?’ At first we couldn’t.”

But by that evening he thought of a property they had unsuccessfully tried to sell for years. “We trusted God and . . . His servant’s message, [so] we placed a phone call. . . . I heard an answer that to this day strengthens my trust in God and His servants.” That same day a man had placed an offer on the Eyrings’ property for an amount just greater than their mortgage. The Eyrings soon became free

of debt (see “Trust in God, Then Go and Do,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 72–73).

You may not have a mortgage to pay, but prophetic counsel can guide you here and now through difficult decisions regarding work, education, a mission, and dating. Discuss with your family or peers about how you can follow the prophet when you have to make decisions.

CHILDREN

Find Your Way

We have to make a lot of choices to get back to our Heavenly Father. We can make the best choices when we follow the prophet.

Find your way through the maze. When you come to a decision, look to the prophet’s counsel!

 **Read the scriptures**
Go right

 **Pray**
Go down and then right

 **Share your testimony**
Go right

 **Help others**
Go down and then left

 **Go to church**
Go up

