

God Be with You Till We Meet Again

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My beloved brothers and sisters and members of the Hinckley family, I am deeply honored by this privilege to pay tribute to my cherished friend and colleague

President Gordon B. Hinckley.
The poet wrote:

*Here and there, and now and then,
God makes a giant among men.*

President Hinckley was such a giant—a giant of knowledge, of faith, of love, of testimony, of compassion, of vision. I cannot adequately express how much I miss him. It's difficult to recall a time when he and I did not know each other. We were friends long before either one of us was called to be a General Authority of the Church, and we have served side by side for over 44 years in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and in the First Presidency. We have shared much over the years—heartache and happiness, sorrow and laughter. Since his passing on Sunday, I have reflected on some of the countless experiences we have had together. I share with you just a few.

In May of 1964 he and I were assigned together to the Gunnison Utah Stake. Prior to our first meeting on Saturday, I noticed that the cuffs of President Hinckley's shirt were held together with paper clips instead of cuff links. I said to him, "Gordon, I like your cuff links!" He laughed and said that he had forgotten to bring his cuff links. I replied that as a good Boy Scout, I had come prepared and had another set, which I was more than happy to give to him—and I did.



On another occasion, back in the mid-1960s, Sister Monson and I, along with Elder Spencer W. Kimball and Sister Kimball, were invited by the Hinckleys to have dinner at their home. During the course of the evening, the doorbell rang. When it was opened, there stood one of the Hinckley's home teachers—without his companion. He was invited in, and he seated himself on the sofa in the Hinckley living room. We all sat down and were rather fascinated as the home teacher began what could only be described as “grilling” the Hinckleys as to how they were doing in such areas as family prayer, family scripture study, family home evening, personal scripture study, and on and on. As they would answer one question, the home teacher would fire another one at them. Of course, all was done in a good-natured way, and it was obvious to us that this home teacher took his duties seriously.

During the past few years, we've all enjoyed observing President Hinckley with his cane, walking to his seat in the Conference Center while waving to the crowd or using it to tap someone on the shoulder. President Hinckley and I have for years gone to the same doctor, and during one of my visits a couple of years ago, the doctor said to me, “Could you please do me a favor? President Hinckley should use his cane for walking because it steadies him. The last thing we want is for him to fall and break a hip or worse. Instead, he waves it



President Hinckley first joked about having to use a cane in the April 2001 general conference. He often used the cane to wave to members, noted President Thomas S. Monson in his funeral remarks.

around and then doesn't use it when he walks. Tell him the cane has been prescribed by his doctor, and he needs to use it as it was meant to be used.”

I listened to the physician's request and then replied, “Doctor, I am President Hinckley's counselor. You are his doctor. *You* tell him!”

May I share just one final experience—a simple act which has touched me deeply. Each Thursday morning the members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have a meeting in the temple. We are driven in carts underground from the Church office parking lot to the temple. During the cold winter months, President Hinckley always wore a coat and a hat during the brief ride. As our cart passed under Main Street, President Hinckley knew that we were then within the confines of the temple rather than under the street and, without a word, would remove his hat and place it on his lap. He seemed to know instinctively when that moment arrived. It was such a simple yet

profound expression of reverence and respect for the house of the Lord, and it made a deep impression on me.

Most of you will remember learning of Sir Thomas More, an English statesman and author of an earlier period who was steadfast in cleaving unto his beliefs. He was called “a man for all seasons.”

Amidst the conflicts of our time and the turbulence of our seasons, our Heavenly Father provided for us “a man for all seasons.” His name: President Gordon B. Hinckley. He was our prophet, seer, and revelator. He was an island of calm in a sea of storm. He was as a lighthouse to the lost mariner. He was your friend and my friend. He comforted and calmed us when conditions in the world were frightening. He guided us undeviatingly on the path which will lead us back to our Heavenly Father.

Since all who wanted to greet President Hinckley personally could not go to him, he went worldwide to them as long as he was able to travel. He was a prophet to the people. Not neglected were the children who flocked to his side, nor did he overlook the parents of those precious ones.

President Hinckley has truly been a prophet for our time. It was said of the Master that He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”¹ and “went about doing good, . . . for God was with him.”² President Hinckley has devoted his life to doing good, and God has surely been with him.

Just a week and a half ago, President Hinckley met with President Eyring and with me in our First Presidency meeting. His voice was strong; his mind was clear. He was self-assured and decisive. A few days later he lay near death; his family members gathered to be near him in his last hours. President Eyring and I were privileged to be with him and the family on

Saturday and again on Sunday, when we were joined by President Boyd K. Packer. As long as I live, I shall cherish the memory of my last visit to his home, brief hours before his passing. We provided a blessing, joined by all of his family members and others present who held the priesthood. It was a sacred time of parting; we knew the veil was very thin and that he was

being summoned to the other side.

As I returned to my home, I recalled the sweet and poignant statement President Hinckley made in his talk at the general Relief Society broadcast in September of 2003, when his sweet Marjorie was still by his side. Speaking of her, he said: “For 66 years we have walked together, hand in hand, with love and encouragement, with appreciation and respect. It cannot be very long before one of us will step through the veil. I hope the other will follow soon. I just would not know how to get along without her, even on the other side, and I would hope that she would not know how to get along without me.”³

Within six months, his beloved Marjorie had stepped through the veil. He missed her every day, every moment. What a glorious reunion they have now had.

To you children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, remember that President Hinckley still lives. He is on a heavenly mission to others who await his influence and testimony. His plea to all of you could be found in the book of 3 John: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”⁴

My dear brothers and sisters, all that we knew and loved about President Gordon B. Hinckley continues. His spirit has simply gone home to that God who gave him life. Wherever I go in this beautiful world, a part of this cherished friend will always go with me.

Below: The funeral procession prepares to leave the Conference Center. Bottom left: People lined the streets along the route to the cemetery and waved canes and white handkerchiefs as the funeral procession went by. Bottom right: Members of the Hinckley family at the Salt Lake City Cemetery, where President Hinckley was buried.





WHAT IS THIS THING THAT MEN CALL DEATH

By President Gordon B. Hinckley
(1910–2008)

*What is this thing that men call
death,
This quiet passing in the night?
'Tis not the end, but genesis
Of better worlds and greater light.*

*O God, touch Thou my aching
heart,
And calm my troubled, haunting
fears.
Let hope and faith, transcendent,
pure,
Give strength and peace beyond
my tears.*

*There is no death, but only change
With recompense for victory won;
The gift of Him who loved all men,
The Son of God, the Holy One.*

On more than one occasion, President Hinckley used as part of his message the words to one of his favorite hymns. You all know it.

*God be with you till we meet again;
By his counsels guide, uphold you;
With his sheep securely fold you.
God be with you till we meet again.*

*God be with you till we meet again;
When life's perils thick confound
you,
Put his arms unfailing round you.
God be with you till we meet again.*

*God be with you till we meet again;
Keep love's banner floating o'er
you;
Smite death's threat'ning wave
before you.
God be with you till we meet again.*

*Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet. . . .
God be with you till we meet again.⁵*

I share with you the words he spoke in general conferences after quoting that hymn. Such becomes his farewell to all of us. Said he: “‘God be with you till we meet again’ . . . , my beloved associates. I have sung those simple words in a thousand places across the world . . . with love and affection.”⁶ “I have sung [them] in English when others sang them in a score of languages. I have lifted my voice with those wonderful and simple words on memorable occasions on all the continents of the earth. I have sung them in bidding farewell to missionaries, with tears in

my eyes. I have sung them with men in battle dress during [times of] war. . . . In a thousand places and in many circumstances over these almost numberless years, I have raised my voice with so many others in these words of parting.”⁷ “God bless you, my dear friends.”⁸

On behalf of each one of us, my brothers and sisters, I offer our final farewell to our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley: Gordon, God be with you till we meet again. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 2:52.
2. Acts 10:38.
3. “To the Women of the Church,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 115.
4. 3 John 1:4.
5. “God Be with You Till We Meet Again,” *Hymns*, no. 152.
6. “Latter-day Saints in Very Deed,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 85.
7. “Till We Meet Again,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2002, 104; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 89.
8. *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 85.

