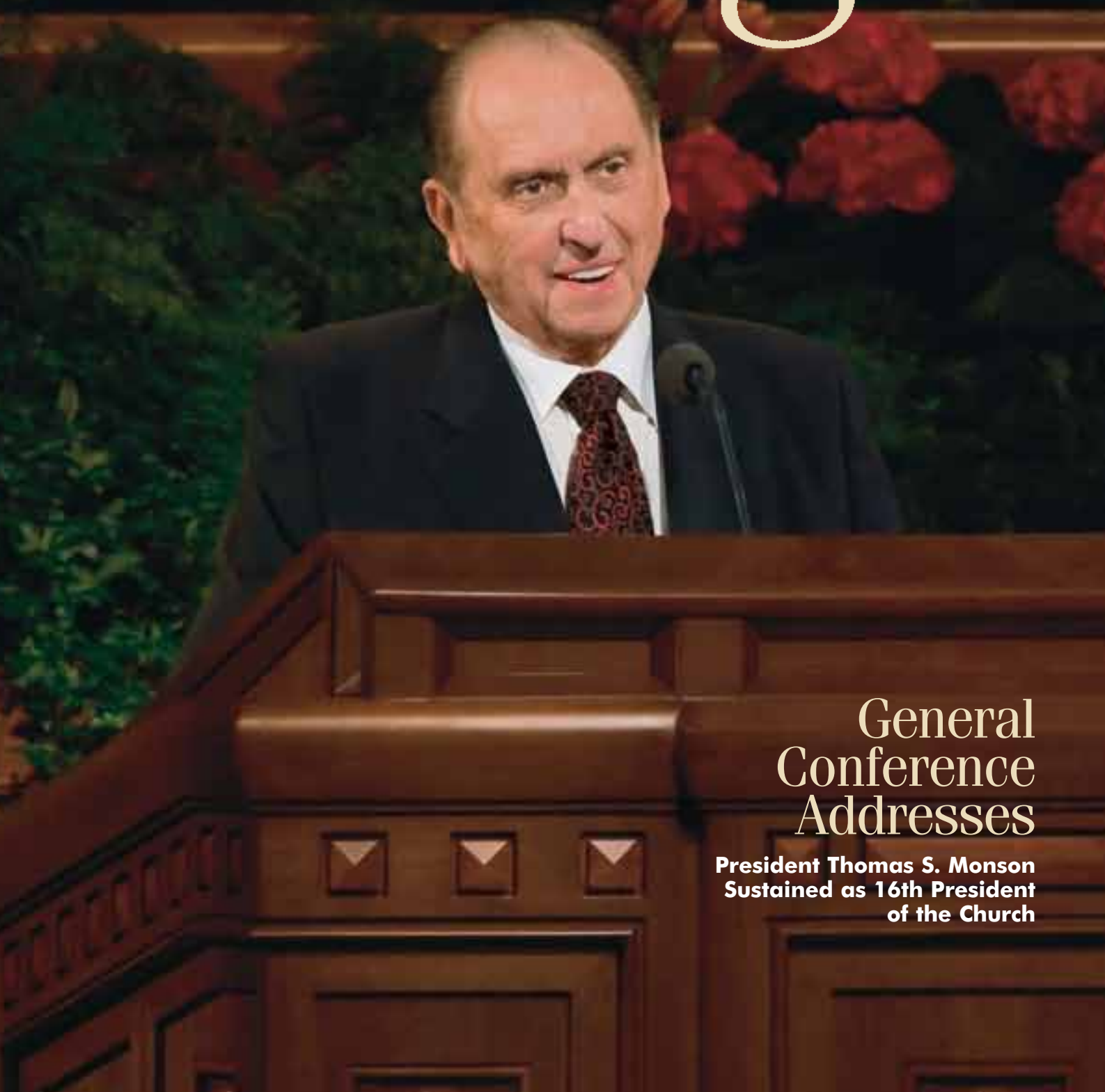


THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2008

Ensign



General Conference Addresses

**President Thomas S. Monson
Sustained as 16th President
of the Church**



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The First Presidency

President Thomas S. Monson (center) was sustained as the 16th President of the Church during the 178th Annual General Conference. His counselors in the First Presidency are President Henry B. Eyring (left) and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

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Conference Summary for the 178th Annual General Conference

SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 5, 2008, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Thomas S. Monson.
Invocation: Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen.
Benediction: Elder Ulisses Soares.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: "How Wondrous and Great," *Hymns*, no. 267; "Lead, Kindly Light," *Hymns*, no. 97, arr. Wilberg, pub. Deseret Book; "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19; "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Come, Follow Me," *Hymns*, no. 116, arr. Manookin, pub. Sonos.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 5, 2008, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Gary J. Coleman.
Benediction: Elder Stanley G. Ellis.
Music by a combined choir from Brigham Young University; Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1, arr. Staheli, unpublished; "Lean on My Ample Arm," *Hymns*, no. 120; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; "Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me," *Hymns*, no. 104, arr. Manookin, pub. Sonos.

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 5, 2008, PRIESTHOOD SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Thomas S. Monson.
Invocation: Elder Mervyn B. Arnold.
Benediction: Elder Larry W. Gibbons.
Music by a priesthood choir from the Logan and Ogden institutes; J. Nyles Salmond, Lynn Hopkins, and Jerald F. Simon, directors; Andrew Unsworth, organist: "Rise Up, O Men of God," *Hymns* (1948), no. 332; "An Angel from on High," *Hymns*, no. 328, arr. Unsworth, unpublished; "Ye Elders of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 319; "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240, arr. Unsworth, unpublished.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 2008, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Thomas S. Monson.
Invocation: Elder Anthony D. Perkins.
Benediction: Elder Benjamin De Hoyos.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66; "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," *Hymns*, no. 26; "He Sent His Son," *Children's Songbook*, 34–35, arr. Hofheins, unpublished; "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85; "If You Could Hie to Kolob," *Hymns* (1948), no. 257, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "High on the Mountain Top," *Hymns*, no. 5, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 6, 2008, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder C. Scott Grow.
Benediction: Elder Bruce C. Hafen.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "For the Beauty of the Earth," *Hymns*, no. 92, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Called to Serve," *Hymns*, no. 249, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83; "God Bless Our Prophet Dear," *Hymns*, no. 24, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 2008, GENERAL YOUNG WOMEN MEETING

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: Susan W. Tanner.
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Music by a Young Women choir from Cache Valley in the Utah North Area; Merrilee Webb, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72, arr. Webb, unpublished; "I'm Trying

to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 78–79, arr. Christofferson, unpublished (flute: Helen McGarr); "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Kasen, pub. Jackman; "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81, descant arr. Webb, unpublished.

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Ensign

AN OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH
OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring,
Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson,
Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard,
Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,
Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland,
David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook,
D. Todd Christofferson

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The Sustaining of Church Officers

PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Second Counselor in the First Presidency



Brothers and sisters, President Monson has requested that I now handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are met. This is an occasion of great significance for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world.

Dating from October 10, 1880, when John Taylor was sustained to succeed Brigham Young as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church, each of these occasions has been designated a formal solemn assembly of the body of the Church to express the voice of the Church.

We shall vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand when requested and express by your uplifted hand whether you choose to sustain those whose names will be presented. You should

vote only when asked to stand.

The General Authorities assigned to the Tabernacle and to the Assembly Hall on Temple Square will observe the voting in those gatherings. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. Should there be any contrary votes, we ask that we be so advised. We shall now proceed with the business of this solemn assembly.

The First Presidency will please arise.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

Those in favor may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Those in favor may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar,



Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators.

Please manifest it.

The First Presidency will be seated.

We invite Elder Christofferson to now take his place with the Quorum of the Twelve.

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, please arise.

It is proposed that the Quorum of



General Authorities participate in the solemn assembly.

the Twelve Apostles sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency.

All in favor, please manifest it.
You may be seated.

The members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric will please arise.

It is proposed that the members of

the Quorums of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve as they have been presented and voted upon by the First Presidency.

All in favor, please manifest it.
You may be seated.

The following will please arise wherever you may be participating around the world: all Area Seventies, ordained patriarchs, and all members of high priests and elders quorums.

It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon.

All in favor, please manifest it.
Any opposed may manifest it.
Please be seated.

Will all of the Aaronic Priesthood please arise—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons. It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet,



seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon.

All in favor may please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate.

You may be seated.

Will all members of the Relief Society—that is, all women 18 years of age and older—please arise.

It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon.

All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate it.

You may be seated.

Will the young women—that is, all young women ages 12 to 18—please arise.

It is proposed that Thomas Spencer Monson be sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together

with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as previously presented and voted upon.

All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate it.

You may be seated.

Now, will the entire membership, wherever assembled, including all of those who have stood previously, please arise. It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with his counselors and members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as they have been presented and voted upon.

All in favor, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate.

You may all be seated.

We shall now remain seated as we release and sustain other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church.

It is proposed that we release Elder D. Todd Christofferson as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

Those who can join with us in a

vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2008: A. Venâncio Caleira, Marco A. Cardenas, José A. Castro, Gérald Caussé, Luis G. Chaverri, Timothy J. Dyches, Jaime Ferreira, José A. García, Francisco I. Gímenez, Carlos A. Godoy, James J. Hamula, Frederick C. Ihesiene, Glen O. Jenson, Robert Koch, Kuen (Tony) Ling, Richard D. May, Ross H. McEachran, Yasuo Niiyama, Timothy M. Olson, Fernando D. Ortega, Luigi S. Peloni, Rafael E. Pino, Gelson Pizzirani, Alejandro M. Robles, Gerold Roth, M. Gonzalo Sepúlveda, Su Kiong Tan, Anthony R. Temple, Larry Y. Wilson, Tsung Ting (Jared) Yang, Willy F. Zuzunaga.

Those who wish to join us in expressing our gratitude for their excellent service, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we release Sisters Susan W. Tanner, Elaine S. Dalton, and Mary N. Cook as the Young Women general presidency. We also release all members of the Young Women general board.

All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation for their excellent service and devotion, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder L. Whitney Clayton as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest this too.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy William R. Walker, Craig C. Christensen, Marcos A. Aidukaitis, Gérald Caussé, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, James J. Hamula, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Rafael E. Pino, Gary E. Stevenson, José A. Teixeira, F. Michael Watson, and Jorge F. Zeballos and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Tad R. Callister and Kent D. Watson.

All in favor, please manifest it.
If there be any contrary, by the
same sign, please.

It is proposed that we sustain the
following as new Area Seventies:

Pedro E. Abularach, Koichi Aoyagi,
Juan C. Barros, Colin H. Bricknell,
Victor Kah Keng Chen, Kuo Chiang
Chung, J. Devn Cornish, Wynn R.
Dewsnup, Matthew J. Eyring,
G. Guillermo Garcia, Robert C. Gay,
Alfredo L. Gessati, James B. Gibson,
Julio C. González, Paulo H. Itinose,
Douglas W. Jessop, Faustino López,
Declan O. Madu, Per G. Malm,
Fernando Maluenda, James B.
Martino, Sergiy N. Mikulin, Abelardo
Morales, W. T. David Murray, Satoshi
Nishihara, Norbert K. Ounleu, Michael D.
Pickerd, Anatoly K. Reshetnikov,
William F. Reynolds, Michael A. Roberts,
Fernando A. R. Da Rocha, A. Ricardo
Sant'Ana, Robert B. Smith, Ysrael A.
Tolentino, Ruben D. Torres, J. Romeo
Villarreal, Louis Weidmann, Chi Hong
(Sam) Wong.

All in favor, please signify.

Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain
Elaine S. Dalton as the new general
president of the Young Women with
Mary N. Cook as first counselor and
Ann M. Dibb as second counselor.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the
other General Authorities, Area
Seventies, and general auxiliary presi-
dencies as presently constituted.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may manifest it.

President Monson, insofar as I have
been able to observe, the voting in the
Conference Center has been unani-
mous in favor of the proposals made.

Thank you, brothers and sisters,
for your sustaining vote, your faith,
devotion, and prayers.

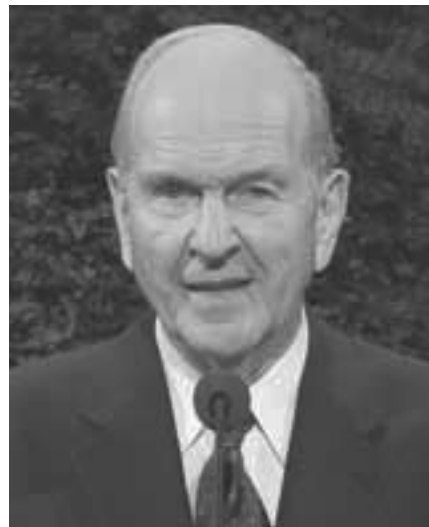
We invite the newly called members
of the Seventy and the Young Women
general presidency to come forward
and take their places on the stand. ■

Salvation and Exaltation

ELDER RUSSELL M. NELSON

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*In God's eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter;
exaltation is a family matter.*



Gratefully we welcome Elder
D. Todd Christofferson to
the Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles. Wholeheartedly we sustain
this wonderful First Presidency and all
who have been called.

Brethren and sisters, when we
received the news that President
Gordon B. Hinckley had passed away,
each of us immediately felt a deep
sense of loss. Knowing that his des-
tiny was in the hands of the Lord,
however, we have felt our mood shift
from grief to gratitude. We are very
grateful for what we have learned
from this great prophet of God.

Today, at this solemn assembly, we
have complied with the will of the

Lord, who said that “it shall not be
given to any one to go forth to preach
my gospel, or to build up my church,
except he be ordained by . . . one
who has authority, and *it is known to
the church* that he has authority and
has been regularly ordained by the
heads of the church.”¹ This law of
common consent² has been invoked,
and the Church will move forward on
its prescribed course.

Members throughout the world
sustain President Thomas S. Monson
and his able counselors. We are “no
more strangers and foreigners, but
fellowcitizens with the saints, and of
the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation
of the apostles and prophets, Jesus
Christ himself being the chief corner
stone.”³

The Lord revealed why “he gave
some, apostles; and some, prophets.”
It is “for the perfecting of the saints,
for the work of the ministry, for the
edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the
faith, and of the knowledge of the
Son of God.”⁴

Thus the ministry of the
Apostles—the First Presidency and
the Twelve—is to bring about that
unity of the faith and to proclaim our
knowledge of the Master. Our min-
istry is to bless the lives of all who will



learn and follow the “more excellent way” of the Lord.⁵ And we are to help people prepare for their potential salvation and exaltation.

The third article of faith declares that “through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”

To be saved—or to gain salvation—means to be saved from physical and spiritual death. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people will be resurrected and saved from physical death. People may also be saved from individual spiritual death through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, by their faith in Him, by living in obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel, and by serving Him.

To be exalted—or to gain exaltation—refers to the highest state of happiness and glory in the celestial realm. These blessings can come to us after we leave this frail and mortal existence. The time to prepare for our eventual salvation and exaltation is now.⁶

As part of that preparation, one must first hear and understand the gospel. For this reason the gospel of

Jesus Christ is being taken to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”⁷

Individual Responsibility

Some years ago I met with a tribal king in Africa. When he realized that he was being taught by an Apostle of the Lord, he was deeply moved. He said that throngs of his people would be baptized if he were to give them such a mandate. I thanked him for his kindness but explained that the Lord does not work in that way.

The development of faith in the Lord is an individual matter. Repentance is also an individual matter. Only as an individual can one be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. Each of us is born individually; likewise, each of us is “born again”⁸ individually. Salvation is an individual matter.

Family Responsibilities

Individual progression is fostered in the family, which is “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”⁹ The home is to be God’s laboratory of love and service. There a husband is to love his wife, a

wife is to love her husband, and parents and children are to love one another.

Throughout the world, the family is increasingly under attack. If families fail, many of our political, economic, and social systems will also fail. And if families fail, their glorious eternal potential cannot be realized.

Our Heavenly Father wants husbands and wives to be faithful to each other and to esteem and treat their children as an heritage from the Lord.¹⁰ In such a family we study the scriptures and pray together. And we fix our focus on the temple. There we receive the highest blessings that God has in store for His faithful children.

Thanks to God’s great plan of happiness,¹¹ families can be together forever—as exalted beings. Our Heavenly Father declared, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹² Both of His objectives were enabled by the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. His Atonement made resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility for all who would ever live.

Resurrection, or immortality,

comes to every man and every woman as an unconditional gift.

Eternal life, or celestial glory or exaltation, is a conditional gift. Conditions of this gift have been established by the Lord, who said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."¹³ Those qualifying conditions include faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and remaining faithful to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.

No man in this Church can obtain the highest degree of celestial glory without a worthy woman who is sealed to him.¹⁴ This temple ordinance enables eventual exaltation for both of them.

In Church callings we are subject to release. But we cannot be released as parents. From the first days of human history, the Lord has commanded parents to teach the gospel to their children.¹⁵ Moses wrote, "Thou shalt teach . . . diligently . . . thy children, and shalt talk of [God's words] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."¹⁶

In our day the Lord has added, "Bring up your children in light and truth."¹⁷ The Church is to assist and not to replace parents in their responsibilities to teach their children.

In this day of rampant immorality and addictive pornography, parents have a sacred responsibility to teach their children the importance of God in their lives.¹⁸ Those evils, so highly destructive of divine potential, are to be strictly shunned by children of God.

We are also to teach our children to honor their parents. The fifth commandment states, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."¹⁹

How can we best teach our children? The Lord has given us specific instruction:



"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy

Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy."²⁰

When a child needs correction, you might ask yourself, "What can I say or do that would persuade him or her to choose a better way?" When giving necessary correction, do it quietly, privately, lovingly, and not



publicly. If a rebuke is required, show an increase of love promptly so that seeds of resentment may not remain. To be persuasive, your love must be sincere and your teachings based on divine doctrine and correct principles.

Do not try to control your children. Instead, listen to them, help them to learn the gospel, inspire them, and lead them toward eternal life. You are God's agents in the care of children He has entrusted to you. Let His divine influence remain in your hearts as you teach and persuade.

Ancestors

Any discussion of family responsibilities to prepare for exaltation would be incomplete if we included only mother, father, and children. What about grandparents and other ancestors? The Lord has revealed that we cannot become perfect without them; neither can they without us be made perfect.²¹ Sealing ordinances are essential to exaltation. A wife needs to be sealed to her husband; children need to be sealed to their parents; and we all need to be connected with our ancestors.²²

What about those who are not able to marry in this life or those who cannot be sealed to their parents in this life? We know that the Lord will judge

each of us according to the desires of our hearts, as well as our works,²³ and that the blessings of exaltation will be given to all who are worthy.²⁴

We as children of the covenant are highly favored. In our hearts have been planted the promises made to Fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord has said:

"Ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God. . . .

"Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel."²⁵

This life is the time to prepare for salvation and exaltation.²⁶ In God's eternal plan, salvation is an individual matter; exaltation is a family matter.

As children of the covenant, we have met in this morning's solemn assembly. Attention has been focused upon the sacred titles of prophets and apostles. But the final responsibility to prepare for salvation and exaltation rests upon each person, accountable for individual agency, acting in one's own family, bearing another sacred title of mother, father, daughter, son, grandmother, or grandfather.

In those responsible roles, may we go forward in faith, led by Jesus Christ, whose Church this is, and by

His prophet, through whom He speaks, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 42:11; emphasis added.
2. See D&C 26:2; 28:13.
3. Ephesians 2:19–20.
4. Ephesians 4:11–13.
5. 1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11.
6. See Alma 34:32–33.
7. Revelation 14:6.
8. John 3:3, 7; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59.
9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
10. See Psalm 127:3.
11. See Alma 42:8.
12. Moses 1:39.
13. D&C 14:7; see also 3 Nephi 15:9. The Book of Mormon further explains the conditional nature of this great gift. It states that "ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20; emphasis added).
14. See D&C 131:1–3.
15. See Moses 6:57–58. Also note the teaching of King Benjamin: "Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin. . . . But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:14–15).
16. Deuteronomy 6:7.
17. D&C 93:40. The Lord also said, "Teach [your] children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28).
18. So taught Paul to Timothy: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. . . . From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14–15).
19. Exodus 20:12. Remember that parental proverb: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).
20. D&C 121:41–43.
21. See D&C 128:15.
22. See D&C 128:18.
23. See D&C 137:9.
24. See D&C 130:20–21; see also Rudger Clawson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1917, 29; Joseph F. Smith, in *Deseret News*, May 1, 1878, 2; Richard G. Scott, "The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 75.
25. D&C 86:9, 11.
26. See Alma 12:24.

Special Experiences

ELDER RONALD A. RASBAND

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Our personal journey through life provides us with many special experiences that become building blocks of faith and testimony.



I would like to add my testimony and witness on this special day that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord's prophet on the earth. I am grateful to have this privilege to speak in general conference.

I am grateful, as you are, for the experience we have in this historic conference as we sustain, in an orderly and patterned way, our new prophet, First Presidency, and other leaders of the Church.

This kind of experience fortifies our testimonies and increases our faith in the knowledge that this is indeed the Lord's true and living Church.

Our personal journey through life provides us with many special experiences that become building blocks of faith and testimony. These experiences come to us in vastly different ways and at unpredictable times. They can be powerful spiritual events or small enlightening moments. Some experiences will come as serious challenges and heavy trials that test our ability to cope with them. No matter what the experience may be, each gives us a chance for personal growth, greater wisdom, and, in many cases, service to others with more empathy and love. As the Lord stated to the Prophet Joseph Smith in a reassuring way during one of his most significant trials at Liberty Jail, "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

As experiences accumulate in our lives, they add strength and support to each other. Just as the building blocks of our homes support the rest of the structure, so too do our personal life experiences become building blocks for our testimonies and add to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This very conference session illustrates the value of a life full of experiences. As we follow the wise counsel of our leaders and marvel at their

teachings and spirit, is it any wonder that the Lord chooses His senior Apostle, after years of preparation, to become His chosen prophet?

My patriarchal blessing indicates that I would be given special experiences that would strengthen my own testimony. Brothers and sisters, think of the special experiences you have been blessed with in your life that have given you conviction and joy in your heart. Remember when you first knew that Joseph Smith was God's prophet of the Restoration? Remember when you accepted Moroni's challenge and knew that the Book of Mormon was indeed another testament of Jesus Christ? Remember when you received an answer to fervent prayer and realized that your Heavenly Father knows and loves you personally? As you contemplate such special experiences, don't they give you a sense of gratitude and resolve to go forward with renewed faith and determination?

Not long ago Sister Rasband and I had an experience we shall never forget. I was assigned to preside at two stake conferences in Peru. While there, we went to the city of Puno, high in the Andes Mountains, on Lake Titicaca. At 12,000 feet (3,660 m) above sea level, we were amazed at this simple and beautiful city, high on this Andean lake. We met with stake presidents in the area and had a wonderful youth fireside with hundreds of young people from the Puno area.

One morning we were invited to visit a small group of local members who lived out on the floating reed islands of Lake Titicaca. The people who live there are known as the Uros Indians of Bolivia and Peru.

We were told that a few Latter-day Saint families had joined together and built their own small, new floating island. With excitement, we took a boat out to the island and were greeted warmly by these wonderful members.



We held their babies wrapped in the most beautiful, colorful hand-made blankets. We ate the fish they caught that very day from the lake, which had been so carefully prepared and generously shared. We saw their wares and handicrafts and exchanged gifts with one another.

As we visited, we learned that their children paddled by canoe 45 minutes to and from Puno for seminary and school each day. We were also pleased that these members knew the scriptures well, understood them, and loved them. Eagerly they showed us their current temple recommends, having been endowed and sealed in the Cochabamba Bolivia Temple.

Before we were to leave, one of the mothers asked if we would kneel with them and have a family prayer. I remember well kneeling on the spongy reeds with these faithful Saints. As we knelt, she asked if I would say the prayer and, using the Melchizedek Priesthood, dedicate their new island and home.

I was deeply humbled that, there on the floating islands of Lake Titicaca, these faithful Latter-day Saint families

would ask me to pray for the little island of Apu Inti and ask the Lord to bless the homes and families of the Lujanos and Jallahuis.

As I consider this special experience that the Lord blessed us with, I know a new building block has been added to my house of faith. I often think of that experience in Puno as another reminder of the fulfillment of my own patriarchal blessing.

From the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants, written in 1831, foretelling the expansion of the Lord's work in our day, the Lord revealed:

"But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;

"That faith also might increase in the earth;

"That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

"That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:20–23).

Brothers and sisters, the weak and the simple members of the Church, like you and me, are taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, to Puno,

Peru, and other far-off places. Faith is increasing among God's covenant people, and I believe it is through having a personal treasury of such valued experiences that an increase of faith can happen for each of us.

President Monson said: "[The Lord] commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and . . . they shall learn in their *own experience* Who He is" (in "The Way of the Master," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 7; quoting Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* [1948], 401; emphasis added).

In these days of worldly intrusions into our lives, when trials and difficulties may seem to engulf us, let us remember our own special spiritual experiences. These building blocks of faith will bring us conviction and reassurance of a caring, loving Father in Heaven, of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and of Their restored true and living Church. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Righteous Traditions

CHERYL C. LANT

Primary General President

Are the traditions that we are creating in our families going to make it easier for our children to follow the living prophets?



For as long as I can remember, my father wore a beautiful red ruby ring on his left hand. It was passed on to my only brother. I suppose it will become a tradition in our family—a legacy passed from generation to generation. It will be a good tradition, with sweet memories associated with it.

Each of us has traditions in our families. Some of them are material. Some of them have deep meaning. The most important traditions are connected with the way we live our lives and will last beyond us as our children's lives are influenced and shaped. In the Book of Mormon, we

read of the Lamanites who were deeply affected by the traditions of their fathers. King Benjamin said they were a people who knew nothing about the principles of the gospel “or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct” (Mosiah 1:5).

What kinds of traditions do we have? Some of them may have come from our fathers, and now we are passing them along to our own children. Are they what we want them to be? Are they based on actions of righteousness and faith? Are they mostly material in nature, or are they eternal? Are we consciously creating righteous traditions, or is life just happening to us? Are our traditions being created in response to the loud voices of the world, or are they influenced by the still, small voice of the Spirit? Are the traditions that we are creating in our families going to make it easier for our children to follow the living prophets, or will they make it difficult for them?

How should we determine what our traditions will be? The scriptures give us a great pattern. In Mosiah 5:15 it states, “Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works.”

I love this because we know that traditions are formed over time as we repeat the same actions over and over again. As we are steady and unchanging in doing that which is good, our traditions become firmly rooted in righteousness. But I have a question. How do we determine what is good or, more importantly, what is good enough? Another scripture that gives us a little more information is found in 3 Nephi 6:14. It speaks of people “who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.”

We learn that our conversion to the “true faith” precedes our ability to remain firm, steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments. This conversion is a firm belief in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. A witness of this is found in the Book of Mormon, which is another witness of Jesus Christ. It goes hand in hand with the Bible in proclaiming the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ as well as the reality of a living Father in Heaven. Every prophet recorded in these sacred books gives his personal witness of these things, as well as teachings on how we need to live our lives in order to partake of the Atonement and find personal peace and happiness.

There is only one way to become personally converted. It is through a witness of the Spirit as we study these very scriptures that testify of Jesus Christ. It comes as we pray and as we fast. It comes only when we have a deep desire to know the truth. Our motivation must be to openly seek truth rather than justify our actions by finding fault with the scriptures, the teachings of the prophets, or the Church itself. Our effort must be toward hearing the interpretations of the Spirit rather than the understandings of the world. We must be willing to open our hearts and minds, accept



the Lord's way, and, if need be, change our lives. Our personal conversion comes as we begin to live the way the Lord wants us to live—steadfast and immovable in keeping all of the commandments, not just those that are convenient. This then becomes a process of refinement as we strive to make each day a little better than the last. Thus our traditions become traditions of righteousness.

I would invite all of us to take a moment to reflect on the traditions in our lives and how they might be affecting our families. Our traditions of Sabbath day observance, family prayer, family scripture study, service and activity in the Church, as well as patterns of respect and loyalty in the home, will have a great effect on our children and on their future. If our parenting is based on the teachings of the scriptures and of the latter-day prophets, we cannot go wrong. If every time there is a challenge our hearts turn first and always to our Father in Heaven for direction, we will be in a safe place. If our children know where we stand and we always

stand on the Lord's side, we know we are where we need to be.

Now, the important thing is that we consistently work to do these things. We will not be perfect at it, and our families will not always respond positively, but we will be building a strong foundation of righteous traditions that our children can depend on. They can hold to that foundation when things get difficult, and they can return to that foundation if they should stray for a period of time.

At the end of my father's life, he passed much more on to us, his children, than a red ruby ring. His body was spent, but in reality he stood as a pillar of strength, an example of righteousness and truth. His very life held the traditions that strengthen us today, even though he is no longer with us. He was "steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord."

Can we do this for our children? What is the legacy we are giving them today? What will it be tomorrow? It can start with us. Will their hearts and lives be full of traditions that make it easy

for them to accept and follow the Lord and the latter-day prophets? Will we as families be able to claim the blessings promised, "that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life" (Mosiah 5:15)?

Brothers and sisters, I know that we can! I know that God loves us and is waiting to help us come unto Him. Each of us can know that these things are true. I know that they are! I know that God lives; Jesus Christ is His Son and our Redeemer. The gospel of Jesus Christ is true; the scriptures contain it and testify of it. And we have a true and living prophet today—President Thomas S. Monson. He has been prepared and brought forth in this day to lead the Lord's Church.

As we become "steadfast and immovable" in keeping the commandments of the Lord, we will secure the blessings of heaven for ourselves and for our families.

I pray that we will feel this deep in our hearts and in our lives, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Restoring Faith in the Family

ELDER KENNETH JOHNSON

Of the Seventy

Stable families provide the fabric that holds society together, benefiting all mankind.



With knowledge of the “great plan of happiness,”¹ we have the opportunity and also the responsibility to help restore faith in the family.

In many ways our commission is comparable to those who work in the field of medicine and scientific research. Using established laws, they determine how suffering can be alleviated and the quality of life improved.

In the realm of religious belief, men and women of faith, using proven principles,² can help to heal a grieving heart, restoring hope and assurance to the troubled mind.

The scientist’s success has been achieved by complying with what are

often referred to as natural laws. The great scientists of the past and present did not create the laws associated with these naturally occurring processes; they discovered them.

In a letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul poses a thought-provoking question concerning the source of man’s intellectual capacity: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?”³

Through logic and learning, knowledge is increased and understanding enhanced. Using this process, theories and laws are identified and accepted as authentic.

One thing that becomes clear to the enlightened mind is that there are laws that keep life and living things in balance. Discovering the laws of physics and complying with them brings progress, enabling man to rise to higher levels of attainment than would otherwise be possible.

I believe that this premise also applies to ethical standards and moral values. It is, therefore, our responsibility to safeguard the home as a center of learning where these virtues can be instilled in an atmosphere of love and through the power of example.⁴

President Thomas S. Monson has taught, “Youth need fewer critics and more models.”⁵

Reflecting on my own life, I realize how I gained an appreciation for the core values that are necessary for the development of a sound character. Where did I learn loyalty, integrity, and dependability? I learned these qualities in the home from the example of my parents. How did I gain an appreciation for the value of selfless service? I did so by observing and enjoying my mother’s devotion to her family. Where did I learn honor and respect for daughters of God? I learned from the example of my father.

It was in the home that I learned principles of provident living and the dignity of work. I can still visualize my mother spending numerous nights at home, using a foot treadle sewing machine to stitch shoes for a local shoe factory. This was not to enable her to purchase anything for herself but to help to provide financial support so that my brother and I could attend college. She later expressed how this act of service was a source of satisfaction for her.

My father was a wise, industrious man. He taught me how to cut timber using a handsaw, how to replace or attach a plug to a power cord of a domestic appliance, and many other practical skills.

All of these lessons carried a common theme: never be satisfied with anything less than your best efforts.

I developed the ability to make important decisions by talking with my parents and learning from their counsel. Add to the aforementioned accountability, consideration for others, and encouragement to pursue educational opportunities, and the list would still be incomplete.

I was introduced to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in my teenage years by Pamela, who later became my wife. She has helped make of my life a soaring symphony from a simple melody.⁶

I have enjoyed 67 years of happiness in marriage and family life—



A family in Korea pauses outside the meetinghouse where they came to watch conference.

21 as a son in the home of my parents and 46 as a husband, culminating in the joy of being a father and grandfather. What more could one hope for? Simply stated, that these same opportunities would be enjoyed by everyone.

Returning to the teachings of Paul recorded in Corinthians, we find these words:

“Even so the things of God knoweth no man [except he has] the Spirit of God. . . .

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of . . . God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”⁷

Scientists gain their knowledge mainly through research, conducting experiments, and the application of intellect.

Disciples of Christ receive their witness by studying His words,

observing His works, putting gospel principles into practice, and receiving the spirit of inspiration.⁸

“There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”⁹

Although spiritual truths may appear less tangible, to the humble heart their impact is undeniable. It is important to understand that natural laws were not determined on the basis of popularity. They were established and rest on the rock of reality.

There are also moral verities that did not originate with man.¹⁰ They are central to a divine plan which, when discovered and applied, brings great happiness and hope on our mortal journey.¹¹

For example, I believe, as stated in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”¹² and defined in divine revelation, that marriage and family are

ordained of God. The scriptures declare, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”¹³

Wise men have provided a legacy of learning from the past. We must hand down to future generations a foundation of faith in the family, as defined by Deity.¹⁴

We should never forget that freedom and happiness in all aspects of life come by understanding and living in harmony with eternal gospel principles. They provide a sure foundation upon which to build a productive and happy life.¹⁵

Following the pattern prescribed through the plan of the Father has enabled me to experience what it means to live “after the manner of happiness”¹⁶ and “with joy . . . draw water out of the wells of salvation.”¹⁷

The Savior taught, “I am come that

they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”¹⁸

Our outlook or attitude can sometimes restrict our ability to enjoy life’s greatest opportunities.

The question could be asked, “What of those who have not experienced a positive family environment?”

Stable families provide the fabric that holds society together, benefiting all mankind, even those who may feel they live in less-favorable circumstances.

For those who faithfully live¹⁹ and patiently pray for such sociality,²⁰ I share the simple, soothing words of Helen Steiner Rice:

*When God makes a promise,
It remains forever true,
For everything God promises
He unalterably will do.
When you’re disillusioned
And every hope is blighted
Recall the promises of God
And your faith will be relighted.*²¹

It is my prayer that we can stand together, with courage and conviction, as guardians of the God-given gift of family. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Alma 42:8; see also Alma 24:14.
2. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Principle,” 200.
3. 1 Corinthians 2:11.
4. See Proverbs 22:6.
5. “Anxiously Engaged,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 57.
6. See D&C 128:19.
7. 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14.
8. See John 7:16–17; Jacob 4:8.
9. Job 32:8.
10. See D&C 130:20–21.
11. Like a compass, principles provide points of reference on life’s journey.
12. See *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
13. Genesis 2:24.
14. See D&C 49:15–17.
15. See D&C 68:25–28.
16. 2 Nephi 5:27.
17. 2 Nephi 22:3.
18. John 10:10.
19. See D&C 82:10.
20. See D&C 130:2.
21. From *Expressions of Comfort* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2007), 187–88. Used by permission.

Concern for the One

ELDER JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Jesus Christ is our greatest example. He was surrounded by multitudes and spoke to thousands, yet He always had concern for the one.



I am grateful for the opportunity to be with you today in this magnificent Conference Center. As vast as this congregation is, it’s humbling to realize that it is merely a fraction of the millions who will see, hear, and read the words spoken at this great conference.

Of course, we will miss our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley. We are all better people, however, because of his influence. The Church is stronger because of his guidance. Indeed, the world is a better place because there was such a leader as President Gordon B. Hinckley.

I would like to say a few words about our new First Presidency.

I have known President Monson for a long time. He is a mighty man of Israel who was foreordained to preside over this Church. He is well-known for his captivating stories and parables, but we who know him best understand that his life is a practical and exemplary model of the application of those stories. While it is a compliment to him that many of the great and mighty of this world know and honor him, perhaps it is an even greater tribute that many of the lowly call him friend.

To his core, President Monson is kind and compassionate. His words and deeds exemplify his concern for the one.

President Eyring is a wise, learned, and spiritual man. He is known and respected not only in the Church but by those not of our faith. He is the kind of man who, when he speaks, everyone listens. He has added stature to the name *Eyring*.

I knew President Uchtdorf when I was serving as Area President in Europe. From the moment I met him, I recognized in him a man of immense spiritual depth and tremendous capability. I knew the Lord was mindful of him. Twenty-three years ago, I had the

honor of extending to him the Lord's calling to serve as a stake president in Frankfurt, Germany. As I have watched over the years, I have noticed that everything under his direction has succeeded. The Lord is with him. When I think of President Uchtdorf, two words come to mind: *Alles wohl*—that's German for "All is well."

True disciples of Jesus Christ have always been concerned for the one. Jesus Christ is our greatest example. He was surrounded by multitudes and spoke to thousands, yet He always had concern for the one. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost,"¹ He said. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"²

This instruction applies to all who follow Him. We are commanded to seek out those who are lost. We are to be our brother's keeper. We cannot neglect this commission given by our Savior. We must be concerned for the one.

Today I would like to talk about those who are lost—some because they are different, some because they are weary, and some because they have strayed.

Some are lost because they are different. They feel as though they don't belong. Perhaps because they are different, they find themselves slipping away from the flock. They may look, act, think, and speak differently than those around them and that sometimes causes them to assume they don't fit in. They conclude that they are not needed.

Tied to this misconception is the erroneous belief that all members of the Church should look, talk, and be alike. The Lord did not people the earth with a vibrant orchestra of personalities only to value the piccolos of the world. Every instrument is precious and adds to the complex beauty



of the symphony. All of Heavenly Father's children are different in some degree, yet each has his own beautiful sound that adds depth and richness to the whole.

This variety of creation itself is a testament of how the Lord values all His children. He does not esteem one flesh above another, but He "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God."³

I remember when I was young, there was an older boy who was physically and mentally disabled. He had a speech impediment and walked with difficulty. The boys used to make fun of him. They teased and taunted him until sometimes he would cry.

I can still hear his voice: "You're not kind to me," he said. And still they would ridicule him, push him, and make jokes about him.

One day I could bear it no longer. Although I was only seven years old, the Lord gave me the courage to stand up to my friends.

"Don't touch him," I said to them. "Stop teasing him. Be kind. He is a child of God!"

My friends stepped back and turned away.

I wondered at the time if my boldness would jeopardize my

relationship with them. But the opposite happened. From that day onward, my friends and I became closer. They showed increased compassion for the boy. They became better human beings. To my knowledge, they never taunted him again.

Brothers and sisters, if only we had more compassion for those who are different from us, it would lighten many of the problems and sorrows in the world today. It would certainly make our families and the Church a more hallowed and heavenly place.

Some are lost because they are weary. It's easy to feel overwhelmed. With all the pressures and demands on our time and the stress we face each day, it's little wonder we get tired. Many feel discouraged because they have not measured up to their potential. Others simply feel too weak to contribute. And so, as the flock moves on, gradually, almost imperceptibly, some fall behind.

Everyone has felt tired and weary at one time or another. I seem to feel more so now than I did when I was younger. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, even Jesus Christ knew what it meant to be tired. I do not wish to underestimate the weight that members of the Church bear upon their shoulders, nor do I minimize the emotional and spiritual trials they face. These can be heavy and often difficult to bear.

I do, however, have a testimony of the renewing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the Lord "giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."⁴ When I feel tired, I remember the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. . . .

". . . Let the woods and all the trees

of the field praise the Lord; . . . and let all the sons of God shout for joy!"⁵

For you members of the Church who hold back because of feelings of inadequacy, I plead with you to step forward, put your shoulder to the wheel, and push. Even when you feel that your strength can add little, the Church needs you. The Lord needs you. Remember that the Lord often chooses "the weak things of the world" to accomplish His purposes.⁶

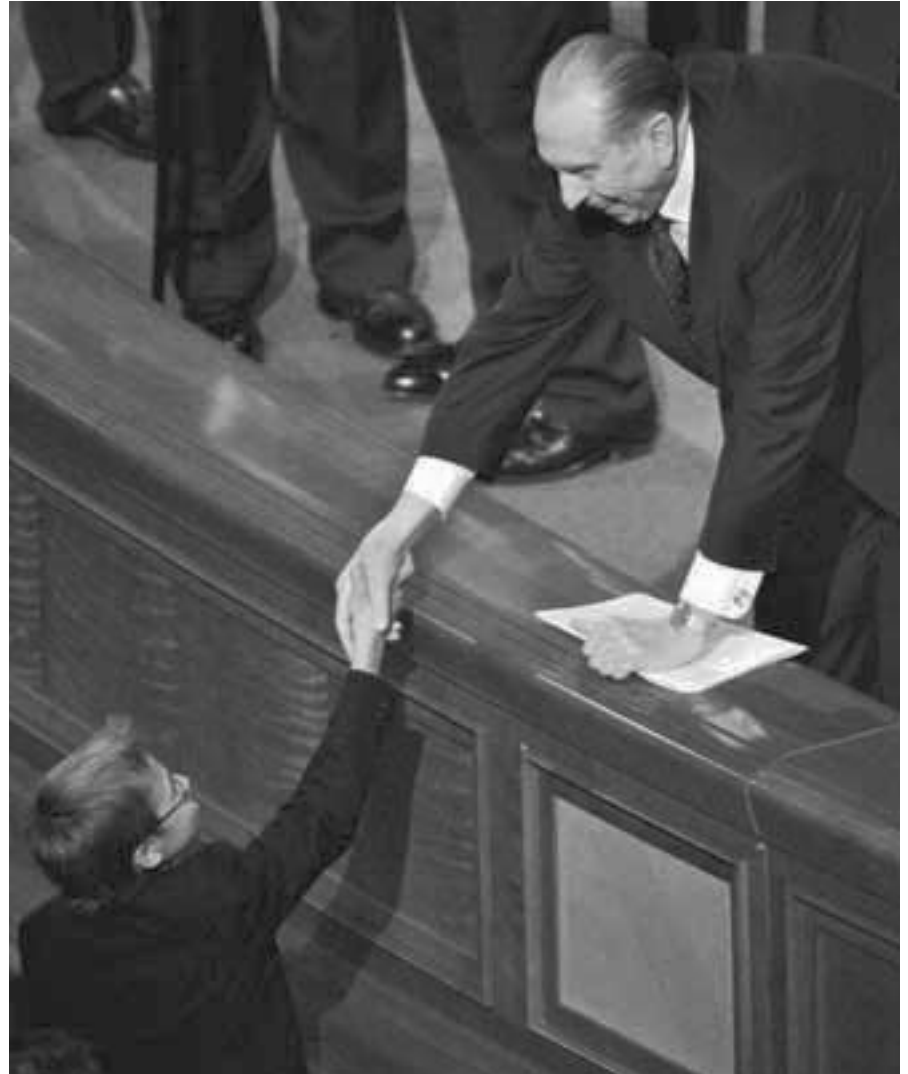
To all who are weary, let the comforting words of the Savior console you: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁷ Let us rely on that promise. The power of God can infuse our spirits and bodies with energy and vigor. I urge you to seek this blessing from the Lord.

Draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you, for He has promised that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."⁸

When we show concern for those who are weary, we "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."⁹ Caring Church leaders are mindful of individual limitations yet eager to utilize members to the extent of their strength and abilities. Leaders teach and support but do not bring pressure to "run faster or labor more than" strength allows.¹⁰

Remember, sometimes those who start out the slowest end up going the farthest.

Some are lost because they have strayed. Except for the Lord, we have all made mistakes. The question is not whether we will trip and fall but, rather, how will we respond? Some, after making mistakes, stray from the fold. This is unfortunate. Do you not know that the Church is a place for imperfect people to gather together—even with all their mortal



frailties—and become better? Every Sunday in every meetinghouse throughout the world, we find mortal, imperfect men, women, and children who meet together in brotherhood and charity, striving to become better people, to learn of the Spirit, and to lend encouragement and support to others. I am not aware of any sign on the door of our meetinghouses that reads "Restricted Entrance—Perfect People Only."

Because of our imperfections, we need the Lord's Church. It is there that His redemptive doctrines are taught and His saving ordinances are administered. The Church encourages and motivates us to be a better and happier people. It is also a place where we can lose ourselves in the service of others.

The Lord knows we will make mistakes. That is why He suffered for our sins. He wants us to get back on our feet and strive to do better. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

To you who have strayed because you have been offended, can you not set your hurt and anger aside? Can you not fill your hearts with love? There is a place for you here. Come, join the fold, consecrate your abilities, talents, and skills. You will be better for it, and others will be blessed by your example.

To those who have strayed because of doctrinal concerns, we cannot apologize for the truth. We cannot deny doctrine given to us by the Lord Himself. On this principle we cannot compromise.

I understand that sometimes people disagree with doctrine. They even go so far as to call it foolish. But I echo words of the Apostle Paul, who said that sometimes spiritual things can appear as foolishness to men. Nevertheless, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”¹¹

In truth, things of the Spirit are revealed by the Spirit. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”¹²

We testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ is here upon the earth today. He taught of His Father’s doctrine, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”¹³

I know that each of you bears a concern for a loved one. Give encouragement, service, and support to them. Love them. Be kind to them. In some cases, they will return. In others, they will not. But in all cases, let us ever be worthy of the name we take upon ourselves, even that of Jesus Christ.

To all who inhabit this beautiful earth, I raise my voice and bear solemn witness that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and King! He restored His truth and His gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He speaks to His prophets and apostles. President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord’s anointed and guides His Church today. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 18:11.
2. Luke 15:4.
3. 2 Nephi 26:33.
4. Isaiah 40:29.
5. D&C 128:22–23.
6. D&C 1:19.
7. Matthew 11:28.
8. Isaiah 40:31.
9. D&C 81:5.
10. D&C 10:4.
11. 1 Corinthians 1:25; see also v. 18.
12. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
13. John 7:17.

The True and Living Church

PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

First Counselor in the First Presidency

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it lives on.



As we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of the Church, and D. Todd Christofferson as an Apostle and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, we have seen and felt evidence that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is both true and living. The Lord spoke to those through whom He restored the Church in the latter days. He said of them that they “might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking

unto the church collectively and not individually—

“For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

“Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven;

“And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.”¹

This is the true Church, the only true Church, because in it are the keys of the priesthood. Only in this Church has the Lord lodged the power to seal on earth and to seal in heaven as He did in the time of the Apostle Peter. Those keys were restored to Joseph Smith, who then was authorized to confer them upon the members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

When the Prophet Joseph was murdered, the enemies of the Church thought that the Church would die. They thought it was the creation of a mortal man and therefore would perish with him. But their hopes were dashed. It was the true Church, and it also had the power to live on, even when those chosen for a time to lead it died.

We have seen today a demonstration that this is the true and living Church. The keys of the priesthood

are held by mortals, but the way has been prepared by the Lord for the keys to remain functioning on the earth so long as the people exercise faith both that the keys are on the earth and that they have been passed on by the will of God to His chosen servants.

God's people have not always been worthy of the marvelous experience we have shared today. The Apostles, after the Ascension of Christ, continued to exercise the keys He left with them. But because of disobedience and loss of faith by the members, the Apostles died without the keys being passed on to successors. We call that tragic episode "the Apostasy." Had the members of the Church in those days had the opportunity and the will to exercise faith as you have today, the Lord would not have taken the keys of the priesthood from the earth. So this is a day of historical significance and of eternal importance in the history of the world and to the children of our Heavenly Father.

Now our obligation is to remain worthy of the faith necessary for us to fulfill our promise to sustain those who have been called. The Lord was well pleased with the Church at the beginning of the Restoration, as He is today. But He cautioned the members then, as He does now, that He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. For us to sustain those who have been called today, we must examine our lives, repent as necessary, pledge to keep the Lord's commandments, and follow His servants. The Lord warns us that if we do not do those things, the Holy Ghost will be withdrawn, we will lose the light which we have received, and we will not be able to keep the pledge we have made today to sustain the Lord's servants in His true Church.

Each of us must make an individual evaluation. First, we need to measure the depth of our gratitude for membership in the true Church of Jesus



President Thomas S. Monson and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf welcome Elder D. Todd Christofferson, newly sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Christ. Second, we need to know by the power of the Holy Ghost in what ways we can do better in keeping the commandments.

We know from prophecy that not only will the true and living Church not be taken from the earth again, but it will become better. Our lives will be transformed for the better as we exercise faith unto repentance, always remember the Savior, and try ever harder to keep His commandments. The scriptures contain promises that when the Lord comes again to His Church, He will find it spiritually prepared for Him. That should make us both determined and optimistic. We must do better. We can. And we will.

On this day especially it would be wise to determine to sustain with our faith and our prayers all those who serve us in the kingdom. I am personally aware of the power of the faith of members of the Church to sustain those who have been called. In the last few weeks I have felt in powerful

ways the prayers and the faith of people whom I do not know and who know me only as someone called to serve through the keys of the priesthood. President Thomas S. Monson will be blessed by your sustaining faith. His family will likewise have blessings poured out upon them because of your faith and your prayers. All those who were sustained by you today will be sustained by God because of their faith and yours.

Every member will have opportunities to sustain through service given in the name of God. The Church is a powerful force for the blessing of its members and all people across the earth. For instance, the Church has done remarkable humanitarian work across the earth. All of that is possible because of the faith of members and of friends that God lives and that the Lord wishes to succor all of those in need whom He can reach through His faithful disciples.

Additionally, it is through the

Church and the ordinances which are in it that the blessings of the sealing power reach into the spirit world. This is a true and living Church, reaching even to those who are no longer living. As you have the faith to find the names of your ancestors, as you go to the house of the Lord to offer them vicarious ordinances, you sustain this great work, whose purpose is to offer salvation to all of Heavenly Father's children who come into this world.

I would like to speak of some of the reasons I see for gratitude for a true and living Church. Then I will suggest some ways in which I see the Church being prepared for the Savior's return. And finally, I will bear my testimony of how I have come to know that this is the true and living Church.

Most of all I am grateful for my experience of the cleansing power available through the ordinances performed by the power of priesthood. I have felt forgiveness and cleansing through baptism by those with authority. I have felt the burning in my bosom that is only possible because of words spoken by servants of God: "Receive the Holy Ghost."

My sense of gratitude stems also from blessings to my family. It is the sealing power and our knowledge of it which changes and transforms our family life here and our expectations for the joy of family life in the world to come. The thought and the hope that I can have eternal relationships carries me through the trials of separation and the loneliness which are part of mortal existence. The promise to the faithful in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that we may have associations and an expansion of families in the eternities. That assurance changes forever and for the better all of our associations in families.

For example, I am at a stage in my life when, because of great distances, I cannot come to know well grandchildren and, in time, great-grandchildren. There are also people who



have never had the opportunity for marriage and parenthood who have the same yearning as I do to somehow be close to family. Because of the restoration of the knowledge of eternal families, we are more hopeful and more kindly in all our family relations. The greatest joys in this life center in families, as they will in the worlds to come. I am so grateful for the assurance I have that if we are faithful, the same sociality which we enjoy here in this life will be forever with us in the world to come, in eternal glory.²

I can see evidence of the prophesied perfecting of the Church. For example, as I travel and come to know the members of the Church, I see that there is a steady improvement in their lives. In their simple faith and obedience, the Atonement is changing and edifying the members. Frequently I am in meetings with obviously humble people who are allowed to teach lessons and give sermons which have in them power like that given to Lehi and Nephi, the sons of Helaman. You remember the account:

"And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did preach unto the Lamanites with such great power and authority, for they had power and

authority given unto them that they might speak, and they also had what they should speak given unto them."³

I am confident that the repeated wish of President Gordon B. Hinckley will be granted. He taught that all who come into the Church might be retained in full fellowship if they are nourished by the good word of God. I remember him saying that the last words that he might speak at the end of his service would be "retention, retention, retention." His words live on in the leadership of President Monson and in all of us as we qualify to have the power of a Lehi and a Nephi to nourish with the good word of God. I am confident that you will continue, as I will, to be amazed by humble Latter-day Saints who home teach, visit teach, and speak to their nonmember friends with ever greater power.

For years we have remembered the words of President David O. McKay: "Every member a missionary." I am confident that the day is coming that through the faith of the members we will see increasing numbers of people invited to hear the word of God who will then come into the true and living Church.

There is another improvement I am confident will come. Families across the Church are searching for ways to strengthen and protect their children against the evils around them. In some cases those parents are desperately trying to bring back some in their family who have wandered. I am confident that there will be, increasingly, a reward given by God for their efforts. Those who never give up will find that God never gave up and that He will help them.

Much of that help will come from those called to serve in the Church. The spirit of reaching out will increase so that many will be as the young Bishop Thomas Monson was, inspired with practical ways to invite and encourage those who may, for a time, not recognize the blessings God has



Members and missionaries of the San Pedro Branch, Belize City Belize District, gather for conference.

in store for them. President Monson to this day remembers people he labored to rescue when he was their bishop. My hope would be that all of us would have the confidence that God will guide us in reaching out, and back, to those God would have us bring with us as we go home to Him.

Another improvement I see coming in the kingdom is a desire and a capacity to reach out to the poor and those in need. I have seen an amazing increase among the members of the Church in sympathy for victims of natural disasters across the world. In obituary notices I see families asking that donations be sent to the Perpetual Education Fund or to the Church's Humanitarian Fund.

The Prophet Joseph Smith saw that wonderful development. He said that as a person becomes truly converted, he or she will want to range across the earth caring for Heavenly Father's

children.⁴ That is already beginning to happen among more of the members of the Church. What is remarkable to me is that the pattern of giving to those in need extends to those who have less themselves and seems to be unaffected by whether we are in good or difficult economic times. That is evidence to me that the Atonement is working ever more effectively among the members.

My testimony that this is the true and living Church began in my childhood. One of my earliest memories is of a conference meeting held not in some place like this but in a rented room of a hotel. A man was speaking whom I did not know, nor do I know his name today. I knew only that he was someone sent to our little district in the mission field by someone who held the priesthood. I do not know what he said. But I received a powerful, certain witness before I was eight,

even before I was baptized, that I was hearing a servant of God in the true Church of Jesus Christ. It was not the rental room nor the size of the congregation, which was small, but it was a witness that I had been blessed at that moment to be in a meeting of the true Church.

When I moved with my family to the organized stakes of the Church in my teen years, for the first time I felt the power of priesthood quorums and of a loving bishop. I still remember and can feel the assurances that came when I sat in a priests quorum next to a bishop and knew that he had the keys of a true judge in Israel.

That same witness came early in my life on two Sundays, one in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the other in Boston, Massachusetts. In each case I was present on the day that a stake was organized from a district. Seemingly ordinary men

Church Auditing Department Report, 2007

PRESENTED BY ROBERT W. CANTWELL

Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

whom I knew well were called as stake presidents. I raised my hand on those days as you did today and had a witness come to me that God had called His servants and that I would be blessed by their service and for sustaining them. I have now felt that same miracle countless times across the Church.

I saw in the days and months that followed their being sustained that those stake presidents were lifted up to their callings. I have seen the same miracle in the service of President Monson as he received the call to preside as the prophet and President of the Church and to exercise all the keys of the priesthood in the earth. Revelation and inspiration have come to him in my presence, which confirms to me that God is honoring those keys. I am an eyewitness. They are keys of a priesthood which is, in the Lord's words, "without beginning or end."⁵

I bear you my solemn witness that this is the true and living Church of Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father will answer your fervent prayers to know that for yourself. You can have a witness that the calls which you sustained today were from God. Even more, you can know that within this Church, ordinances are performed which can cleanse souls and bind on earth and in heaven, as they were in the days of Peter, James, and John. Those keys and ordinances are now restored in their fulness through the Prophet Joseph Smith and have been passed on through his successors. Jesus is the Christ. He lives. I know that. I testify that Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it lives on. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 1:30–33.
2. See D&C 130:2.
3. Helaman 5:18.
4. See *History of the Church*, 4:227.
5. Alma 13:8.

Dear Brethren: As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and operations. After receiving

the council's authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2007 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,
Church Auditing Department
Robert W. Cantwell
Managing Director ■



A sister missionary in Idaho watches conference.

Statistical Report, 2007

PRESENTED BY ELDER F. MICHAEL WATSON

Of the Seventy

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and activity of the Church as of December 31, 2007.

Church Units

Stakes	2,790
Missions	348
Districts	618
Wards and Branches	27,827

Church Membership

Total Church	
Membership	13,193,999
Increase in Children	
of Record	93,698

Converts Baptized	279,218
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Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries	52,686
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Temples

Temples Rededicated	1
(Nuku'alofa Tonga)	
Number of Temples	
Currently in Operation	124

Prominent Church Members Who Have Passed Away since Last April

President Gordon B. Hinckley, 15th President of the Church, at age 97, on January 27, 2008; *President James E. Faust*, counselor in the First Presidency

and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Inis Bernice Egan Hunter*, widow of President Howard W. Hunter, former President of the Church; *Sister Ruth W. Faust*, widow of President James E. Faust, former counselor in the First Presidency; *Sister LeAnn C. Neuenschwander*, wife of Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy; *Sister Eunice N. Kay*, widow of Elder F. Arthur Kay, former member of the Seventy; *Sister Janath R. Cannon*, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency; *Brother Richard L. Warner*, former counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. ■



Singing hymns helps these members pass the time while waiting for a conference session.

Testimony

ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Knowledge encourages obedience, and obedience enhances knowledge.



A testimony of the gospel is a personal witness borne to our souls by the Holy Ghost that certain facts of eternal significance are true and that we know them to be true. Such facts include the nature of the Godhead and our relationship to its three members, the effectiveness of the Atonement, and the reality of the Restoration.

A testimony of the gospel is not a travelogue, a health log, or an expression of love for family members. It is not a sermon. President Kimball taught that the moment we begin preaching to others, our testimony is ended.¹

I.

Various questions arise as we hear others bear testimony or as we consider bearing testimony ourselves.

1. In a testimony meeting a member says, “I know that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith.” A visitor wonders, “What does he mean when he says he *knows* that?”

2. A young man preparing for a mission wonders whether his testimony is strong enough that he can serve as a missionary.

3. A young person hears the testimony of a parent or teacher. How does such a testimony help a person who hears it?

II.

What do we mean when we testify and say that we *know* the gospel is true? Contrast that kind of knowledge with “I know it is cold outside” or “I know I love my wife.” These are three different kinds of knowledge, each learned in a different way. Knowledge of outside temperature can be verified by scientific proof. Knowledge that we love our spouse is personal and subjective. While not capable of scientific proof, it is still important. The idea that all important knowledge is based on scientific evidence is simply untrue.

While there are some “evidences” for gospel truths (for example, see Psalm 19:1; Helaman 8:24), scientific methods will not yield spiritual knowledge. This is what Jesus taught in response to Simon Peter’s testimony that He was the Christ: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and

blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). The Apostle Paul explained this. In a letter to the Corinthian Saints, he said, “The things of God knoweth no man, but [by] the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11; see also John 14:17).

In contrast, we know the things of man by the ways of man, but “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Book of Mormon teaches that God will manifest the truth of spiritual things unto us by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 10:4–5). In modern revelation God promises us that we will receive “knowledge” by His telling us in our mind and in our heart “by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 8:1–2).

One of the greatest things about our Heavenly Father’s plan for His children is that each of us can know the truth of that plan for ourselves. That revealed knowledge does not come from books, from scientific proof, or from intellectual pondering. As with the Apostle Peter, we can receive that knowledge directly from our Heavenly Father through the witness of the Holy Ghost.

When we know spiritual truths by spiritual means, we can be just as sure of that knowledge as scholars and scientists are of the different kinds of knowledge they have acquired by different methods.

The Prophet Joseph Smith provided a wonderful example of this. When he was persecuted for telling people about his vision, he likened his circumstance to the Apostle Paul, who was ridiculed and reviled as he made his defense before King Agrippa (see Acts 26). “But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision,” Joseph said. “He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under

heaven could not make it otherwise. . . . So it was with me,” Joseph continued. “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me. . . . I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I” (Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25).

III.

That was Joseph Smith’s testimony. What about ours? How can we come to know and testify that what he said was true? How does one gain what we call a testimony?

The first step in gaining any kind of knowledge is to really desire to know. In the case of spiritual knowledge, the next step is to ask God in sincere prayer. As we read in modern revelation, “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61).

Here is what Alma wrote about what he did: “Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit” (Alma 5:46).

As we desire and seek, we should remember that acquiring a testimony is not a passive thing but a process in which we are expected to *do* something. Jesus taught, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17).

Another way to seek a testimony seems astonishing when compared with the methods of obtaining other knowledge. We gain or strengthen a testimony by bearing it. Someone even suggested that some testimonies are better gained on the feet bearing



them than on the knees praying for them.

A personal testimony is fundamental to our faith. Consequently, the things we must do to acquire, strengthen, and retain a testimony are vital to our spiritual life. In addition to those already stated, we need to partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:9) to qualify for the precious promise that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77). Of course, that Spirit is the source of our testimonies.

IV.

Those who have a testimony of the restored gospel also have a duty to share it. The Book of Mormon teaches that we should “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9).

One of the most impressive teachings on the relationship between the gift of a testimony and the duty to bear it is in the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In describing different kinds of spiritual gifts, this revelation states:

“To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the

Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

“To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful” (vv. 13–14; see also John 20:29).

Those who have the gift to *know* have an obvious duty to bear their witness so that those who have the gift to *believe on their words* might also have eternal life.

There has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly (see D&C 60:2). Though some profess atheism, there are many who are open to additional truths about God. To these sincere seekers, we need to affirm the existence of God the Eternal Father, the divine mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the reality of the Restoration. We must be valiant in our testimony of Jesus. Each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our spiritual convictions to friends and neighbors, to fellow workers, and to casual acquaintances. We should use these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of His divine mission, and our determination to serve Him.² Our children should also hear us bear our testimonies



38:41). We should never be overbearing, shrill, or reviling. As the Apostle Paul taught, we should speak the truth in love (see Ephesians 4:15). Anyone can disagree with our personal testimony, but no one can refute it.

VI.

In closing, I refer to the relationship between obedience and knowledge. Members who have a testimony and who act upon it under the direction of their Church leaders are sometimes accused of blind obedience.

Of course, we have leaders, and of course, we are subject to their decisions and directions in the operation of the Church and in the performance of needed priesthood ordinances. But when it comes to learning and knowing the truth of the gospel—our personal testimonies—we each have a direct relationship with God, our Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, through the powerful witness of the Holy Ghost. This is what our critics fail to understand. It puzzles them that we can be united in following our leaders and yet independent in knowing for ourselves.

Perhaps the puzzle some feel can be explained by the reality that each of us has two different channels to God. We have a channel of governance through our prophet and other leaders. This channel, which has to do with doctrine, ordinances, and commandments, results in obedience. We also have a channel of personal testimony, which is direct to God. This has to do with His existence, our relationship to Him, and the truth of His restored gospel. This channel results in knowledge. These two channels are mutually reinforcing: knowledge encourages obedience (see Deuteronomy 5:27; Moses 5:11), and obedience enhances knowledge (see John 7:17; D&C 93:1).

We all act upon or give obedience to knowledge. Whether in science or religion, our obedience is not blind when we act upon knowledge suited

frequently. We should also strengthen our children by encouraging them to define themselves by their growing testimonies, not just by their recognitions in scholarship, sports, or other school activities.

V.

We live in a time when some misrepresent the beliefs of those they call Mormons and even revile us because of them. When we encounter such

misrepresentations, we have a duty to speak out to clarify our doctrine and what we believe. We should be the ones to state our beliefs rather than allowing others the final word in misrepresenting them. This calls for testimony, which can be expressed privately to an acquaintance or publicly in a small or large meeting. As we testify of the truth we know, we should faithfully follow the caution to speak “in mildness and in meekness” (D&C

to the subject of our action. A scientist receives and acts upon a trusted certification of the content or conditions of a particular experiment. In matters of religion, a believer's source of knowledge is spiritual, but the principle is the same. In the case of Latter-day Saints, when the Holy Ghost gives our souls a witness of the truth of the restored gospel and the calling of a modern prophet, our choice to follow those teachings is not blind obedience.

In all of our testifying we must avoid arrogance and pride. We should remember the Book of Mormon rebuke to a people who had such pride in the greater things God had given them that they afflicted their neighbors (see Jacob 2:20). Jacob said this was "abominable unto him who created all flesh" because "the one being is as precious in his sight as the other" (Jacob 2:21). Later, Alma cautioned that "ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another" (Mosiah 23:7).

I close with my testimony. I know that we have a Heavenly Father, whose plan brings us to earth and provides the conditions and destiny of our eternal journey. I know that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, whose teachings define the plan and whose Atonement gives the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. I know that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith to restore the fulness of the gospel in these latter days. And I know that we are led today by a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who holds the keys to authorize priesthood holders to perform the ordinances prescribed for our progress toward eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 138.
2. For example, see Jeanne Newman, "With the Sound of a Trump," *Tambuli*, Aug.–Sept. 1985, 21–23; *New Era*, Aug. 1985, 9–11.

Gaining a Testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost

ELDER ROBERT D. HALES

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

What has been told to me . . . can be told to you by the Holy Spirit . . . according to your obedience and desires.



Like you, I appreciated the participation in the solemn assembly. But I thought I might give one point of doctrine and help. When we raised our hands to the square in the solemn assembly, it was not just a vote in that we gave of ourselves a

private and personal commitment, even a covenant, to sustain and to uphold the laws, ordinances, commandments, and the prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson. I so appreciated participating with you and raising my right hand to the square.

My brothers and sisters, over the past few months I have had a humbling experience which has given me the opportunity to reflect with gratitude on the gift of life. In the course of this experience, I have continually pondered my testimony of God our Eternal Father and His eldest Son, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and how I gained my testimony of the Father and the Son.

People all over the world, of every creed and persuasion, search and struggle to know, Who is God? What is His relationship to Jesus Christ? And what is our relationship with Them?



In Brazil, Primary children wait for the next session of conference.

I know with surety that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live. The Atonement is real. God the Father and Jesus Christ are distinct, separate, immortal beings. They know us as individuals, and They hear and answer our sincere prayers. The Savior testified to the inhabitants of the New World, “I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me.”¹ The Holy Ghost has testified to me that these things are true.

I began to gain my testimony in my youth when I reflected on 13 prophetic statements called the Articles of Faith, written by Joseph Smith. It was in Primary that we

memorized them. They describe the basic beliefs of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The first of these statements reads, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”²

Joseph Smith knew the nature of the three members of the Godhead by personal experience. As a 14-year-old boy he wanted to know which of the many Christian churches he should join. In the Bible, in the book of James of the New Testament, he read, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.”³ Obediently he knelt in prayer and was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. He described Them as “two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description,

standing above [Joseph] in the air. One of them [God the Father] spake unto [him], calling [him] by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁴

Since my own boyhood, Joseph Smith’s experience has been a guide to me—and can be for all of us. The young prophet learned the truth about our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, because he sought to know from the scriptures his Heavenly Father’s will and then he faithfully obeyed.

This pattern was set and perfectly exemplified by the Savior as recorded in the Bible. When Jesus was a 12-year-old boy, His mother, Mary, and His earthly father, Joseph, found Him teaching in the temple. Jesus asked them, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”⁵ But Jesus was not speaking of Joseph’s business. He was speaking of the business of His literal and Eternal Father in Heaven.

The manner by which God the Father introduced His Son on several occasions is significant: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. . . . And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”⁶ And again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, “there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”⁷

When Jesus appeared on the American continent, He was introduced in the same way by His Father: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”⁸ And then nearly two millennia later, the same words were spoken to the young Joseph Smith: “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁹

It is of special significance that whenever Heavenly Father wants to introduce His Son to us, He commands us to listen—to “hear” the words of Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? He participated with His Father in the Creation of the world and was responsible, under the direction of His Father, to create all things on the face of the earth. "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."¹⁰ Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Mediator with the Father. He is the Savior who laid down His life for us and pleads our cause with the Father. Therefore, we pray to Heavenly Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son, is not the same being as His Father, but He is *like* His Father. He too is a glorified being of power and authority.

It is very enlightening and touching to me to consider how Jesus talks to His Father. In His great Intercessory Prayer, which is found in the Bible in the book of John, it is unmistakably clear that Jesus acknowledges He is the Son. Listen to His words as He reports the obedient completion of His earthly mission to His Father in Heaven:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

"For I have given unto them [the disciples] the words which thou gavest me . . . , and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . .

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. . . .

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."¹¹

Through the course of the Savior's ministry, the disciples did indeed become one but not in their physical bodies. They became one in unity of purpose and love. This is the oneness of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, spoken of in the scriptures. They too are distinct beings, but They are united in purpose, in Their love



for us, and in the work They are doing on our behalf.

The Savior also prayed:

"O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. . . .

". . . That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

". . . For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."¹²

Oh, how Jesus wanted us to know the Father as He did. He prayed:

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these [the disciples] have known that thou hast sent me.

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."¹³

Jesus showed His great love for those who choose to follow Him as He prayed for their protection: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."¹⁴ He was praying for us, brothers and sisters.

And then our Savior tenderly asks that they, meaning us, may be with Him again: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."¹⁵

In preparation for the atoning

sacrifice, Jesus prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane as He took upon Himself the sins, sorrows, and sufferings of all mankind. In those hours alone, He again made it clear that He was not performing His own work. He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."¹⁶ In this most crucial moment for Him and for all of us, He was not talking to Himself or relying on His own strength. He was calling upon His Father, God Omnipotent, to sustain Him and allow Him to do His Father's will; and His Father sent an angel "from heaven, strengthening him."¹⁷ I so love the love that the Father has for His Son and for all of us.

From before the foundation of the world to the final moments on the cross, the Savior had been about His Father's business. He completed the work He had been sent to do. Therefore, we do not wonder to whom He was talking when, upon the cross, "he said, It is finished,"¹⁸ and "cried with a loud voice, . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."¹⁹ We know He was praying to His Heavenly Father.

I testify that our Savior lives. He is the Only Begotten of the Father, and

He will come again on this earth to reign. He is Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, “full of grace, and mercy, and truth. . . . It is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name.”²⁰ He is the literal Son of God, who rose from the dead on the third day, bringing the reality of resurrection to all who will come to earth. I also testify that God our Eternal Father lives and loves each of us, for we are His children. So great is His love that He sent His Only Begotten Son into the world “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”²¹

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I testify of the truth of what is in the scriptures and what has been told to me and can be told to you by the Holy Spirit. It will be revealed according to your obedience and desires. The Savior taught us during His mortal ministry this great truth that applies to all of us: “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.”²² I testify that I do know these things, and I know with surety that these things which I have spoken of are true. That you may seek for that same surety is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 11:32.
2. Articles of Faith 1:1.
3. James 1:5.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Luke 2:49.
6. Matthew 3:16–17.
7. Luke 9:35.
8. 3 Nephi 11:7.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
10. Moses 1:33.
11. John 17:4, 8, 18, 22.
12. John 17:5, 23–24.
13. John 17:25–26.
14. John 17:15.
15. John 17:24.
16. Matthew 26:39.
17. Luke 22:43.
18. John 19:30.
19. Luke 23:46.
20. Alma 5:48.
21. John 3:16.
22. 3 Nephi 18:20.

Opening Our Hearts

ELDER GERALD N. LUND

Of the Seventy

Let us make it a part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit.



Today I should like to speak on the importance of opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

After baptism we are confirmed and given the Holy Ghost. This is a supernal gift. The Holy Ghost comforts, teaches, warns, enlightens, and inspires us. Nephi put it very simply: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”¹ We need the help of the Holy Ghost if we are to make our way safely through what the Apostle Paul called the “perilous times”² in which we now live.

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, which allows Him to dwell in

our hearts and communicate directly with our spirits.³ The voice of the Spirit is described as still and small and one that whispers.⁴ How can a voice be still? Why is it likened to a whisper? Because the Spirit almost always speaks to our minds and to our hearts⁵ rather than to our ears. President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *bear*.”⁶

We feel things in our hearts. In the scriptures, the prophets teach that personal revelation is closely linked to the heart. For example:

Mormon taught, “Because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost.”⁷

Alma said, “He that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.”⁸

Mormon wrote of the Nephites, “[Their souls were filled] with joy and consolation . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”⁹

And then the Psalmist simply wrote, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.”¹⁰

Isn’t that something we all seek, brothers and sisters—to be visited by the Holy Ghost, to have the Lord draw closer to us, to find joy and consolation in our lives? If so, then



carefully assessing the condition of our hearts is one of the most essential things we can do in this life.

The heart is a tender place. It is sensitive to many influences, both positive and negative. It can be hurt by others. It can be deadened by sin. It can be softened by love. Early in our lives, we learn to guard our hearts. It is like we erect a fence around our hearts with a gate in it. No one can enter that gate unless we allow him or her to.

In some cases the fence we erect around our hearts could be likened to a small picket fence with a Welcome sign on the gate. Other hearts have been so hurt or so deadened by sin that they have an eight-foot (2.5-m) chain-link fence topped with razor wire around them. The gate is padlocked and has a large No Trespassing sign on it.

Let us apply the idea of a gateway to the heart to receiving personal revelation. Nephi taught, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost

carrieth it *unto* the hearts of the children of men.”¹¹ Elder David A. Bednar noted the use of the word *unto*: “Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. . . . Ultimately, . . . the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.”¹²

Why just *unto* the heart? Individual agency is so sacred that Heavenly Father will never force the human heart, even with all His infinite power. Man may try to do so, but God does not. To put it another way, God allows us to be the guardians, or the gatekeepers, of our own hearts. We must, of our own free will, open our hearts to the Spirit, for He will not force Himself upon us.

So how do we open our hearts?

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”¹³ If something is pure, it is not polluted or tainted by things which do not belong to it. Purity of heart is certainly

one of the most important qualifications for receiving inspiration from God. While none of our hearts are perfect, the more diligently we strive to eliminate impurity, or push out things which do not belong there, the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Note this sweet promise of the prophet Jacob: “O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love.”¹⁴

While in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that describes a condition of some hearts:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

“Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men.”¹⁵

Many in the world now live in prosperous and peaceful circumstances. In the Book of Mormon, prosperity often led the people away from the Lord. Mormon warned, “We may see at the very time when he doth



Sister missionaries in Sydney, Australia, greet those arriving for conference broadcasts.

prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art . . . , then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God.”¹⁶

The Lord noted three natural consequences of having one’s heart set on the things of the world: First, we seek to hide our sins instead of repenting of them. Next, we seek to gratify our pride and vain ambitions rather than seeking the things of God. Finally, we begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over others.¹⁷

Note that pride is a natural consequence of setting our hearts on the things of the world. Pride quickly desensitizes our hearts to spiritual promptings. For example, the Lord said, “I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart, and received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit.”¹⁸ Compare that to this promise: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give

thee answer to thy prayers.”¹⁹

In the Liberty Jail revelation, the Lord described the effect of a worldly heart: “Behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and . . . behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself.”²⁰ Brothers and sisters, in these very “perilous times,” we cannot afford to grieve the Spirit and be left to ourselves.

I say again, the condition of our hearts directly affects our sensitivity to spiritual things. Let us make it a part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit. Since we are the guardians of our hearts, we can choose to do so. We choose what we let in or hold out. Fortunately the Lord is anxious to help us choose wisely.

I close in testimony with two of the promises He has made to those who seek to come unto Him: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with [His] love, . . . that ye may be purified even as he is pure.”²¹

And finally this stirring declaration of Paul the Apostle: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”²²

May we ever ask Christ to strengthen our hearts and fill them with His love is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 32:5.
2. 2 Timothy 3:1.
3. See D&C 8:2.
4. See D&C 85:6.
5. See D&C 8:2.
6. “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” *Liabona*, June 1997, 10; *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60.
7. Moroni 8:26.
8. Alma 12:10.
9. Helaman 3:35.
10. Psalm 34:18.
11. 2 Nephi 33:1; emphasis added.
12. “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liabona*, Sept. 2007, 17; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61.
13. Matthew 5:8.
14. Jacob 3:2.
15. D&C 121:34–35.
16. Helaman 12:2.
17. See D&C 121:36–37.
18. D&C 63:55.
19. D&C 112:10.
20. D&C 121:37–38.
21. Moroni 7:48.
22. Philippians 4:13.

Service, a Divine Quality

ELDER CARLOS H. AMADO

Of the Seventy

*Those who serve will strive to ennoble, build,
and lift their fellowmen.*



All the things that Christ did for our salvation are unique. He was able to perform His redeeming work in approximately three years of ministry. Today I would like to highlight three purposes for the Savior's life on earth.

1. His Atoning Sacrifice

The first and greatest purpose was the unrivaled and amazing assignment that He received from His Father: to carry out an infinite and eternal sacrifice for all humanity.

As Heavenly Father's Only Begotten Son in the flesh, He inherited all of His Father's divine qualities, and from His earthly mother, Mary,

He inherited mortal characteristics.

Only His sacrifice could rescue us from our mortal and fallen state (see Alma 34:8–14). He came to the world with the specific purpose to give His life, since only His life could give us eternal life.

No other mortal being, in the past, present, or future of the existence of the earth, has lived or will live to carry out the Atonement for our sins. He is our Savior and Redeemer (see John 3:16).

He will return again to govern and rule among us with great power and glory.

2. His Doctrine

The second purpose for His having dwelt among us was to teach the doctrine that He learned from His Father, which includes the ordinances and covenants of salvation and exaltation (see Mark 1:27; John 7:16).

His doctrine is one of love, forgiveness, and mercy. It is the way to live in peace and harmony among men and the way to return to live with God.

3. His Service to the Children of God

His third purpose was to build the kingdom by serving others. This was a different type of leadership. Service is a characteristic of His followers—a divine quality.

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:13–15).

He lived to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to heal all manner of sickness (see Matthew 4:23–24). To teach His doctrine and to serve our fellowmen are two responsibilities that we accepted when we were baptized. This converts us into true servants of Christ.

On one occasion after teaching His doctrine, He had compassion on the people and performed the miracle of multiplying the loaves of bread and fish and feeding the multitude, revealing to us His character of compassion and service. The next day the multitude was even greater because of the food that they had received. He taught them with determination and with eternal vision:

"Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John 6:26–27).

As a Church we should feed the hungry, relieve the sick, clothe the naked, and give shelter to the destitute. With fast offerings we alleviate the basic and immediate needs of the members, and with the welfare plan we help meet their long-term needs. When there are natural disasters, through humanitarian service we provide assistance for our brothers and sisters who are not of our faith.

Without neglecting these temporal needs, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by commandment of the Lord, maintains the most sublime and lofty labor of service, which is to bless all men by teaching them



the doctrine of Christ and inviting them to receive the saving ordinances so that they might gain “immortality and eternal life” (Moses 1:39).

A Change of Thought and Attitude

I know that God loves us. He allows us to exercise our moral agency even when we misuse it. He permits us to make our own decisions.

Christ cannot help us if we do not trust Him; He cannot teach us if we do not serve Him. He will not force us to do what’s right, but He will show us the way only when we decide to serve Him. Certainly, for us to serve in His kingdom, Christ requires that we experience a change of thought and attitude.

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who

is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13).

Blessings of Service

I testify that through serving our fellowmen we come to know the Lord.

Service makes us strong in our faith and useful in His kingdom. Service gives us purpose and courage in life. It brings us closer to God and helps us refine our divine nature. It teaches us to love and understand our fellowmen, and it helps us forget about our personal desires, eliminating selfishness, pride, and ingratitude. It teaches us to think of the needs of others, which allows us to develop the virtues that the Savior possesses.

Kindness, love, patience, understanding, and unity will increase as

we serve, while intolerance, jealousy, envy, greed, and selfishness decrease or disappear. The more we give of ourselves, the more our capacity to serve, understand, and love will grow.

Those who serve will always seek to please God and live in harmony with Him. They will be full of peace; they will have a cheerful countenance and a spirit of kindness.

Those who serve will strive to enoble, build, and lift their fellowmen; therefore, they will find the good in others, and they will not find reason or have time to become offended. They develop the virtue of praying for those who criticize. They don’t expect recognition or reward. They possess the love of Christ.

Those who serve will always be willing to share what they possess and

what they know at all times, in all places, and with all people.

Those who serve even in adversity will maintain a living hope of a better future. They will continue to be firm in the midst of a crisis because their hope is in Christ.

Those who serve will accept their assignments with humility, recognizing their limitations but convinced that two people can do all things they propose to do as long as one of the two people is God.

With divine inspiration, King Benjamin declared, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). Those who serve will have greater understanding of the personality and attributes of God.

Those who serve with devotion, even when things don’t turn out the way they would like, are not easily discouraged, fatigued, or frustrated because the promise of peace of mind and the companionship of the Holy Spirit will never abandon them.

Worldwide and Local Service

In the Church there are tens of thousands of members who selflessly serve in more than 170 nations in a great diversity of tongues and languages. They give unselfish service through leadership, teaching, and care of others, without salary or material reward, without applause or worldly recognition. They give of their time, their talents, and their resources; they sacrifice all that they have and serve efficiently and marvelously well. After a certain time they are released to give the opportunity of service to others.

Because of His doctrine and His service, the restored Church of Jesus Christ is constantly blessing the lives of its members. We thank God for all of you faithful Saints who have felt the joy of service, who feel it now, and who will feel this joy as you serve others. We pray that God always will bless you for it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Three Presiding High Priests

ELDER WILLIAM R. WALKER

Of the Seventy

Wisdom and strength will come to us as we look to the First Presidency as our ideal and our pattern of leadership.



What a blessing and privilege it is for us to sustain President Thomas S. Monson, President Henry B. Eyring, and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf as the new First Presidency of the Lord’s Church.

I first learned the importance of the First Presidency as a boy growing up in Western Canada. When I would go to Grandma and Grandpa Walker’s home, I was greeted in the entry by a framed photo of the First Presidency of the Church. I remember it well. It seemed that they stood as sentinels, greeting all who entered.

The beautiful color photo was of President George Albert Smith with his counselors J. Reuben Clark Jr. and

David O. McKay. The photo showed them standing together by a large world globe. I loved the picture. They were such handsome and dignified men; I knew them as the prophet of God and his counselors.

That picture hanging in the front foyer of my grandparents’ home had a powerful influence on me. I lived in the small prairie town of Raymond, where my grandparents lived. I could walk to their home, so I visited often. I remember frequently standing quietly alone in the foyer, reverently looking at that picture of the First Presidency. I remember thinking about why my grandparents thought it was so important to honor the First Presidency and have that picture prominently displayed in their home. All who entered would see it. Perhaps most importantly, for their children and grandchildren it was a constant reminder of what was deeply important in the hearts and lives of Grandma and Grandpa.

Years later I concluded that displaying the picture of the First Presidency was equivalent to Joshua’s beautiful expression: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

All who entered the home of James and Fanny Walker knew that written



away. Sometime later the picture in Grandma and Grandpa's foyer was replaced by a beautiful picture of President David O. McKay and his counselors Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark Jr.

As a boy I certainly didn't understand the deep significance or the process of succession in the Presidency—but I knew that the prophet had died and that we were led by a new prophet of God, with two counselors at his side.

At age 13 I was called into Bishop Murray Holt's office, and he extended a call to me to serve as the president of the deacons quorum. He told me I needed to go home and pray about who my counselors should be. He taught me that the Lord would help me decide. He did. I then learned about counselors, and I began to see why the Lord has His Church directed by presidencies, not just presidents. I loved my counselors in the deacons quorum, and we prayed and worked hard to help the boys in our quorum. Bishop Holt taught me the pattern of presidencies and taught me how a presidency should operate and function in the Lord's Church.

When I later served as president of other quorums, I already knew the importance of counselors, and I knew that the Lord would help me choose them—just as my bishop had taught me.

As a deacons quorum president and later as a bishop and stake president, I knew that whatever wisdom, understanding, or capacity I had, it would be magnified considerably when I included my counselors in any decision that needed to be made. I learned that the benefits of serving together as a presidency were magnificent and magnifying.

I came to understand why the Lord appointed that His Church should be led by three presiding high priests and why that form of leadership would be prescribed

upon their hearts were the words "As for us and our house, we will serve the Lord." As their grandson, I knew it, and I have never forgotten it.

As a boy I didn't understand so well the significance of there being three in the First Presidency rather than having one President. I knew, of course, that Jesus had selected Peter, James, and John, not just Peter. I knew that my father was one of three men in the bishopric, serving as a counselor to Bishop J. O. Hicken. I knew my grandfather was the stake president and that he had two counselors who stood beside him (President John Allen and President Leslie Palmer).

In every case—a *presidency*—not just consisting of one man as the leader but as three who led together.

In Primary I had learned the Articles of Faith and grew to love them. The Articles of Faith give our youth comfort and confidence as they learn the fundamental doctrines of the Church. I then knew that "a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5).

In 1835 the Lord revealed to the

Prophet Joseph Smith the proper order of presidencies in the Church:

"Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers. . . .

"Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:21–22).

"A quorum of three presidents" (D&C 107:29)—not a president and two vice presidents but three presiding high priests. A quorum of three presidents—the First Presidency of the Lord's Church.

The world does not organize itself this way, but this is how the Lord organized and structured His Church.

It brings to mind the scripture:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9).

At about the time of my seventh birthday, I learned a little about succession in the Presidency when President George Albert Smith passed

throughout most of the Church.

The Lord said, “I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived” (D&C 52:14). He has given us the pattern of leadership. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: “Every organization in the Church is presided over by a presidency of three, except the Seventies [and the Twelve]” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 94).

Additionally, the auxiliaries at all levels are led by a president and two counselors. All the blessings and benefits of serving together as a presidency apply to auxiliaries as well as to the priesthood quorums.

Every one of us who serve in presidencies anywhere in the Church should look to the First Presidency as our pattern and the example that we seek to follow as we carry out our stewardships. We should strive to be like them and to work together in love and harmony as they do.

President Gordon B. Hinckley often spoke of the importance of counselors. He said, “The Lord put [counselors] there for a purpose” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 94).

President Hinckley further instructed us: “Every morning except Monday, the First Presidency meets, when we are in town. I call on President Faust to present his business and we discuss it and make a decision. Then I call on President Monson to present his business and we discuss it and make a decision. Then I present the items which I wish to present and we discuss them and make a decision. We work together. . . . You can’t be a one-man operation in a presidency. Counselors—what a wonderful thing are counselors. They save you from doing the wrong things, they help you to do the right things” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 95; see also “In . . . Counsellors There Is Safety,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 48–51).

A counselor to President Joseph F.



Smith once described how the First Presidency deliberated: “When a case came before [the President of the Church] to judge, he and his counselors would talk it over and give it their *careful consideration until they came to the same conclusion*” (Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, June 1919, 19; emphasis added).

That should be our pattern in presidencies.

The revelations teach us to make our decisions in quorums and presidencies “in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity” (D&C 107:30).

The Lord has given us the pattern. We have sustained today the new First Presidency of the Church. They

will teach us and show us the pattern that we should follow. Wisdom and strength will come to us as we look to the First Presidency as our ideal and our pattern of leadership.

Great blessings will come to our families as we teach our children and grandchildren to love and sustain the leaders of the Church. As a young boy standing in my grandparents’ home, I knew that we were led by men of God, whom the Lord had placed there to guide us.

And I know it now. I bear witness that this is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that we are led by His apostles and prophets. I bear witness that the senior apostle, President Thomas S. Monson, has been called of God and that with his two noble counselors at his side, they will lead us in accordance with the mind and will of the Lord, whose Church this is. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

To Heal the Shattering Consequences of Abuse

ELDER RICHARD G. SCOTT

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The power of healing is inherent in the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



I bear solemn witness of how deeply I love our new prophet, seer, and revelator, President Thomas S. Monson—how deeply I trust him, and how I am willing to do whatever he asks me to do.

Some matters are so sensitive and intensely personal and can awaken such disturbing feelings that they are seldom mentioned publicly. Yet, if tenderly and compassionately treated in

the light of truth, discussion of these matters can bring greater understanding, with the easing of pain, the blessing of healing, and even the avoidance of further tragedy.

It is with a deep desire to define a path to relief that I speak to you who suffer the shattering consequences of mental, verbal, physical, and especially sexual abuse. I speak also to those of you who cause it. I will focus on sexual abuse, although the counsel given should help the victims of other mistreatment. My intent is to act as a mirror so that divine, healing light can illuminate the dark clouds of distress caused by others' unrighteous acts. May I be aided to communicate understandably, to provide help, and not further complicate a damaged life. It is also likely that greater understanding, awareness, and sensitivity may permit some of the rest of us to help resolve or prevent the tragedy of abuse in additional victims.

The rising tide of this vicious, abominable sin may not have touched your life personally. Yet it is pervasive

enough in the world that it may have touched someone you love. It frequently causes such profound suffering—that can be overcome—that I want to speak of how healing can be attained. It will be done reverently, for my objective is to help heal and not aggravate painful memories.

Agency

Moral agency is a vital element in our Father in Heaven's plan of happiness. He understood that some of His spirit children would use that agency improperly, causing serious problems to others. Some would even violate sacred trust, such as a father or family member abusing an innocent child. Since our Heavenly Father is completely just, there has to be a way of overcoming the tragic consequences of such damaging use of agency for both the victim and the perpetrator. That secure healing comes through the power of the Atonement of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to rectify that which is unjust. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His power to heal provides the abused with the means to overcome the terrible consequences of another's unrighteous acts. When combined with complete repentance, the Atonement also affords the perpetrator a way to avoid the severe punishment the Lord has decreed for such acts.

To the Victim

I testify that I know victims of serious abuse who have successfully made the difficult journey to full healing through the power of the Atonement. After her own concerns were resolved by her faith in the healing power of the Atonement, one young woman who had been severely abused by her father requested another interview with me. She returned with an older couple. I could sense that she loved the two very deeply. Her face radiated happiness. She began, "Elder Scott, this is my father. I love him. He's concerned



about some things that happened in my early childhood. They are no longer a problem for me. Could you help him?" What a powerful confirmation of the Savior's capacity to heal! She no longer suffered from the consequences of abuse, because she had adequate understanding of His Atonement, sufficient faith, and was obedient to His law. As you conscientiously study the Atonement and exercise your faith that Jesus Christ has the power to heal, you can receive the same blessed relief. During your journey of recovery, accept His invitation to let Him share your burden until you have sufficient time and strength to be healed.

To find relief from the consequences of abuse, it is helpful to understand their source. Satan is the author of all of the destructive outcomes of abuse. He has extraordinary capacity to lead an individual into blind alleys where the solution to extremely challenging problems

cannot be found. His strategy is to separate the suffering soul from the healing attainable from a compassionate Heavenly Father and a loving Redeemer.

If you have been abused, Satan will strive to convince you that there is no solution. Yet he knows perfectly well that there is. Satan recognizes that healing comes through the unwavering love of Heavenly Father for each of His children. He also understands that the power of healing is inherent in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Therefore, his strategy is to do all possible to separate you from your Father and His Son. Do not let Satan convince you that you are beyond help.

Satan uses your abuse to undermine your self-confidence, destroy trust in authority, create fear, and generate feelings of despair. Abuse can damage your ability to form healthy human relationships. You must have faith that all of these negative consequences can be resolved; otherwise

they will keep you from full recovery. While these outcomes have powerful influence in your life, *they do not define the real you.*

Satan will strive to alienate you from your Father in Heaven with the thought that if He loved you He would have prevented the tragedy. Do not be kept from the very source of true healing by the craftiness of the prince of evil and his wicked lies. Recognize that if you have feelings that you are not loved by your Father in Heaven, you are being manipulated by Satan. Even when it may seem very difficult to pray, kneel and ask Father in Heaven to give you the capacity to trust Him and to feel His love for you. Ask to come to know that His Son can heal you through His merciful Atonement.

It was Satan's proposal that Father's children be forced to obey, that there be no moral agency and therefore no personal growth. To preserve moral agency, the Lord does not restrain individuals from improper use



are many ways to begin healing, but remember that a full cure comes through the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer. Have faith that with effort His perfect, eternal, infinite Atonement can heal your suffering from the consequences of abuse.

As impossible as it may seem to you now, in time the healing you can receive from the Savior will allow you to truly forgive the abuser and even have feelings of sorrow for him or her. When you can forgive the offense, you will be relieved of the pain and heartache that Satan wants in your life by encouraging you to hate the abuser. As a result, you will enjoy greater peace. While an important part of healing, if the thought of forgiveness causes you yet more pain, set that step aside until you have more experience with the Savior's healing power in your own life.¹

If you are currently being abused or have been in the past, find the courage to seek help. You may have been severely threatened or caused to fear so that you would not reveal the abuse. Have the courage to act now. Seek the support of someone you can trust. Your bishop or stake president can give you valuable counsel and help you with the civil authorities. Explain how you have been abused and identify who has done it. Ask for protection. Your action may help others avoid becoming innocent victims, with the consequent suffering. Get help now. Do not fear—for fear is a tool Satan will use to keep you suffering. The Lord will help you, but you must reach out for that help.

Do not be discouraged if initially a bishop hesitates when you identify an abuser. Remember that predators are skillful at cultivating a public appearance of piety to mask their despicable acts. Pray to be guided in your efforts to receive help. That support will come. Rest assured that the Perfect Judge, Jesus the Christ, with a perfect

of that agency. However, He will punish them for such acts unless there is full repentance. Through the Holy Ghost, He sends warning promptings to the abuser, but often that individual's degrading appetite is so powerful that it blocks out that spiritual guidance. That is why our Father provided a way to heal the consequences of acts that, through force, misuse of authority, or fear of another, temporarily take away the agency of the abused.

The beginning of healing requires childlike faith in the unalterable fact that Father in Heaven loves you and has supplied a way to heal. His

Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, laid down His life to provide that healing. But there is no magic solution, no simple balm to provide healing, nor is there an easy path to the complete remedy. The cure requires profound faith in Jesus Christ and in His infinite capacity to heal. It is rooted in an understanding of doctrine and a resolute determination to follow it.

Healing may begin with a thoughtful bishop or stake president or a wise professional counselor. If you had a broken leg, you wouldn't decide to fix it yourself. Serious abuse can also benefit from professional help. There

knowledge of the details, will hold all abusers accountable for every unrighteous act. In time He will fully apply the required demands of justice unless there is complete repentance. Your preoccupation with a need for justice only slows your healing and allows the perpetrator to continue his abusive control. Therefore you should leave punishment for the diabolic acts of abuse to civil and Church authorities.

To the Perpetrator

Now, to the perpetrator who has shattered the life of another by abuse: Recognize that you need help with your addiction or it will destroy you. You will not overcome it by yourself. You likely need specialized professional help. I plead with you to seek to be rescued *now*. You likely have deceived yourself in the false, temporary security that you have successfully hidden your transgression from the civil or Church authorities. But know that the Lord Jesus Christ is completely aware of your sins. He has warned: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones . . . , it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."² Know that even without action by a victim, your act of abuse will be publicly known, for Satan will expose you, then abandon you.

Simplify your life by taking steps *now* to cleanse your soul from such sin and resolve the penalties they evoke. Show your desire to heal the anguish that you have caused others. Talk to your bishop or stake president. The seriousness of your acts may require you to face civil and Church discipline. But full repentance will bring the sweet relief of forgiveness, peace of conscience, and a renewed life. It will also bring relief to the abused and their families. You will be free of the weight of remorse and the accusing thoughts of what you have caused in grief and anguish in



another's life. Recognize that it is much easier to repent in this life than it will be in the next, so repent now. You will be helped when you decide to be freed from your addiction through repentance and the support of others. Be grateful that you didn't live anciently when abusers were stoned to death without the opportunity for repentance.³

To Parents

Parents, in appropriate, sensitive ways, teach your children of the potential danger of abuse and how to avoid it. Be aware of warning signs, such as an abrupt change in a child's behavior, that may signal a problem. Be alert to a child's unsettled feelings and identify their origin.

To Judges in Israel

To you who hold the keys of a judge in Israel, painstakingly assure that every individual that is suffering from abuse receives appropriate help. The Church handbook and the help line listed there are valuable resources to guide your ecclesiastical action and coordination with civil authorities.⁴ Carefully supervise the participation of any individual who may have had past offenses. Recognize that it is very unlikely that a perpetrator will confess his depraved acts. Seek the guidance

of the Spirit when you feel that something may be amiss. Enlist the help of ward and stake leaders to avoid potential dangers.

I pray that you, as one abused or one who has caused it, will act now to avail yourself of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I testify that your faith and obedience will assure that He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. These materials may help in recovering from the tragedy of abuse: Gordon B. Hinckley, "Save the Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 52–54; James E. Faust, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope," *Liabona*, Jan. 2002, 19–22; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 18–20; Dallin H. Oaks, "He Heals the Heavy Laden," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 6–9; Richard G. Scott, "Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse," *Ensign*, May 1992, 31–33; Richard G. Scott, "Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–18; Richard G. Scott, "Peace of Conscience and Peace of Mind," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 15–18; Richard G. Scott, "The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 40–42; Jeffrey R. Holland, "Broken Things to Mend," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 69–71; "A Conversation on Spouse Abuse," *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 22–27; "The Wrongful Road of Abuse," chapter 28 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 1998), 249–55; D&C 121:34–46.
2. Matthew 18:6.
3. See Deuteronomy 22:25–27.
4. See *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1: Stake Presidencies and Bishoprics* (2006), 107–8, 110, 120, 122, 147, 186.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

ELDER L. TOM PERRY

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven.



The Apostle Paul boldly declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). This same boldness is declared by our full-time missionaries as they serve in many parts of the world.

Essentially, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a five-ingredient recipe for eternal life. First, let us consider what can become of us if we follow this recipe, and then we can consider each of the ingredients.

What do we know about eternal life? We learn from Moses 1:39 that the Lord’s work and glory is to bring to pass our immortality and eternal

life. This teaches us that immortality and eternal life are separate and distinct. The gift of eternal life, which is promised only when certain conditions are met, is so much greater than the gift of immortality.

According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie: “Eternal life is not a name that has reference only to the unending duration of a future life; immortality is to live forever in the resurrected state, and by the grace of God all men will gain this unending continuance of life. But only those who obey the fulness of the gospel law will inherit eternal life. . . . It is ‘the greatest of all the gifts of God’ . . . , for it is the kind, status, type, and quality of life that God himself enjoys. Thus those who gain eternal life receive exaltation; they are sons of God, joint-heirs with Christ, members of the Church of the Firstborn; they overcome all things, have all power, and receive the fulness of the Father” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 237).

The duty of our missionaries, as stated on page 1 of *Preach My Gospel*, is to “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the . . . Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end” (2004).

In many cookbooks there are

pictures of the perfect dishes that recipes make—the fulness of the joy of cooking. These pictures are important because they help us envision the outcome if we strictly follow the directions as given in the recipe. It is important to begin with the end in mind, but the end represented by pictures in cookbooks is an end that is only possible if everything is done right. If directions are not followed or an ingredient is left out or miscalculated, the desired taste and appearance are seldom attained. The picture of a perfect dish, however, can serve as motivation to try again to create something that is both delicious and beautiful.

When we think of eternal life, what is the picture that comes to mind? I believe that if we could create in our minds a clear and true picture of eternal life, we would start behaving differently. We would not need to be prodded to do the many things involved with enduring to the end, like doing our home teaching or visiting teaching, attending our meetings, going to the temple, living moral lives, saying our prayers, or reading the scriptures. We would want to do all these things and more because we realize they will prepare us to go somewhere we yearn to go.

Why does a missionary’s purpose need to begin with helping others receive faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement? In order to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, people must first embrace Him whose gospel it is. They must trust the Savior and what He has taught us. They must believe that He has the power to keep His promises to us by virtue of the Atonement. When people have faith in Jesus Christ, they accept and apply His Atonement and His teachings.

The Savior taught His disciples, as recorded in the 27th chapter of 3 Nephi, the interdependence of His gospel and His earthly ministry and Atonement when He said:



Members and missionaries in the Antsirabe Branch, Madagascar Antananarivo Mission, gather prior to conference.

“Behold, I [give] unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. . . .

“And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (vv. 13, 16).

Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement turns us to Him. The world teaches that seeing is believing, but our faith in our Lord leads us to believe so we can see Him and the Father’s plan for us.

Our faith also leads to action—it leads to the commitments and changes associated with true repentance. As Amulek taught in the 34th chapter of Alma:

“Therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

“Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

“Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save” (vv. 16–18).

Why must individuals repent before they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost? The voice of Christ proclaimed to the Nephites an end to the law of sacrifice, and then He said: “And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20).

This same requirement is discussed in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants in a verse we often use to describe the requirements for baptism. Verse 37 states, “All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite

spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins . . . shall be received by baptism into his church.”

These verses of scripture teach essential lessons about the nature of repentance as preparation for baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost. First, repentance involves an attitude of humility. In order to prepare to be baptized and take upon ourselves the name of Christ, we must humble ourselves before Him—offer our sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and accept His will. Second, we learn that persons must witness before the Church, or a representative of the Church, that they have repented of their sins. Finally, we recognize that repentance, which is a cleansing process, precedes baptism, which is a cleansing ordinance, in order to prepare someone to receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. The gift of the Holy Ghost is available only to those who are cleansed



Children from the Bell Ville Argentina District show one of their favorite pictures.

by repentance of the sins of the world.

Why do we need baptism to receive the Holy Ghost? Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: “Baptism is twofold, and has a double mission to perform. It not only cleanses—it [illuminates] the soul, making manifest the things of God, past, present, future, and imparting a sure testimony of the Truth. The soul, cleansed of sin, is in a condition to enjoy the abiding influence of the Holy Ghost, which ‘dwelleth not in unclean tabernacles.’ Water baptism begins the work of purification and enlightenment. Spirit baptism completes it” (*Baptism—The Birth of Water and of Spirit* [n.d.], 10).

The ordinance of baptism by water and fire is described as a gate by Nephi (see 2 Nephi 31:17). Why is baptism a gate? Because it is an ordinance denoting entry into a sacred and binding covenant between God and man. Men promise to forsake the world, love and serve their fellowmen, visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, proclaim peace, preach the gospel, serve the Lord, and keep His commandments. The Lord promises to “pour out his

Spirit more abundantly upon [us]” (Mosiah 18:10), redeem His Saints both temporally and spiritually, number them with those of the First Resurrection, and offer life eternal. Baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost are the prescribed ways to enter the strait and narrow path to eternal life.

According to the Apostle Paul, baptism also denotes our descent into a watery grave from which we are raised with “newness of life” (Romans 6:4) in Christ. The ordinance of baptism symbolizes Christ’s death and Resurrection—we die with Him so we can live with Him. In this sense baptism is the first saving ordinance, and receiving the Holy Ghost helps each of us press forward and endure to the end.

How do we endure to the end?

Enduring to the end requires faithfulness to the end, as in the case of Paul, who told Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Obviously, this is not an easy task. It is intended to be difficult, challenging, and, ultimately, refining as we prepare to return to live with our Father in Heaven and receive eternal blessings.

Enduring to the end is definitely not a do-it-yourself project. First, it requires the Savior’s redemptive power. We cannot return to our Heavenly Father’s presence unless we are clean, and so we must continue to repent. Ideally, we repent moment by moment, but we also attend sacrament meeting each week to partake of the sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants. Second, enduring to the end requires the Holy Ghost, who will both guide and sanctify us. Third, we must be an integral part of a community of Saints, serving and receiving service from our brothers and sisters in the gospel. With baptism we become part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:11–13); each of us has a role to play, each of us is important, but in order to succeed we must be unified in our Savior. Fourth, we must share the gospel with others. The promises of bringing even one soul unto the Lord are profound and eternal (see D&C 18:15). Moreover, the gospel takes deeper root in those who share it frequently. Finally, we must always maintain faith and hope in Christ to endure to the end, and among the many ways we do this are praying, fasting, and reading the scriptures. These practices will fortify us against the subtle schemes and fiery darts of the adversary.

I love the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it defines the way we can partake of the fruits of the gospel, experience the “exceedingly great joy” (1 Nephi 8:12) that only it can bring, and endure to the end through all of the challenges of mortal life. The gospel teaches us all we need to know to return to live with our Father in Heaven as resurrected and glorified beings. May all of us maintain in our minds the vision of eternal life. May we be diligent in following the recipe for eternal life that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May we endure to the end. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Give Heed unto the Prophets' Words

ELDER QUENTIN L. COOK

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

As the priesthood holders of the Church, it is our solemn responsibility to follow our prophet.



My dear brethren of the priesthood, I am grateful to be with you at this session of general conference on this historic day.

We admire those who risk their lives to rescue those in danger.¹ When I visited Southern California during the devastating Santa Ana wind fires late last year, I came away with two impressions. The first was how the Church members came to the assistance of those in need. The second was how appreciative they were to the firefighters. One homeowner described what he saw the firefighters do. He pointed out that the Santa Ana winds blow from the warm desert toward the ocean. Once a fire starts,

these hot desert winds carry the flames at a speed of up to 60 or 70 miles (97–113 km) per hour. The homeowner described his gratitude and admiration as he watched the firefighters standing with their hoses behind a cleared area, facing a wall of fire up to 10 feet (3 m) high descending upon them at this enormous speed. These brave men and women were able to rescue both people and homes while in constant personal danger.

From time to time, as individuals and as a church, we go through periods of crisis and danger. Some arise quickly like a fire. Others are subtle and go almost undetected before they are upon us. Some require heroic action, but most are less spectacular. The way we respond is crucial. My purpose this evening is to reemphasize to priesthood holders the importance of heeding the words of the prophets. This is one sure way to respond to physical and spiritual dangers of all kinds. Some illustrations may be helpful.

Many of you have participated in treks to experience and appreciate the dramatic rescue of the Willie and Martin handcart companies. I first became aware of this rescue when I was a teenager. My mother gave me a book written by Orson F. Whitney,

who would later be an Apostle.² Elder Whitney's book acquainted me with the heroic effort directed by Brigham Young to rescue the handcart companies. They had been overtaken by winter storms on the high plains of Wyoming. Some had died and many others were on the verge of death. Brigham Young became aware of their plight, and at the October 1856 general conference he instructed the Saints to drop everything and rescue those stranded on the plains.³

The response was dramatic. Elder Whitney reported, "Brave men by their heroism—for it was at the peril of their own lives that they thus braved the wintry storms on the plains—immortalized themselves, and won the undying gratitude of hundreds who were undoubtedly saved by their timely action from perishing."⁴

One reason my mother had given me the book was Elder Whitney had made special mention of my great-grandfather David Patten Kimball, who had participated in the rescue when he was 17 years old. All the rescuers battled deep snow and freezing temperatures during much of the rescue of the handcart companies. At great personal sacrifice, David and his associates helped carry many of the pioneers across the freezing, ice-filled Sweetwater.⁵

This true account greatly impressed me. I wanted to prove my devotion to the Lord through some dramatic act. However, in a visit with my grandfather, he explained that when President Brigham Young sent his father, David, and the other young men on their rescue mission, President Young instructed them to do everything they possibly could to save the handcart companies, even at the peril of their own lives.⁶ Their acts of bravery were specifically to "follow the prophet Brigham Young" and by so doing express their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. My grandfather told me that consistent, faithful dedication

to the counsel of a prophet is the real lesson I should learn from my great-grandfather's service. As heroic as it was for David and his associates to help rescue the pioneers, it is also valiant today to follow the counsel of our prophet.

An often-told account from the Old Testament illustrates this principle. Naaman, a prominent leader in Syria, was afflicted with leprosy. He became aware that the prophet Elisha in Israel might be able to heal him. Elisha sent word by a messenger that Naaman should wash himself in the river Jordan seven times. Initially, Naaman was upset with this counsel. However, his servants said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" Then Naaman followed the counsel of the prophet Elisha, and he was made clean.⁷

Like Naaman, you young priesthood holders might aspire to "do some great thing" or participate in something dramatic like the handcart rescue. However, your resolve should be to follow the counsel of the prophet. The First Presidency has reaffirmed its commitment to increasing the worthiness of young people who are recommended for missionary service. Keeping yourselves free from the sins of the world and meeting the high standards for missionary service should be one goal. Preparing yourselves to proclaim the gospel and rescue some of Heavenly Father's children spiritually would be both significant and heroic. You can meet this challenge.

Throughout history, a loving Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church, have blessed us with prophets who counsel and warn about future dangers.⁸ In Doctrine and Covenants, section 21, speaking specifically of the prophet, the Lord declares:

"Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments



which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."⁹

We have had the great privilege this morning in a solemn assembly to sustain President Thomas S. Monson as our prophet, seer, and revelator and as the 16th President of the Church in this dispensation. Later in this priesthood session of conference we will be blessed to hear his first general conference address as President of the Church. We will want to sustain him with our hearts and our actions as we pay careful attention to what he teaches and what we feel.

My love and appreciation for our previous prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, is planted deeply in my heart and will remain with me throughout the eternities. But just as there is room in our hearts for all the children who come into our families, we have that same love and devotion for each prophet the Lord calls to lead His Church.

Prophets are inspired to provide us with prophetic priorities to protect us from dangers. As an example, President Heber J. Grant, the prophet

from 1918 to 1945, was inspired to emphasize adherence to the Word of Wisdom,¹⁰ the principle with a promise revealed by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph.¹¹ He stressed the importance of not smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages and directed the bishops to review these principles in temple recommend interviews.

At that time smoking was accepted by society as an appropriate, even glamorous, behavior. The medical profession accepted smoking with little concern because the scientific studies linking cigarette smoking with several kinds of cancer were far in the future. President Grant counseled with great vigor, and we became known as a people who abstained from drinking and smoking.

Starting in the late 1960s, illegal drug use reached epidemic proportions throughout the world. While there were some members who rebelled, the vast majority of LDS youth were able to avoid the devastating use of drugs.

Obedying the Word of Wisdom gave our members, especially our youth, a preventive inoculation against drug use and the resulting health problems and moral hazards. Unfortunately, there appears to be a resurgence of drug use in our own day. Living the Word of Wisdom today will free you from some of the most serious dangers you can face in this life.

Sometimes prophets teach us prophetic priorities that provide protection for us now and in the future. As an example, President David O. McKay was the prophet from 1951 to 1970. One area of significant focus was his emphasis on the family. He taught that no success in life can compensate for failure in the home.¹² He encouraged members to strengthen families by increasing religious observance. His teachings were a protection from the disintegration of the institution of marriage that came after his death.¹³ Because of President

McKay's teaching, the Latter-day Saints strengthened their commitment to family and eternal marriage.

As the priesthood holders of the Church, it is our solemn responsibility to follow our prophet. We sustain President Monson and his counselors, President Eyring and President Uchtdorf.

We want you young people to know that President Thomas S. Monson has been prepared by the Lord from his youth to be the prophet.¹⁴ After serving in the navy at the close of World War II, he was ordained as a bishop at age 22 and then served in a stake presidency. At 32 years of age he served as a mission president in Canada with his sweetheart and companion, Frances Monson. He was called to be an Apostle by President McKay when he was only 36 years old. He is the youngest man called as an Apostle in the past 98 years and has served for over 44 years. The last 22 years he has served as a counselor to Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley.¹⁵

Section 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants sets forth instructions to a counselor in the First Presidency. It contains important priesthood principles. The first instruction is to be "faithful in counsel." President Monson has faithfully counseled with each of the three prophets under whom he has served. The unity of the First Presidency in all of their important decisions has been an example to all of us as priesthood holders in the exercise of Church government.

The second instruction is "proclaiming the gospel." President Monson has been a great missionary all his life. His personal missionary effort, his supervisory work of the Missionary Department, and his calling and training of mission presidents have been undertaken with enthusiasm. He made significant contributions to the new missionary guide, *Preach My Gospel*. In addition to valuable



content contributions, he inspired the inclusion of true accounts to make the guide come alive. With his printer's eye, he improved the design and layout. He is indeed a great missionary.

The third instruction reads, "Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the

feeble knees."¹⁶ Many of our brothers and sisters face devastating problems in their lives. It is in our Christlike outreach to them that we as priesthood leaders, parents, friends, and home teachers can be like the handcart company rescuers.

President Monson's rescue efforts in this regard have been particularly exemplary. As a bishop he learned to



minister to the members of his ward. He has kept in touch with and served their children and grandchildren. Despite a demanding schedule, he was able to speak at the funerals of all 84 of the widows who lived in his ward when he was bishop.

He has reached out to those in need in a remarkable and personal way. His long years of oversight of humanitarian efforts have blessed people all over the world, both members and those not of our faith. His personal ministry has been Christlike and has given comfort and peace to countless numbers of people. One friend of mine who lost a grandson in a tragic accident told me that his grief was almost beyond comprehension. President Monson's ministering to him turned almost overwhelming grief to the peace that surpasses understanding. His effort to personally minister to those who are sick and afflicted has been extraordinary.

President Monson has done his

very best to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." He has magnified his calling as a counselor in the First Presidency in a remarkable way. He has valiantly testified of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, which is the primary responsibility of all Apostles.

As the then junior member of the Twelve, participating in my first reorganization of the First Presidency in an upper room of the Salt Lake Temple this past February, I experienced the confirmation of the Spirit as the Twelve individually and unanimously sustained President Monson as the Lord's prophet and President of the Church.

I am grateful for our Father in Heaven, who loves us, and for His Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and, through the Atonement, our ultimate rescuer from the physical and spiritual dangers of life. He is our advocate with the Father. Of this I

bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See John 15:13.
2. See *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (1945), 413–14.
3. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Faith to Move Mountains," *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 83–84.
4. *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 413.
5. See Chad M. Orton, "The Martin Handcart Company at the Sweetwater: Another Look," *BYU Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2006): 5–37.
6. See Marva Jeanne Kimball Pedersen, *Crozier Kimball: His Life and Work* (1995), 6–7.
7. See 2 Kings 5:1–14.
8. See Amos 3:7.
9. D&C 21:4–5.
10. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2002), 189–97.
11. See D&C 89.
12. Quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
13. See Brad Schiller, "The Inequality Myth," *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 10, 2008, A15.
14. See the following examples: 1 Samuel 2:26; Mormon 1:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:7.
15. See *Deseret Morning News 2008 Church Almanac* (2007), 35.
16. D&C 81:3–5.

And Who Is My Neighbor?

BISHOP H. DAVID BURTON

Presiding Bishop

We express our deep appreciation to the many individuals . . . who are the good Samaritans of today.



Good evening. Tonight the scripture passages “As ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40) and “Remember in all things the poor and the needy” (D&C 52:40) take on special meaning as we review highlights of humanitarian endeavors during the past year.

A briefing on humanitarian assistance was recently given to the General Welfare Committee of the Church. The committee chair, then President Gordon B. Hinckley, expressed profound gratitude for the generosity of members and those not of our faith who have made this

outreach possible. In behalf of the General Welfare Committee, we express our deep appreciation to the many individuals, families, quorums, and Relief Society and Young Women groups who are the good Samaritans of today.

In 2007 the Church responded to major earthquakes in 5 countries, massive fires in 6 countries, hunger and famine in 18 countries, and flooding and severe storms in 34 countries. In total the Church and its members responded to 170 major events—nearly one every two days for the entire year. It was a busy year with many opportunities to serve.

In addition to responding to natural disasters, we undertook thousands of public health initiatives during the year. Over 1 million people benefited from Church-sponsored clean water projects in 25 countries. More than 60,500 people received wheelchairs in 60 nations. Early this year Sister Burton and I, with the South America North Area Presidency, participated with the First Lady of Colombia in a wheelchair presentation. Tears came easily as receivers and their caregivers expressed their appreciation. In 11 countries, over 54,000 individuals now enjoy improved vision. Over 16,500 health-care professionals in 23 countries were trained in infant

neonatal resuscitation; they, in turn, will train many others. In a quest to eliminate measles, 2.8 million children and youth in 10 countries received immunizations. The combined effects of these outreach endeavors directly touched nearly 4 million people in 85 countries.

In August a major 8.0 earthquake killed 520 people and destroyed more than 58,000 homes in southern Peru. In a marvelous display of love and concern, each of the 29 stakes in Lima, Peru, provided basic assistance to ward areas in the devastated region.

With the wonderful assistance of missionaries, a plan is under way to help individuals rebuild their homes and lives and replace several schools. As many as 400 homes may ultimately be built, with individuals, friends, and family doing much of the work. Supervision, coordination, and training are under the direction of Elder and Sister Alan Layton.

Late in the year a combination of dry weather and high winds fueled wildfires in southern California. These wildfires forced over one million people from their homes. At least 1,500 homes were destroyed. In response the Church provided cleaning kits, blankets, hygiene kits, and food. Over 5,000 Mormon Helping Hands along with missionaries cleaned, cooked, comforted, and cared for those affected.

One note of appreciation said: “Please forward a great big thank you to all the Latter-day Saints who have been working so hard in my neighborhood. The Mormons have been here constantly with meals, hugs, prayers, and helping to repair and clear property. They . . . uplift my community, heal hearts, and repair homes in the San Diego hills.”¹

Reflecting on the experience, one stake president said: “One of our projects was to assist cleaning up around the local Baptist church. . . .



We assigned 25 youth. . . . The Baptists said that they would have lots of donuts and coffee for us. We told them the coffee would go stale, but our youth could handle as many donuts as they could provide!”²

Heavy rains triggered flooding across the midwestern United States, Oregon, and Washington. Volunteers came with supplies from the bishops’ storehouse to provide help to those in need.

When Church representatives in Findlay, Ohio, presented a donation to the local Red Cross chapter, a passerby spotted them in their yellow Mormon Helping Hands T-shirts. She walked in and held up her camera phone with a picture of four Helping Hands and exclaimed, “They just saved my home!”³ Then she hugged everyone in sight.

A shipment of food was delivered to a local food bank. When it arrived, the manager had a startled look on his face and said, “How did you know? I just gave out my last loaf of bread

and planned to lock the doors. How did you know?”

Working with the World Health Organization to eliminate measles as a killer of almost a million children each year, over 54,000 Church members volunteered to help organize the effort. A Church member in Nigeria wrote: “I called our labor the ‘rescue of the innocent.’ We went house to house and village hall to village hall. A woman told us she had lost three children to measles. She told her story with such grace and passion that there was not a dry eye in the house, mine included.” Our volunteer observed, “The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things that you do for others remain as your legacy.”⁴

Our four-year effort to help those devastated by a tsunami in Indonesia and southern Asia also continued. Funding was provided to help build 902 homes, with 3 community centers, 24 village water systems, 15 schools, and 3 medical centers. A community leader said: “Community members feel

happy and blessed to have the community center. . . . It is a place [where] we can pray . . . and teach the children. . . . Thank you to [the Church] for building this center for our people. . . . We will pray to God to give [the Church] blessings and success in the future. Thank you.”⁵

In Ethiopia, communities helped to access clean drinking water. The Church drilled wells and constructed storage tanks. Communities organized a water committee and dug the trenches needed to pipe the water from the storage tanks to each village. In some cases this was a distance of over three miles (5 km).

Some communities struggled to meet their commitments for trenching. The soil was hard, dry, and full of clay, making digging very difficult. In one community a school of 1,500 students suspended normal school activities for a period of time, and everyone participated in digging the remaining sections of the trench. As they worked, other members of the community joined in. At one point there was over a mile-long line of people digging.

Thank you for your compassion, your goodness, and your generosity. May we press forward to lighten the load of neighbors, encourage and assist the downtrodden, open our purses to assist the poor, and extend our helping hands. I bear witness of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel and pray that we may continue to enjoy the blessings of true discipleship as we quietly reach out to others. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Laura Ridge-Cosby, San Diego, California, in an unsolicited card received by Welfare Services.
2. Gary Sabin, president of the Poway California Stake, e-mail to Garry Flake.
3. As told by Vincent Jones, bishop of the Findlay Ward, Toledo Ohio Stake.
4. Kalu Iche Kalu, measles campaign coordinator for the Aba Nigeria Stake.
5. Mohammed Johan, Calang, Indonesia.

Do You Know Who You Are?

DEAN R. BURGESS

First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

Knowing who you are makes you spiritually strong, sound, and steadfast in your priesthood duties.



As an Aaronic Priesthood young man, I can remember the excitement I felt as a newly ordained deacon. I looked forward to being able to fulfill my priesthood assignments. As a young Primary boy, I watched the deacons in my ward very closely in anticipation of the day I would be 12 years old, receive the priesthood, and be able to pass the sacrament. That day finally arrived, and soon after being ordained by my father, who was the bishop of the ward, I felt ready, but nervous, to begin my duties as a new deacon.

I now belonged to a quorum of the Aaronic Priesthood. The members of my quorum became very best

friends. That friendship and quorum brotherhood continued to grow through my youth as we learned and served together in our priesthood duties. We were all good friends and experienced a fun and enjoyable time being together in our quorum activities.

One Sunday following one of those warm and long sacrament meetings, the first counselor in our bishopric called me aside to talk to me. This unscheduled priesthood interview became a blessing in my life as I have pondered the question he asked during our brief but significant visit. Brother Bateman looked me in the eye and asked, “Dean, do you know who you are?” There was complete silence, and then he gave me a quick and powerful reminder, “You are the son of Reid Burgess.”

The meaning and significance of that question has burned in my heart for a long time, and I often reflected on it throughout my teenage years. This good brother’s question—“Do you know who you are?”—has given me inspired direction throughout my life and a commitment to bring respect and honor to my family and to the priesthood.

Tonight I would ask each one of you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood the very same question

that I was asked as a young man, “Do you know who you are?”

Knowing who you are makes you spiritually strong, sound, and steadfast in your priesthood duties. You become confident with faith and determination to make right decisions. You have courage to stand up for what you know is right. You realize that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood of God and have the authority to act in His name.

Ammon, a great missionary of the Book of Mormon, was a faithful and valiant servant of King Lamoni. He miraculously preserved King Lamoni’s flocks and did all he could to serve the king. When hearing of Ammon’s powerful acts, Lamoni questioned who Ammon really was. Ammon declared:

“Behold, I am a man, and am thy servant; therefore, whatsoever thou desireth which is right, that will I do.

“Now when the king had heard these words, he marveled again, for he beheld that Ammon could discern his thoughts; but notwithstanding this, king Lamoni did open his mouth, and said unto him: Who art thou? Art thou that Great Spirit, who knows all things?

“Ammon answered and said unto him: I am not.”

Ammon then explained who he was when he said, “I am a man . . . created after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach . . . this people” (Alma 18:17–19, 34). Ammon knew who he was and what his true mission was.

Finding out who we are is one of life’s greatest quests. As parents and leaders, we make a sincere and honest effort to help those we love understand and know the answer to this simple but profound question, “Who am I?”

I ask you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, How do you come to receive a knowledge and witness of who you are?



Please consider the following three questions and related principles that are essential in understanding your true identity.

First, do you know that you are a son of God?

You are literally a son of God, “spiritually begotten in the premortal life. As His child, you can be assured that you have divine, eternal potential and that [your Heavenly Father] will help you in your sincere efforts to reach that potential” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 74).

The knowledge that Heavenly Father loves us and that we are His children gives us strength, comfort, and hope to live this mortal life. In the First Epistle of John we read:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:

therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:1–2).

You are important to a loving Father in Heaven! Young men, pray always! Your prayers both morning and night will help you come to know that you are a son of God.

Second, do you know who you are in God’s plan?

Alma called it “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), a plan that God prepared for you and for each of us. Following this plan makes it possible for each of us to enjoy happiness now and to return to His presence after we die. Heavenly Father sent His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to “loose the bands of death” (Alma 7:12) and atone for our sins and the sins of the world. Allowing the Savior

to atone for our sins is the greatest expression of our Heavenly Father’s love for each of us. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Knowing, believing, and understanding the mission of the Savior helps us know who we are.

As part of Heavenly Father’s plan, you are sent to an earthly home and to a family. The covenants you make in God’s plan, as an individual and as part of a family, will bind you forever in your family and in the family of God for all eternity. Honor and respect those names you bear. Live the standards and the commandments of God. Allow others to know who you are by the way you live the standards, as found in the *For the*

Strength of Youth booklet. Study, ponder, and live these divine standards. They are for you!

Third, do you know who you are as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

You have been baptized and have received the Holy Ghost. You are a member of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. It is His Church, and He has given us a prophet of God to teach, lead, and guide us and to direct His work here on earth. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is our prophet in these “perilous times” (2 Timothy 3:1). Listen to him. He and other modern-day prophets will teach you who you are and how to become like the Savior.

You are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have been ordained to hold the priesthood of God. President Monson has said, “We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood and to act in the name of God. We are recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us” (“A Royal Priesthood,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 59).

You belong to a priesthood quorum of young men, where you can feel the brotherhood and friendship of other priesthood holders. The quorum is a protection for you against worldly influences. You are able to serve one another and participate in the ordinances of the priesthood. In your quorums you are also taught the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which help you understand who you are. Young men, honor the priesthood of God.

I testify that knowing who you are and keeping your promises and covenants with the Lord will bring you happiness in your life.

May we all be able to know and understand who we really are. May the Spirit we feel tonight bear “witness with our spirit[s], that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

A 12-Year-Old Deacon

ELDER JOHN M. MADSEN

Of the Seventy

Each one of us, as sons of God, can fulfill our mission and destiny.



My beloved brethren of the priesthood, as I begin, I would like to direct my remarks to each 12-year-old deacon attending this general priesthood session. Wherever you are, I want to acknowledge your presence and to tell or remind you of the experience that President Gordon B. Hinckley had when he was, like you are, a 12-year-old deacon.

From his biography we read: “Not long after he was ordained a deacon, he attended his first stake priesthood meeting with his father. . . . He felt a little out of place as he found a seat on the back row of the Tenth Ward chapel while [his father] (who was

serving in the stake presidency) took his place on the stand. To open the meeting, the three or four hundred men present stood and sang William W. Phelps’s triumphant anthem . . . : ‘Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah! / Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer. / Blessed to open the last dispensation, / Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.’”

Reflecting back on that experience, President Hinckley said: “Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. It touched my heart. It gave me a feeling that was difficult to describe. I felt a great moving power, both emotional and spiritual. I had never had it previously in terms of any Church experience. There came into my heart a conviction that the man of whom they sang was really a prophet of God. I knew then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”¹

Even as that experience had by President Hinckley as a 12-year-old deacon was “one he would remember for the rest of his life,”² I pray that the experience you are having will be one you will remember for the rest of your lives.

Now, I invite us all to look at this remarkable cast bronze sculpture entitled *Deacons’ Bench*. For those of



you who cannot see it, *Deacons' Bench* is the likeness of five deacons, caught in a candid moment while seated on a bench in church.

As you look at these five deacons, what do you see? Now, as I read statements by two former Presidents of the Church, I will ask the question a little differently: what *can* you see?

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: "Our young people . . . are the nobility of heaven, a choice and chosen generation who have a divine destiny. Their spirits have been reserved to come forth in this day when the gospel is on the earth, and when the Lord needs valiant servants to carry on his great latter-day work."³

President Spencer W. Kimball

declared, "We are rearing a royal generation . . . who have special things to do."⁴

In light of these prophetic declarations, if we expand our vision beyond five deacons on a bench to include all of the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, then what can you see?

I trust and pray that we can all see their divine potential; that we can see them going forth as bearers of the holy priesthood and as missionaries preaching "the everlasting gospel"⁵ by the Spirit⁶ "to the nations of the earth";⁷ that we can see them as faithful husbands and fathers and as valiant servants in and leaders of the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days.

In order for us to more clearly envision the divine destiny of this chosen and royal generation, we need only to reflect upon the 12-year-old Jesus, who went up to Jerusalem with His parents to celebrate the Feast of the Passover.⁸

Who was this 12-year-old boy? What was His mission and destiny? And how was He able to fulfill it?

We proclaim and the scriptures confirm that He was and is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God;⁹ that He "came into the world . . . to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness"¹⁰ "that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name";¹¹ that as a youth He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man";¹² that He "grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come";¹³ and that He "was in all points tempted like as we are."¹⁴ Indeed, He faced "temptations of every kind"¹⁵ but "gave no heed unto them."¹⁶ And when confronted by Lucifer, "the father of all lies,"¹⁷ "the author of all sin,"¹⁸ Jesus was protected not only by His knowledge of the scriptures but also by His absolute obedience to the word and will of His Father,¹⁹ and He commanded, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."²⁰

Now, as to how He was able to fulfill His mission and destiny, consider these words of Jesus, who said:

"When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."²¹

That each one of us, as sons of God,²² can fulfill our mission and destiny is made plain by these words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments . . . may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.”²³

I so testify, as I also bear my witness that President Thomas S. Monson is indeed a prophet of God and that he and his counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. In Sheri Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 35–36.
2. In “President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *In Memoriam: President Gordon B. Hinckley, 1910–2008* (a supplement to the *Liabona*, Apr. 2008, 3; a supplement to the *Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 3).
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 6.
4. “Boys Need Heroes Close By,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 45.
5. Revelation 14:6; D&C 68:1; see also D&C 133:7–8.
6. See Matthew 10:19–20; Luke 24:32; D&C 42:14; 43:15; 50:13–22; 84:85.
7. D&C 134:12; see also Revelation 14:6; D&C 68:8; 133:7–8.
8. See Luke 2:41–42.
9. See Matthew 16:16; 2 Nephi 25:19–20; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 5:48; Helaman 5:9; 3 Nephi 5:13; 11:10–11; 20:31; D&C 14:9; 68:6.
10. D&C 76:41.
11. Mosiah 3:9; see also Mosiah 3:12; D&C 18:17–19, 21–25.
12. Luke 2:52.
13. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24.
14. Hebrews 4:15.
15. Alma 7:11.
16. D&C 20:22.
17. 2 Nephi 2:18; Ether 8:25; Moses 4:4.
18. Helaman 6:30; see also Mosiah 4:14.
19. See Matthew 4:1–10.
20. Matthew 4:10.
21. John 8:28–29.
22. Psalm 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Romans 8:16–17; Hebrews 12:9; D&C 11:30; 35:2; Moses 6:68.
23. D&C 93:1, 19; see also John 14:6; D&C 76:92–95; 2 Nephi 31:7–16; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Moroni 10:32–33.

A Matter of a Few Degrees

PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The difference between happiness and misery . . . often comes down to an error of only a few degrees.



My dear brethren, I feel your strength and goodness as we assemble as the priesthood of God. I love you; I admire you. Thank you for your faith, your prayers, and your willingness to serve the Lord.

It is now two months since President Thomas S. Monson called me to serve as Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church. I am sure this came as a surprise to many, and it caught me off guard as well. In fact, I would say I may have been the second most surprised person on earth, the first being my wife.

On the day the Quorum of the Twelve met in the temple to sustain

President Monson and ordain and set him apart as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I felt overjoyed to have the opportunity to raise my hand in support of my beloved friend and leader.

After President Monson was sustained, he announced his counselors.

President Eyring was no surprise. He is a man of stature and character—a wonderful choice as First Counselor. How I love and admire him.

Then President Monson announced his Second Counselor. It was a name that sounded strangely familiar. It was my name.

I looked around the room, not sure I had heard correctly. But the smiles from my brethren and the look of compassion from President Monson assured me that once again my life was about to change.

We all miss President Hinckley. He continues to bless our lives.

President Monson is the prophet of God for our days; I honor him and pledge my heart, might, mind, and strength to this great work.

In 1979 a large passenger jet with 257 people on board left New Zealand for a sightseeing flight to Antarctica and back. Unknown to the pilots, however, someone had modified



the flight coordinates by a mere two degrees. This error placed the aircraft 28 miles (45 km) to the east of where the pilots assumed they were. As they approached Antarctica, the pilots descended to a lower altitude to give the passengers a better look at the landscape. Although both were experienced pilots, neither had made this particular flight before, and they had no way of knowing that the incorrect coordinates had placed them directly in the path of Mount Erebus, an active volcano that rises from the frozen landscape to a height of more than 12,000 feet (3,700 m).

As the pilots flew onward, the white of the snow and ice covering the volcano blended with the white of the clouds above, making it appear as though they were flying over flat ground. By the time the instruments sounded the warning that the ground was rising fast toward them, it was too late. The airplane crashed into the side of the volcano, killing everyone on board.

It was a terrible tragedy brought on by a minor error—a matter of only a few degrees.¹

Through years of serving the Lord and in countless interviews, I have learned that the difference between happiness and misery in individuals, in marriages, and families often comes down to an error of only a few degrees.

Saul, the King of Israel

The story of Saul, the king of Israel, illustrates this point. Saul's life began with great promise, but it had an unfortunate and tragic end. In the beginning, Saul was "a choice young man, . . . and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he."² Saul was personally chosen by God to be king.³ He had every advantage—he was physically imposing,⁴ and he came from an influential family.⁵

Of course, Saul had weaknesses, but the Lord promised to bless, uphold, and prosper him. The scriptures tell us that God promised to always be with him,⁶ give him another heart,⁷ and turn him into another man.⁸

When he had the Lord's help, Saul was a magnificent king. He united Israel and defeated the Ammonites, who had invaded their land.⁹ Soon a much greater problem faced him—the Philistines, who had a terrible army with chariots and horsemen "and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude."¹⁰ The Israelites were so terrified of the Philistines that they hid "themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks."¹¹

The young king needed help. The prophet Samuel sent word for him to wait and that he, the prophet, would come and offer sacrifice and seek counsel from the Lord. Saul waited

seven days, and still the prophet Samuel had not arrived. Finally, Saul felt he could wait no longer. He gathered the people together and did something he had no priesthood authority to do—he offered the sacrifice himself.

When Samuel arrived, he was brokenhearted. "Thou hast done foolishly," he said. If only the new king had endured a little longer and not deviated from the course of the Lord, if only he had followed the revealed order of the priesthood, the Lord would have established his kingdom forever. "But now," Samuel said, "thy kingdom shall not continue."¹²

On that day, the prophet Samuel recognized a critical weakness in Saul's character. When pressured by outside influences, Saul did not have the self-discipline to stay on course, trust the Lord and His prophet, and follow the pattern God had established.

Small Errors Can Have a Large Impact on Our Lives

The difference of a few degrees, as with the Antarctica flight or Saul's failure to hold fast to the counsel of the prophet just a little longer, may seem minor. But even small errors over time can make a dramatic difference in our lives.

Let me share with you how I taught the same principle to young pilots.

Suppose you were to take off from an airport at the equator, intending to circumnavigate the globe, but your course was off by just one degree. By the time you returned to the same longitude, how far off course would you be? A few miles? A hundred miles? The answer might surprise you. An error of only one degree would put you almost 500 miles (800 km) off course, or one hour of flight for a jet.

No one wants his life to end in tragedy. But all too often, like the pilots and passengers of the sightseeing flight, we set out on what we hope will be an exciting journey only

to realize too late that an error of a few degrees has set us on a course for spiritual disaster.

Is There a Lesson for Our Lives in These Examples?

Small errors and minor drifts away from the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring sorrowful consequences into our lives. It is therefore of critical importance that we become self-disciplined enough to make early and decisive corrections to get back on the right track and not wait or hope that errors will somehow correct themselves.

The longer we delay corrective action, the larger the needed changes become, and the longer it takes to get back on the correct course—even to the point where a disaster might be looming.

You men of the priesthood have been entrusted with a great responsibility. Just think of it: our Heavenly Father trusts you young deacons, teachers, and priests with the “key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel.”¹³ You men of the Melchizedek Priesthood have received an oath and a covenant in which you have been promised all the Father has if you magnify your priesthood.¹⁴

The Lord reminds us that “unto whom much is given much is required.”¹⁵ Those who bear the priesthood of God have a great responsibility to be examples of goodness to the world. We live up to these expectations when we quickly recognize the dangers and influences that tempt us to drift from the Lord’s way and when we courageously follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost to make decisive corrections that will bring us back on course.

This conference is being translated into 92 languages and broadcast to 96 countries by the miracle of modern technology. Many of you brethren attend general conference by means of the Internet. New technologies



such as this make it possible for the gospel message to be spread throughout the world. The Church Web sites are good examples of how you can use this technology as a wonderful resource of inspiration, help, and learning. They can be a blessing for you priesthood holders, your families, and the Church.

But be cautious. These same technologies can allow evil influences to cross the threshold of your homes. These dangerous traps are only a mouse click away. Pornography, violence, intolerance, and ungodliness destroy families, marriages, and

individual lives. These dangers are distributed through many media, including magazines, books, television, movies, and music, as well as the Internet. The Lord will help you to recognize and avoid those evils. It is the early recognition of danger and a clear course correction that will keep you in the light of the gospel. Minor decisions can lead to major consequences.

Entering a strange and risky chat room on the Internet could lead you into the center of a raging storm. Putting a computer in a private room that the rest of the family cannot access could be the starting point for

a deceitful and dangerous journey.

But the Lord requires not only outward acts but also your inner thoughts and feelings to be close to the spirit of the law.¹⁶ God “require[s] the heart and a willing mind.”¹⁷

We, the priesthood of God, have the responsibility and the power of self-direction: “It is not meet that I should command in all things,” saith the Lord. “Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.”¹⁸

Our Heavenly Father knew before we came to this mortal existence that negative forces would tempt us to drift from our course, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”¹⁹ That is why He prepared a way for us to make corrections. Through the merciful process of true repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, our sins can be forgiven and we will “not perish, but have everlasting life.”²⁰

Our willingness to repent shows our gratitude for God’s gift and for the Savior’s love and sacrifice on our behalf. Commandments and priesthood covenants provide a test of faith, obedience, and love *for* God and Jesus Christ, but even more importantly, they offer an opportunity to experience love *from* God and to receive a full measure of joy both in this life and in the life to come.

These commandments and covenants of God are like navigational instructions from celestial heights and will lead us safely to our eternal destination. It is one of beauty and glory beyond understanding. It is worth the effort. It is worth making decisive corrections now and then staying on course.

Remember: the heavens will not be filled with those who never made mistakes but with those who recognized



that they were off course and who corrected their ways to get back in the light of gospel truth.

The more we treasure the words of the prophets and apply them, the better we will recognize when we are drifting off course—even if only by a matter of a few degrees.

What If We Have Drifted Far off Course?

Now, brethren, there are those who have neglected to make appropriate course corrections and now believe that they are too far from the Lord’s way to ever make it back. To them we proclaim the good news that is the gospel of redemption and salvation. No matter how terribly off course you are, no matter how far you have strayed, the way back is certain and clear. Come, learn of the Father; offer up a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Have faith, and believe in the cleansing power of the infinite Atonement of Jesus the Christ. If we confess and repent of our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.²¹ “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be [made] as white as snow.”²²

It may not be an easy path, and it requires self-discipline and determination, but its end is glorious beyond

description. You are not doomed to a tragic end. Many are eager to assist you—your family, bishops and stake presidents, your quorum leaders, and home teachers. Of course, your greatest friend is the all-powerful Creator of the universe. It is His priesthood you bear. He understands your sorrow. He knows your grief. He and our Father in Heaven will bless, comfort, and strengthen you; They will walk beside you and carry you as you strive to right your course.

My dear brethren, you are truly choice and precious sons of Heavenly Father. He has entrusted you with the sacred power of the priesthood. Please do not drift off course, not even a few degrees. Harken unto the Lord your God, and He will do for you what He promised to do for Saul: He will give you a new heart, make of you a new man, and always be with you.

I testify of our Heavenly Father, who knows and loves you. I bear witness of Jesus Christ our Savior, who is the head of this Church. President Thomas S. Monson is the prophet of God today. I express my love and gratitude for you, my dear friends and brethren of the priesthood. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Arthur Marcel, “Mount Erebus Plane Crash,” www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2007/1814952.htm.
2. 1 Samuel 9:2.
3. See 1 Samuel 9:17.
4. See 1 Samuel 10:23.
5. See 1 Samuel 9:1.
6. See 1 Samuel 10:7.
7. See 1 Samuel 10:9.
8. See 1 Samuel 10:6.
9. See 1 Samuel 11:11.
10. 1 Samuel 13:5.
11. 1 Samuel 13:6.
12. 1 Samuel 13:13–14.
13. D&C 84:26.
14. See D&C 84:38–39.
15. D&C 82:3.
16. See Alma 12:12–14; D&C 88:109.
17. D&C 64:34.
18. D&C 58:26–28.
19. Romans 3:23.
20. John 3:16.
21. See 1 John 1:9.
22. Isaiah 1:18.

Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

First Counselor in the First Presidency

Go forward in faith in keeping your covenants with God and so claim the promise He has made to you with an oath.



My purpose tonight is to help you grow in your confidence that you can and will rise to the blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It is the magnitude of the possible consequences of that oath and covenant which may require a regular boost in your confidence.

The Lord has made those consequences clear. Rising to the possibilities of the oath and covenant brings the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life. That is a purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Through

keeping the covenants as we receive the priesthood and renewing them in the temple ceremonies, we are promised by an oath made by our Heavenly Father, Elohim, that we will gain the fulness of His glory and live as He lives. We will have the blessing of being sealed in a family forever with the promise of eternal increase.

As you would expect, failing to claim such a blessing would bring tragic consequences. The Lord was clear about that as well. These are the words often read to young men by their leaders when they are approaching the time when they may receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. You likely will remember your feelings when you first heard them. They are the words of the Savior Jesus Christ given to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

“And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

“Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

“But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.

“And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

“And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.”¹

Now, if you are like I was when I first heard those words as a young man, the challenge of accepting the Melchizedek Priesthood could seem daunting. There are at least two reasons why you should be confident rather than discouraged with the penalties that would follow either failing to keep the oath and covenant or deciding not to accept it. Whether you accept the oath and covenant and find it too difficult or if you fail to try, the penalty is the same. There is no question, therefore, that your best course and mine is to receive the holy priesthood and try with all of our hearts to keep its covenants. If we choose not to try, we would certainly lose the opportunity for eternal life. If we try and with God’s help succeed, we will gain eternal life.

There is yet another reason to decide now that you will try with all your heart to qualify for that oath and covenant and have confidence that you will succeed. God promises you the help and power which, if you exercise faith, will give you success.



Let me describe some of the blessings you will receive as you go forward in faith.

First, the very fact that you have been offered the oath and covenant is evidence that God has chosen you, knowing your power and capacity. He has known you since you were with Him in the spirit world. With His foreknowledge of your strength, He has allowed you to find the true Church of Jesus Christ and to be offered the priesthood. You can feel confidence because you have

evidence of His confidence in you.

Second, as you will try to keep your covenants, the Savior has promised His personal help. He has said that as you go forward in honoring the priesthood: "There I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."²

You may at times need reassurance, as I do, that you will have the strength to meet your obligations in

this sacred priesthood. The Lord foresaw your need for reassurance. He said, "For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies."³

I have seen that promise fulfilled in my own life and in the lives of others. A friend of mine served as a mission president. He told me that at the end of every day while he was serving, he could barely make it upstairs to bed at night wondering if he would have the strength to face another day. Then in the morning, he would find his strength and his courage restored. You have seen it in the lives of aged prophets who seemed to be renewed each time they stood to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ and the restored gospel. That is a promise for those who go forward in faith in their priesthood service.

You are also promised that you will be given the power to bear testimony and that in the process you will be cleansed and made fit for the eternal life which you have been promised:

"For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you.

"Therefore, go ye into all the world; and unto whatsoever place ye cannot go ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature."⁴

And with that promise the Lord has honored you by saying of you, "Ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends."⁵

There is another wonderful blessing that will encourage you as you keep your priesthood covenants. Priesthood service will prepare you for living in eternal families. It will change your feelings about what it

means to be a husband or a father or a son or a brother. That change in your heart will come as you feel your faith grow and the promise of eternal life through the Melchizedek Priesthood becomes real to you.

That happened to Parley P. Pratt when the Prophet Joseph Smith first taught him the doctrine of eternal families. Parley P. Pratt wrote:

“It was at this time that I received from him the first idea of eternal family organization, and the eternal union of the sexes in those inexpressibly endearing relationships which none but the highly intellectual, the refined and pure in heart, know how to prize, and which are at the very foundation of everything worthy to be called happiness. . . .

“It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. It was from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore. . . .

“I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling. . . . I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion; a kind ministering angel, given to me as a comfort, and a crown of glory for ever and ever.”⁶

I am a personal witness that priesthood service pursued in faith has such an effect in changing our hearts and our feelings. A young man hearing my words today can have confidence that by honoring his priesthood he will be protected against the temptation to sexual sin so prevalent in the world in



which we live. It will be possible for the Aaronic Priesthood holder hearing me tonight, as his faith increases in the sure reward of eternal life through the eternal priesthood, that he will have the power to see in the daughters of God their true worth and in the promise of a posterity a reason to be pure and to stay clean.

In the same way, faith in the oath and covenant will lead us to develop the feelings of charity essential to an eternal family. One of the promises we make as we accept the priesthood is to care for others.

I have seen the miracle of that growth in charity in the hearts of priesthood holders. So have many of you. And so have many outside the Church. I was in the office of President Gordon B. Hinckley when he was asked to take a phone call. He spoke briefly on the phone and then returned to our conversation. But he took a moment to explain. He said that the call was from the president of the United States, who was flying over Utah in Air Force One on his way to Washington. The president of the United States had called to thank President Hinckley for what priesthood holders had done in the

aftermath of a hurricane. The president of the United States had said that it was a miracle that we were able to get so many people, so quickly, working together so well. He praised our people by saying that we knew how to do things.

Perhaps the president of the United States was impressed with what he thought were our great organizational skills. That was part of the miracle. But the greater reason for the miracle was that hundreds and perhaps thousands of priesthood holders had such faith in the oath and covenant of the priesthood. It was not how they were organized that made the difference: faith in the oath and covenant of the priesthood impelled them to go long distances, stay long hours, and endure hardship as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in caring for those in great need.

They were in that process of giving priesthood service, developing the power and the spirit of charity necessary to become great husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers in families here and in families forever. Those instances of priesthood service have occurred in our outreach to people, as brothers and sisters in God's family across the earth, time and time again.

My prayer is that you will decide tonight, and then every day, to go forward in faith in keeping your covenants with God and so claim the promise He has made to you with an oath. You can do it in simple things. When you meet with your quorum, you can decide to see them as brothers in the family of God. There will be someone in your quorum or priesthood group who is in need. He may not show it. You may not be able to see it with your eyes. But God knows and invites you to be His servant in helping him.

You can be like the priesthood holder who every time I saw him in our priesthood service together



would ask, “How’s Grandma?” He had never met my mother-in-law, as far as I know. But he somehow found out about her illness and her great age. I cannot tell you how much it meant to me to see the hand of God reaching out to me and my wife in consolation and comfort through a priesthood holder. You can have that same effect every time you gather with priesthood holders if you always think of your covenant to succor and help those whose hands hang down and who carry heavy burdens. As you do, you will be developing the very qualities which will qualify you to be a member of a family forever.

There is another thing you can do. You can study the word of God, not for yourself alone but to be an emissary of the Lord Jesus Christ to all the world. When you increase your power to teach the gospel, you are qualifying to help Heavenly Father in gathering His children. As you do that, another blessing will come. Should the need ever come in family life in this world, or in

the world to come, to draw back lost sheep, you will have received more power than you may now recognize.

The Lord describes that wonderful blessing in Alma 13:6: “And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest.”

You may have confidence in your service with this promise of success:

“Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

“And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.”⁷

I testify that God the Father lives. You have made covenants with Him. He offers you an oath, a promise of eternal life, which He cannot break. I testify to you that the priesthood is the power by which God through His Son, Jesus Christ, created the worlds. I testify that God wants you to succeed and to come home again to live with Him in families forever. I testify to you that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ. In it are the keys of the priesthood. It is that priesthood with which God has honored you. I promise you that He knows your capacities and that they are sufficient that you may with full faith have the hope of eternal life for you and for your families forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 84:35–43.
2. D&C 84:88.
3. D&C 84:33.
4. D&C 84:61–62.
5. D&C 84:63.
6. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 259–60.
7. Alma 13:12–13.

Examples of Righteousness

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

It is our duty to live our lives in such a way that we may be examples of righteousness.



Tonight I am aware that you, my brethren, both here in the Conference Center and in thousands of other locations, represent the largest gathering of the priesthood ever to assemble. We are a part of the greatest brotherhood in all the world. How fortunate and blessed we are to be holders of the priesthood of God.

We have been instructed and uplifted as we have listened to inspired messages. I pray that I might have an interest in your faith and prayers as I share with you those thoughts and feelings that have been in my mind lately as I have prepared to address you.

As bearers of the priesthood, we

have been placed on earth in troubled times. We live in a complex world with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Political machinations ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of society seem forever down-trodden, deprived of opportunity, and left with a feeling of failure.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys, we can mend men, we can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

Ours is the task to be fitting examples. We are strengthened by the truth that the greatest force in the world today is the power of God as it works through man. If we are on the Lord's errand, brethren, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Never forget that truth. That divine help, of course, is predicated upon our worthiness. Each must ask: Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? Am I a worthy servant of the Lord?

We are surrounded by so much that is designed to divert our attention from those things which are virtuous and good and to tempt us with that which would cause us to be unworthy to exercise the priesthood we bear. I speak not just to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood but to

those of all ages. Temptations come in various forms throughout our lives.

Brethren, are we qualified at all times to perform the sacred duties associated with the priesthood we bear? Young men—you who are priests—are you clean in body and spirit as you sit at the sacrament table on Sunday and bless the emblems of the sacrament? Young men who are teachers, are you worthy to prepare the sacrament? Deacons, as you pass the sacrament to the members of the Church, do you do so knowing that you are spiritually qualified to do so? Does each of you fully understand the importance of *all* the sacred duties you perform?

My young friends, be strong. The philosophies of men surround us. The face of sin today often wears the mask of tolerance. Do not be deceived; behind that facade is heartache, unhappiness, and pain. You know what is right and what is wrong, and no disguise, however appealing, can change that. The character of transgression remains the same. If your so-called friends urge you to do anything you know to be wrong, *you* be the one to make a stand for right, even if you stand alone. Have the moral courage to be a light for others to follow. There is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so.

Brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, do you strive diligently each day to live as you should? Are you kind and loving to your wife and your children? Are you honest in your dealings with those around you—at all times and in all circumstances?

If any of you has slipped along the way, there are those who will help you to once again become clean and worthy. Your bishop or branch president is anxious and willing to help and will,



with understanding and compassion, do all within his power to assist you in the repentance process, that you may once again stand in righteousness before the Lord.

Many of you will remember President N. Eldon Tanner, who served as a counselor to four Presidents of the Church. He provided an undeviating example of righteousness throughout a career in industry, during service in the government in Canada, and consistently in his private life. He gave us this inspired counsel:

“Nothing will bring greater joy and success than to live according to the teachings of the gospel. Be an example; be an influence for good. . . .

“Every one of us has been foreordained for some work as [God’s] chosen servant on whom he has seen fit to confer the priesthood and power to act in his name. Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come.”¹

My brethren, I reiterate that, as holders of the priesthood of God, it is our duty to live our lives in such a way that we may be examples of righteousness for others to follow. As I have pondered how we might best

provide such examples, I have thought of an experience I had some years ago while attending a stake conference. During the general session, I observed a young boy sitting with his family on the front row of the stake center. I was seated on the stand. As the meeting progressed, I began to notice that if I crossed one leg over the other, the young boy would do the same thing. If I reversed the motion and crossed the other leg, he would follow suit. I would put my hands in my lap, and he would do the same. I rested my chin in my hand, and he also did so. Whatever I did, he would imitate my actions. This continued until the time approached for me to address the congregation. I decided to put him to the test. I looked squarely at him, certain I had his attention, and then I wiggled my ears. He made a vain attempt to do the same, but I had him! He just couldn’t quite get his ears to wiggle. He turned to his father, who was sitting next to him, and whispered something to him. He pointed to his ears and then to me. As his father looked in my direction, obviously to see my ears wiggle, I sat solemnly with my arms folded, not moving a muscle. The father glanced back skeptically at his son, who looked slightly

defeated. He finally gave me a sheepish grin and shrugged his shoulders.

I have thought about that experience over the years as I’ve contemplated how, particularly when we’re young, we tend to imitate the example of our parents, our leaders, our peers. The prophet Brigham Young said: “We should never permit ourselves to do anything that we are not willing to see our children do. We should set them an example that we wish them to imitate.”²

To you who are fathers of boys or who are leaders of boys, I say, strive to be the kind of example the boys need. The father, of course, should be the prime example, and the boy who is blessed with a worthy father is fortunate indeed. Even an exemplary family, however, with diligent and faithful father and mother, can use all the supportive help they can get from good men who genuinely care. There is also the boy who has no father or whose father is not currently providing the type of example needed. For that boy, the Lord has provided a network of helpers within the Church—bishops, advisers, teachers, Scoutmasters, home teachers. When the Lord’s program is in effect and properly working, no young man in the Church should be without the influence of good men in his life.

The effectiveness of an inspired bishop, adviser, or teacher has very little to do with the outward trappings of power or an abundance of this world’s goods. The leaders who have the most influence are usually those who set hearts afire with devotion to the truth, who make obedience to duty seem the essence of manhood, who transform some ordinary routine occurrence so that it becomes a vista where we see the person we aspire to be.

Not to be overlooked—and in fact our primary example—is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His birth was foretold by prophets; angels heralded the announcement of His earthly ministry.

He “grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”³

Baptized of John in the river known as Jordan, He commenced His official ministry to men. To the sophistry of Satan, Jesus turned His back. To the duty designated by His Father, He turned His face, pledged His heart, and gave His life. And what a sinless, selfless, noble, and divine life it was. Jesus labored. Jesus loved. Jesus served. Jesus testified. What finer example could we strive to emulate? Let us begin now, this very night, to do so. Cast off forever will be the old self and with it defeat, despair, doubt, and disbelief. To a newness of life we come—a life of faith, hope, courage, and joy. No task looms too large; no responsibility weighs too heavily; no duty is a burden. All things become possible.

Many years ago I spoke of one who took his example from the Savior, one who stood firm and true, strong and worthy through the storms of life. He courageously magnified his priesthood callings. He provides an example to each of us. His name was Thomas Michael Wilson, the son of Willie and Julia Wilson of Lafayette, Alabama.

When he was but a teenager and he and his family were not yet members of the Church, he was stricken with cancer, followed by painful radiation therapy, and then blessed remission. This illness caused his family to realize that not only is life precious but that it can also be short. They began to look to religion to help them through this time of tribulation. Subsequently, they were introduced to the Church, and eventually all but the father were baptized. After accepting the gospel, young Brother Wilson yearned for the opportunity of being a missionary, even though he was older than most young men when they begin their missionary service. At the age of 23, he received a mission call to serve in the Utah Salt Lake City Mission.



Elder Wilson’s missionary companions described his faith as unquestioning, undeviating, and unyielding. He was an example to all. However, after 11 months of missionary service, illness returned. Bone cancer now required the amputation of his arm and shoulder. Yet he persisted in his missionary labors.

Elder Wilson’s courage and consuming desire to remain on his mission so touched his nonmember father that he investigated the teachings of the Church and also became a member.

I learned that an investigator whom Elder Wilson had taught was

baptized but then wanted to be confirmed by Elder Wilson, whom she respected so much. She, with a few others, journeyed to Elder Wilson’s bedside in the hospital. There, with his remaining hand resting upon her head, Elder Wilson confirmed her a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Wilson continued month after month his precious but painful service as a missionary. Blessings were given; prayers were offered. Because of his example of dedication, his fellow missionaries lived closer to God.

Elder Wilson’s physical condition deteriorated. The end drew near, and

he was to return home. He asked to serve but one additional month, and his request was granted. He put his faith in God, and He whom Thomas Michael Wilson silently trusted opened the windows of heaven and abundantly blessed him. His parents, Willie and Julia Wilson, and his brother Tony came to Salt Lake City to help their son and brother home to Alabama. However, there was yet a prayed-for, a yearned-for blessing to be bestowed. The family invited me to come with them to the Jordan River temple, where those sacred ordinances which bind families for eternity, as well as for time, were performed.

I said good-bye to the Wilson family. I can see Elder Wilson yet as he thanked me for being with him and his loved ones. He said, "It doesn't matter what happens to us in this life as long as we have the gospel of Jesus Christ and live it. It doesn't matter whether I teach the gospel on this or the other side of the veil, so long as I can teach it." What courage. What confidence. What love. The Wilson family made the long trek home to Lafayette, where Elder Thomas Michael Wilson slipped from here to eternity. He was buried there with his missionary tag in place.

My brethren, as we now leave this general priesthood meeting, let us all determine to prepare for our time of opportunity and to honor the priesthood we bear through the service we render, the lives we bless, and the souls we are privileged to help save. You "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,"⁴ and you can make a difference. To these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "For They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74.
2. *Deseret News*, June 21, 1871, 235.
3. Luke 2:40.
4. 1 Peter 2:9.

Faith of Our Father

PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

True religion should not originate from what pleases men or the traditions of ancestors, but rather from what pleases God, our Eternal Father.



How blessed we are by the beautiful music of the Tabernacle Choir.

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, I rejoice to stand with you today, to have the great privilege of calling myself a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to be counted as one among you.

I recall my initial reaction when I received this sacred call from the Lord to serve as the newest member of the First Presidency of this Church—I felt joyfully overwhelmed. Since then I have learned new dimensions of the words *humility*, *gratitude*, and *faith*.

I can assure you that no one was more surprised by my call than my children and grandchildren.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, we do not seek, nor do we decline, callings that come from God through inspired priesthood channels. I pray that God will grant me strength and an understanding heart to magnify this sacred calling according to His will and purpose.

We all miss President Gordon B. Hinckley. His impact on this great work will continue to bless us.

I feel so privileged to work closely with President Monson. I have known him for many years. He is a man of amazing gifts and talents. He is the prophet of God. His faith and loving heart extend to every nation, tongue, and people.

I am grateful to serve with President Eyring, whom I love and respect as a great leader and teacher in the kingdom of God.

When the Quorum of the Twelve met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple to sustain President Monson as the 16th President of the Church, I marveled at the extraordinary abilities, wisdom, and spirituality of those who surrounded me. It made me recognize more clearly my own inadequacies. I love these fine men of great faith. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise my hand to sustain and pledge my support to them. I do love and sustain Elder Christofferson, the newest member of the Twelve.

When the Lord called Frederick G. Williams to be a counselor to the

Prophet Joseph Smith, He commanded him to “be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”¹ I believe this counsel applies to all who accept callings to serve in the kingdom of God—and certainly to me in this season of my life.

A Prophet of God and Our President

I would like to say a few words about President Thomas S. Monson. Some years ago, President Monson came to a regional conference in Hamburg, Germany, and it was my honor to accompany him. President Monson has a remarkable memory, and we talked about many of the Saints in Germany—I was amazed that he remembered so many so well.

President Monson asked about Brother Michael Panitsch, a former stake president and then a patriarch, who had been one of the stalwart pioneers of the Church in Germany. I told him that Brother Panitsch was seriously ill, that he was bedridden and unable to attend our meetings.

President Monson asked if we could pay him a visit.

I knew that shortly before his trip to Hamburg, President Monson had undergone foot surgery and that he could not walk without pain. I explained that Brother Panitsch lived on the fifth floor of a building with no elevators. We would have to climb the stairs to see him.

But President Monson insisted. And so we went.

I remember how difficult it was for President Monson to climb those stairs. He could take only a few at a time before needing to stop and rest. He never uttered a word of complaint, and he would not turn back. Because the building had high ceilings, the stairs seemed to go on forever, but President Monson cheerfully persevered until we arrived at the



apartment of Brother Panitsch on the fifth floor.

Once there, we had a wonderful visit. President Monson thanked him for his life of dedicated service and cheered him with a smile. Before we left, he gave him a wonderful priesthood blessing.

No one but Brother Panitsch, the

immediate family, and myself ever saw that act of courage and compassion.

President Monson could have chosen to rest between our long and frequent meetings. He could have asked to see some of the beautiful sights of Hamburg. I have often thought of how remarkable it was that of all the sights in that city, the one he wanted

to see more than any other was a feeble and ailing member of the Church who had faithfully and humbly served the Lord.

President Monson came to Hamburg to teach and bless the people of a country, and that is what he did. But at the same time, he focused on the one, name by name. His vision is so broad and far-reaching to grasp the complexities of a worldwide Church, yet he is also so compassionate to focus on the one.

When the Apostle Peter spoke of Jesus, who had been his friend and teacher, he offered this simple description: “[He] went about doing good.”²

I feel the same can be said of the man we sustain today as the prophet of God.

The Faith of Our Fathers

I marvel at the different backgrounds of members of the Church. You come from all walks of life—all cultures, languages, political circumstances, and religious traditions.

This multiplicity of life experiences has caused me to reflect on the message of one of our hymns, “Faith of Our Fathers.” In the refrain, these words are repeated: “Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death!”³

The faith of our fathers—I love that phrase.

For many members of the Church, these words bring to mind valiant pioneers who abandoned the comfort of their homes and traveled by wagon and on foot until they reached the valley of the Great Salt Lake. I love and honor the faith and courage of those early pioneers of the Church. My own ancestors were living an ocean away at the time. None were among those who lived in Nauvoo or Winter Quarters, and none made the journey across the plains. But as a member of the Church, I claim with gratitude and pride this pioneer legacy as my own.



With the same joy, I claim the legacies of today’s modern-day Church pioneers who live in every nation and whose own stories of perseverance, faith, and sacrifice add glorious new verses to the great chorus of the latter-day anthem of the kingdom of God.

When my own family contemplates the phrase “faith of our fathers,” often it is the Lutheran faith that comes to mind. For generations our ancestors belonged to that denomination. In fact, my son recently discovered that one of our family lines connects back to Martin Luther himself.

We honor and respect sincere souls from all religions, no matter where or when they lived, who have loved God, even without having the fulness of the gospel. We lift our voices in gratitude for their selflessness and courage. We embrace them as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father.

We believe that it is a fundamental human right to worship “Almighty God according to the dictates of our

own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”⁴

There Are Many Faiths and Traditions of Our Fathers

As the restored Church of Jesus Christ blossoms throughout the globe—now with more than 13 million members—“the faith of our fathers” has an expanded meaning. For some, it could refer to their family’s heritage in one of the hundreds of Christian faiths; for others, it could refer to Middle-Eastern, Asian, or African faiths and traditions.

I have spent most of my life in areas of the world where members of our Church are a small minority. During that time I have learned that often when people learn of the restored gospel, they are impressed by it—many even want to join the Church. But they are reluctant to disappoint their ancestors; they feel they should be true to the faith of their fathers.

I remember when I was a young man, one Sunday I noticed a new family in our meetinghouse—a young mother with two daughters. It wasn’t long before the three were baptized and became members of the Church.

I know the story of their conversion intimately because the oldest daughter’s name was Harriet, and later she would become my wife.

Harriet’s mother, Carmen, had recently lost her husband, and during a period of introspection, she became interested in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After studying the doctrines, Carmen and her daughters knew the Church was true and made plans for baptism.

When Carmen told her mother about this decision, however, her mother was devastated. “How can you be so unfaithful to the faith of your fathers?” she asked.

Carmen’s mother was not the only one who objected. Carmen’s



Top: President Thomas S. Monson was sustained as 16th President of the Church at the Saturday morning session. Above: Following another session, he waves farewell. Right: He expresses goodwill to Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

GENERAL AUTHORITIES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

April 2008



Henry B. Eyring
First Counselor



Thomas S. Monson
President



Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor

THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES



Boyd K. Packer



L. Tom Perry



Russell M. Nelson



Dallin H. Oaks



M. Russell Ballard



Joseph B. Wirthlin



Richard G. Scott



Robert D. Hales



Jeffrey R. Holland



David A. Bednar



Quentin L. Cook



D. Todd Christofferson

THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SEVENTY



Earl C. Tingey



Neil L. Andersen



Ronald A. Rasband



Claudio R. W. Costa



Steven E. Snow



Walter F. Gonzalez



L. Whitney Clayton

THE FIRST QUORUM OF THE SEVENTY

(in alphabetical order)



Marcos A. Adukaifis



Carlos H. Amado



David S. Baxter



Shayne M. Bowen



Gerald Coussé



Sheldon F. Child



Craig C. Christensen



Gary J. Coleman



Spencer J. Condie



Lawrence E. Corbridge



Benjamin De Hoyos



John B. Dickson



Charles Didier



David F. Evans



Enrique R. Falcabella



Eduardo Gavarret



Carlos A. Gordoy



Christoffel Golden Jr.



C. Scott Grow



Bruce C. Hafen



Donald L. Hollstrom



James J. Homola



Keith K. Hittig



Richard G. Hincckley



Jay E. Jensen



Marlin K. Jensen



Daniel L. Johnson



Kenneth Johnson



Paul V. Johnson



Yoshiniko Kikuchi



Paul E. Koelliker



Erich W. Kopischke



John M. Madsen



Richard J. Maynes



Lynn A. Mickelsen



Marcus B. Nash



Dennis B. Neuenstwander



Glenn L. Pace



Allan F. Packer



Kevin W. Pearson



Won Yong Ko



Gerald N. Lund



Clate W. Mask Jr.



Robert C. Oaks



Anthony D. Perkins



Paul B. Pieper



Rafael E. Pino



Bruce D. Porter



Carl B. Pratt



Lynn G. Robbins



Ced O. Samuelson Jr.



Ulisses Soares



Gary E. Stevenson



Michael John U. Teh



William W. Parnley



Wolfgang H. Paul



W. Douglas Shumway



Lowell M. Snow



José A. Teixeira



Octaviano Tenorio



Francisco J. Vinas



William R. Walker



F. Michael Watson



Lance B. Wickman



Jorge F. Zepallias



Claudio D. Zivic



W. Craig Zwick

THE SECOND QUORUM OF THE SEVENTY

(in alphabetical order)



Mervyn B. Arnold



Douglas L. Callister



Tod R. Callister



Craig A. Cardon



Shirley D. Christensen



Don R. Clarke



James M. Dunn



Keith R. Edwards



Stanley G. Ellis



Daryl H. Gam



Larry W. Gibbons



Spencer V. Jones



Robert S. Wood



Robert S. Wood



Robert S. Wood



Robert S. Wood



William W. Parnley



Wolfgang H. Paul



W. Douglas Shumway



Lowell M. Snow



Robert R. Steier



Paul K. Sybrowsky



Kent D. Watson



Robert S. Wood

THE PRESIDING BISHOPRIC



Richard C. Edgley
First Counselor



H. David Burton
Presiding Bishop



Keith B. McMillin
Second Counselor



strong-willed sister, Lisa, was every bit as troubled by the news. Perhaps *troubled* is too soft a word. She was very angry.

Lisa said that she would find those young missionaries and tell them just how wrong they were. She marched to the chapel and found the missionaries, and, you guessed it, Lisa was baptized too.

Many years later, Carmen's mother also received a testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to the earth. One day she said to her daughters and grandchildren, "I want to be in the same heaven as you." While in her mid-70s, she too entered the waters of baptism and became a member of the Church.

The Faith of Our Father

What, then, is the faith of our fathers? Is it the religion of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents?

But what of the faith of the ancient ones before them? What of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Are they not our fathers? Are we not of the house of Israel? What of Noah and Enoch and our first parents, Adam and Eve?

What of the Savior and those disciples who followed Him?

The faith of our Father in Heaven has been consistent since the beginning of time, even from before the foundation of this world. John the Revelator described a great war in heaven.⁵ The issue was moral agency, as it is today. All who have ever lived on this earth were among those who fought against Satan and stood with the Son and the Father. Therefore, do we not owe our allegiance to God, our Heavenly Father?

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, "we believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."⁶ And "we believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may



be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."⁷ We believe in the great plan of happiness, the plan of redemption, the plan of salvation, whereby God's children may experience mortality and return to the presence of the Father—a merciful plan established from before the foundation of this earth.

This is the plan and the faith of our Father!

I testify that the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the faith of our Heavenly Father. It is His truth, revealed to His servants the prophets from the days of Father Adam until our own time. The Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith to restore the faith of our Father on this earth, never to be taken away again. God desires that all of His children receive it, irrespective of their background, culture, or tradition. True religion should not originate from what pleases men or the traditions of ancestors, but rather from what pleases God, our Eternal Father.

Continuing revelation is a fundamental feature of this faith. Joseph Smith's first prayer is a powerful testimony of this. Revelation is a constant compass that keeps us always true to the will and the faith of our Heavenly Father.

Our Heavenly Father loves His children. He hears the prayers of the humble and sincere of every nation, tongue, and people. He grants light to those who seek and honor Him and are willing to obey His commandments. We joyously proclaim that the faith of our Father is on the earth today.

We invite everyone on this beautiful planet to taste of His doctrine and see if it is not sweet and good and precious. We ask those of sincere heart to learn of this doctrine and ask their Father in Heaven if it is not true. And by doing so, all can discover, embrace, and walk in the true faith of their Father, which faith will make them whole.⁸

That is our message to the world.

I bear solemn witness of the reality of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; the Holy Ghost; and living prophets who hold the keys, which have come in unbroken succession from Joseph Smith to Thomas S. Monson today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 81:5.
2. Acts 10:38.
3. *Hymns*, no. 84.
4. Articles of Faith 1:11.
5. See Revelation 12:7–9.
6. Articles of Faith 1:1.
7. Articles of Faith 1:3.
8. See Matthew 9:22.

Born Again

ELDER D. TODD CHRISTOFFERSON

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by whose grace we are changed.



Fifteen years ago I stood for the first time at the pulpit in the Tabernacle as a newly sustained Seventy. I was 48 years old. I had thick, dark brown hair. I thought I understood what it meant to feel inadequate. At the end of my five-minute remarks, my shirt was dripping with perspiration. The whole thing was something of an ordeal. However, today, in retrospect, it seems a comparatively pleasant experience.

When President Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Elder David A. Bednar were first sustained as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a witness of the divine origin of their calls came to me during the session. I was also given in that moment an understanding of the surpassing sacredness of the call and service of an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not have

the words to express that understanding because it was communicated Spirit to spirit without words. To think of it now reduces me to a depth of humility I have never before experienced, and I plead with my Heavenly Father to sustain me as He ever has that I might measure up to something that is far beyond my native capacity and be able to focus outwardly, losing myself in your service. I trust in Him, and I know that His grace is sufficient, and so I here unreservedly commit all that I have and am to God and His Beloved Son. I also commit myself, my loyalty, my service, and my love to the First Presidency and to my Brethren of the Twelve.

My patriarchal blessing, received at age 13 from a beloved grandfather, includes this statement: “[Your Heavenly Father] sent you forth in this last and glorious dispensation that you might be born under the new and everlasting covenant by goodly, righteous parents.” With deepest appreciation I acknowledge that this has been the great foundational blessing of my life. I pay tribute to my parents and with love acknowledge my debt to them and to their parents and generations beyond. Not long after my call to the Seventy, I had occasion to be standing at the grave of one of those ancestors who had died years before I was born. As I contemplated the sacrifices entailed upon him and his family by their acceptance of the restored gospel

of Jesus Christ, a sense of gratitude flooded my heart and a resolve welled up in me to honor his sacrifice and that of those who came after by being faithful to God and the gospel covenants, as they were.

In acknowledging blessings, I include my dear brothers and their spouses who, as it happens, are present today. My wife and I have four sons and a daughter, each married to a wonderful spouse or, in the case of our youngest son, soon to be married to a lovely young woman. We love them and our grandchildren and appreciate how they bless our lives by their loyalty to the Savior and His gospel. At the pinnacle is my wife, Kathy, the maker of our home, the light of my life, a steady and wise companion, filled with spiritual intuition, good humor, goodwill, and charity. I love her beyond expression and hope to show it more convincingly in the days and years ahead.

It was my blessing to serve a full-time mission as a young man in Argentina under the tutelage of two exceptional mission presidents, Ronald V. Stone and Richard G. Scott, and their respective wives, Patricia and Jeanene. I thank God for their lasting influence in me. Following my graduation from law school, Kathy and I and our children made our homes successively in the states of Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and now Utah. Three precious years were spent in Mexico. In all of these places, we have been blessed with dear friends in and out of the Church who have loved and taught and befriended us and our children and who continue to do so. I take this opportunity to publicly express gratitude to all of them.

My love and regard for my Brethren of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric is boundless. I rejoice that my continuing service will keep me close to them and that there will be frequent opportunities to serve together. The unfolding revelations of

our time that have set the Seventy in place in the Church constitute one of the most profound and perhaps underappreciated miracles in the history of the Lord's latter-day work. The Seventy are key to the success of the work now and in the years ahead, and I feel honored beyond measure that my name was ever included among theirs. God bless you, my Brethren.

I wish to bear you my witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the power of His infinite, atoning sacrifice. In doing so, I will call upon an experience from my years in Tennessee. One evening there I received a call at home from a gentleman I did not know. He introduced himself as a recently retired minister of another faith and asked to meet with me privately the following Sunday. When we met, my guest stated frankly he had come out of concern for the welfare of my soul. He pulled out of his portfolio a fairly long list of scripture citations from the New Testament and said he wanted to review these verses with me and see if he could help me be saved. I was a bit surprised at his directness, but I could tell that he was sincere, and I was touched by his genuine interest in me.

We conversed for more than an hour, and he was open to hear me explain something of my faith as well as to read with me some teachings from the Book of Mormon with which he was not familiar. We found there was much we believed in common and some things we did not. We felt a bond of friendship and prayed together before he left. What remains with me is our discussion about being born again. It is spiritual rebirth through Jesus Christ that is the context of my witness of Him.

It was Jesus who stated that entry into the kingdom of God requires that one be born again—born of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:3–5). His teaching about a physical and a spiritual baptism helps us understand that both our own action



and the intervention of divine power are needed for this transformative rebirth—for the change from natural man to saint (see Mosiah 3:19). Paul described being born again with this simple expression: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Consider two examples from the Book of Mormon. About a century before the birth of Christ, King Benjamin taught his people of the Savior’s advent and Atonement. The Spirit of the Lord wrought such a mighty change in the people that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Because of their faith in Christ, they said, “We are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments . . . *all the remainder of our days*” (Mosiah 5:5; emphasis added). The king responded, “Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are

changed through faith on his name” (Mosiah 5:7; see also D&C 76:24).

The case of Alma is also instructive. As he and his companions went about seeking to destroy the Church of Christ, they were rebuked by an angel. There followed for Alma three days and nights that he described as being “racked with eternal torment. . . . Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell” (Alma 36:12–13). Finally, after “repenting nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28), as he put it, there came to his mind the sweet message of Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Alma pled, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death” (Alma 36:18). Forgiveness came to him, and he stood and publicly confessed:

“I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

“And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues



and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

“And thus they become new creatures” (Mosiah 27:24–26).

As we reflect on these examples and other scriptures, it becomes clear that spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by whose grace we are changed. More specifically, it is faith in Christ as the Atoning One, the Redeemer, who can cleanse from sin and make holy (see Mosiah 4:2–3).

When this true faith takes root in a person, it inevitably leads to repentance. Amulek taught that the Savior’s sacrifice would “bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men *that they may have faith unto repentance*” (Alma 34:15; emphasis added).

To be complete, however, repentance requires a covenant of obedience. This is the covenant expressed

by Benjamin’s people “to do [God’s] will, and to be obedient to his commandments” (Mosiah 5:5). This is the covenant witnessed by baptism in water (see Mosiah 18:10), sometimes referred to in the scriptures as the “baptism of repentance” or “baptism unto repentance,” inasmuch as it is the culminating step, the capstone of our repentance (see, for example, Acts 19:4; Alma 7:14; 9:27; D&C 107:20).

Then, as promised, the Lord baptizes us “with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:20). Nephi phrased it this way: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).¹ Having thus relied “upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19), we are “quickened in the inner man” (Moses 6:65) and, if not yet fully born again, then certainly well into the path of spiritual rebirth.

Now, the Lord cautions us to take heed since “there is a possibility that man may fall from grace” (D&C 20:32),

even those who are sanctified (see vv. 32–34). As Nephi counseled: “Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin’s people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical.² For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy.

I know Jesus Christ as the living, resurrected Son of God.

“[I] know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

“And [I] know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength” (D&C 20:30–31; see also Moroni 10:32–33).

I rejoice that for the balance of my life I shall be able continually to offer

Christ, to offer the good news of Christ in all the world. I bear witness of the reality and love of God, our Heavenly Father, to whom Jesus gave all glory. I love and bear witness of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through his personal association with the Lord, his translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, and the sealing of his testimony with his martyr's blood, Joseph has become the preeminent revelator of Jesus Christ in His true character as divine Redeemer. Jesus has had no greater witness nor more devoted friend than Joseph Smith. I declare my testimony of the calling of President Thomas S. Monson as prophet and President of the Church of Jesus Christ in this time and pledge my loyalty to him and his counselors in their sacred roles. I pray God's blessings upon us all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. God taught these things to Adam at the very beginning. He told Adam: "Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin . . . ; for by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified" (Moses 6:59–60). In other words, the baptism of repentance by water leads to the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit brings the atoning grace of Christ, symbolized by His blood, both to justify (or pardon) our sins and to sanctify (or cleanse) us from the effects of sin, making us spotless and holy before God.

The scriptural record reports that "Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. . . . Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons [and daughters]" (Moses 6:64–66, 68).

2. See Ezra Taft Benson, "A Mighty Change of Heart," *Tambuli*, Mar. 1990, 2–7; *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 2–5.

The Best Investment

ELDER SHELDON F. CHILD

Of the Seventy

If you always pay an honest tithing, the Lord will bless you. It will be the best investment you will ever make.



When I was a young boy, one of our neighbors had a herd of dairy cows. One of his cows died, leaving a newborn calf, which he gave to me. I took care of the calf, fed it, and raised it. The day my dad took it to the stockyards to be sold was a day of mixed emotions for me: I had grown attached to my calf, and yet I was looking forward to receiving the rewards of my labor. My only request was that the money I received from selling the calf be in silver dollars. I remember Dad coming home that night and dropping 20 silver dollars into my hands. Money was hard to come by, and I thought I had all the money in the world. I counted,

admired, and polished each coin carefully. When Sunday came, I reluctantly put two shiny coins into my pocket to pay my tithing. As hard as it was to surrender my precious silver dollars to the bishop, I still remember now how good I felt being obedient to the Lord.

On the way home from church, my mother told me how proud she was of me. Then she said, "Your grandfather always told us children that if we would faithfully pay an honest tithing, the Lord would bless us and it would be the best investment that we could ever make."

My grandfather understood that "there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."¹ Tithing is a commandment from God, and when we obey His law, He is bound to bless us. Even as a seven-year-old boy, that was something I could understand. President Thomas S. Monson, in speaking about God's laws, stated: "Violate them and we suffer lasting consequences. Obey them and we reap everlasting joy."²

You'll remember that when Israel was chastened for robbing God, the people asked, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" The answer came, "In



tithes and offerings.” And then the Israelites were promised that if they would obey His law of tithing, they would be entitled to receive His blessings. The Lord said, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”³

The Lord asked Israel to prove Him, to test Him, to have faith in Him so that He would be able to keep His promise to them. That same commandment and that same promise are in effect today. When we keep the law of the tithe, the Lord’s promise is sure: blessings will come to us both temporally and spiritually, according to the wisdom and timing of the Lord.

My wife, Joan, and I have had the

privilege of living in various parts of the world among wonderful people who rely daily on the Lord for their most basic temporal needs. Those who take the leap of faith to pay their tithing testify that the windows of heaven are opened to them. I remember a faithful father in the Philippines telling of paying his meager tithing to the bishop one Sunday and then leading his children home from church, knowing full well that there was no food for them. As they were walking along, a huge breadfruit dropped from a tree right in front of them. He immediately looked up and thanked God for opening the windows of heaven and sending him a breadfruit to feed his children.

We are living in challenging economic times. However, if we look back over the past years, we find

there have been, and will continue to be, times of relative prosperity and times of financial uncertainty. But regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, if we first pay our obligation to the Lord and then use wisdom and good judgment, the Lord will help us manage the resources He has given us.

President Heber J. Grant stated, “I want to say to you, if you will be honest with the Lord, paying your tithing and keeping His commandments, He will not only bless you with the light and inspiration of His Holy Spirit, but you will be blessed in dollars and cents; you will be enabled to pay your debts, and the Lord will pour out temporal blessings upon you in great abundance.”⁴

In 1936, at the height of the Great Depression in the United States, when

people were struggling to make ends meet, Elder John A. Widtsoe admonished the Saints to pay their tithing because of the spiritual blessings they would receive. He said: "Obedience to the law of tithing . . . brings a deep, inward joy . . . that can be won in no other way. . . . The principles of truth become clearer. . . . Prayer becomes easier. . . . The spiritual sense is sharpened [and] . . . man becomes more like his Father in Heaven."⁵

A mother in West Africa shared her testimony about tithing. She was a trader in a marketplace. Every day she would come home, count out her tithing, and put it in a special place. Then on Sunday she would faithfully take it to her bishop. She shared with us how her business had grown and how her family had been blessed with health and strength and enough food to eat. Then with tears in her eyes she said, "But the greatest blessings of all are that my children love the Lord and we are a forever family."

This humble mother understood that one of the great blessings of being a full-tithe payer is the privilege of entering the house of the Lord and participating in the sacred ordinances that enable families to be together forever.

As we faithfully pay our tithes, the Lord will indeed open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. I want each of you to know, and especially my children and grandchildren, that I know, as my grandfather did, that if you always pay an honest tithing, the Lord will bless you. It will be the best investment you will ever make. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 130:20.
2. *Pathways to Perfection: Discourses of Thomas S. Monson* (1973), 126.
3. Malachi 3:8, 10.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 16.
5. "Tithing Testimonies of Our Leaders," *Deseret News*, May 16, 1936, Church Section, 5.

My Soul Delighteth in the Things of the Lord

SUSAN W. TANNER

Recently Released Young Women General President

Delight in the things of the Lord . . . will "lift" our hearts and give us cause to "rejoice."



In the Book of Mormon, Nephi speaks often of delight. He delights "in the things of the Lord," "in the scriptures," and "in the great and eternal plan" of our Father in Heaven (see 2 Nephi 4:15–16; 11:2–8). Notably, Nephi often remembers his sources of delight in the midst of affliction, serving to lift and focus his spirit on eternal blessings.

We too should delight in the things of the Lord for it will "lift" our hearts and give us cause to "rejoice" (2 Nephi 11:8). Let me mention a few of the things I delight in.

I delight in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Like Nephi, "I glory in my Jesus" (2 Nephi 33:6), in His ministering and saving roles upon the earth. He provides light and hope and has given us the Holy Ghost for further guidance and comfort along the pathway we should go. It is only through Him that we can return to our Father. "Salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17).

I delight in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets with whom I have had the blessed opportunity to serve. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord's prophet on the earth today. I delight that he is truly a Christlike minister to the one, reaching out in warmth and love to each individual.

I delight in priesthood keys and temples that dot the earth, making available to each of us eternal ordinances and covenants. Some of my most celestial days recently have been my own children's temple marriages, with my father performing that holy ordinance.

I delight in the strength of youth as I see them throng the temples to do



baptisms for the dead. I love their worthy adherence to the standards leading to the temple and their preparation to be faithful missionaries and righteous mothers and fathers.

I delight that I am a daughter of Heavenly Father, who loves me. I learned of my divine identity in my earliest years at my mother's side. Just recently I saw my then three-year-old granddaughter learning her identity from her mother. Eliza had gone to bed distraught. She could be comforted only as her mother again told Eliza's favorite true story about the special night when Heavenly Father distinctly and clearly whispered to her mommy's heart that Eliza was a special spirit with a noble mission ahead.

I take great delight in my role as a nurturer, which allows me to express my deepest identity as a woman. I never fail to be struck by the way that women, young women, and even little girls seem to have an instinctive interest and ability in nurturing. It is not only a mother's

primary responsibility but also part of our "individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). To nurture is to teach, to foster development, to promote growth, to feed, and to nourish. Who would not shout for joy at being given such a blessed role?

The scriptures use the word *nurture* only twice and in both cases speak of the responsibility of parents to raise their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4; Enos 1:1).

President Hinckley also admonished both men and women to be nurturers. He said, "How much more beautiful would be the . . . society in which we live if every father . . . and . . . mother regarded [their] children . . . as gifts from the God of heaven . . . and brought them up with true affection in the wisdom and admonition of the Lord" ("These, Our Little Ones," *Liabona*,

Dec. 2007, 7; *Ensign*, Dec. 2007, 9).

I delight in families. Recently I delighted in the birth of a new grandchild into a family that understands that parents have the solemn responsibility to rear their children in love and righteousness. The older siblings had a natural curiosity about their little sister's entrance into this world. Their first lessons about this holy subject were taught by loving parents in a sacred family setting, in the celestial climate that accompanies a new soul's birth into mortality, and in the context of our Father's great eternal plan. By contrast, the next day upon returning home from kindergarten, our granddaughter reported that she had learned that day in class "a big new term called sexual abuse." I felt concerned that at this early age children already have to be aware, for safety reasons, of the negative facets of the subject they had so beautifully talked of the night before. I delighted as never before in a nurturing family founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jacob taught that the Lord delights "in the chastity of women" (Jacob 2:28). I delight in the chastity and purity of all women and men. How it must grieve the Lord to see virtue violated and modesty mocked on every side in this wicked world. The Lord has provided for His children great joy through intimate, loving relationships, as my grandchildren were learning. I delight in the clarity of the proclamation to the world on the family, which warns that "individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God."

I delight in the examples of those in the scriptures who walk by faith on their earthly journey. Each time I walk with Abraham and Isaac on the road to Mount Moriah, I weep, knowing that Abraham does not know that there will be an angel and a ram in the

thicket at the end of the journey. We are each in the middle of our earthly path, and we don't know the rest of our own stories. But we, as Abraham, are blessed with miracles.

I delight in the Lord's mercies and miracles (see "Bless Our Fast, We Pray," *Hymns*, no. 138). I know that His tender mercies and His miracles, large and small, are real. They come in His way and on His timetable. Sometimes it is not until we have reached our extremity. Jesus's disciples on the Sea of Galilee had to toil in rowing against a contrary wind all through the night before Jesus finally came to their aid. He did not come until the "fourth watch," meaning near dawn. Yet He did come. (See Mark 6:45–51.) My testimony is that miracles do come, though sometimes not until the fourth watch.

Right now I am exerting my faith and prayers and watching for miracles in behalf of loved ones who are physically sick, emotionally bereft, and spiritually astray. I delight in the Lord's love for each of His children and in His wisdom to allow us individually tailored earthly experiences.

Finally, I delight in, more than I can express, the eternal love and constant help of my husband and the prayers and support of my children and parents during these years of my service as Young Women general president.

"My soul delighteth in the things of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:16)—His law, His life, His love. To delight in Him is to acknowledge His hand in our lives. Our gospel duty is to do what is right and to love and delight in what is right. When we delight to serve Him, our Father in Heaven delights to bless us. "I, the Lord, . . . delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end" (D&C 76:5). I want to be worthy always of His delight. "I love the Lord, in Him my soul delights" ("I Love the Lord," Jackman Music Corporation). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

The Twelve

PRESIDENT BOYD K. PACKER

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

For the Church to be His Church, there must be a Quorum of the Twelve who hold the keys.



Shortly after the death of President Gordon B. Hinckley, the 14 men, Apostles, who had had conferred upon them the keys of the kingdom, gathered together in the upper room of the temple in order to reorganize the First Presidency of the Church. There was no question about what would be done, no hesitancy. We knew that the senior Apostle was the President of the Church. And in that sacred meeting, Thomas Spencer Monson was sustained by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the President of the Church. He nominated and named his counselors. They likewise were sustained, and they were each ordained and given authority. President Monson was specifically given the authority to exercise all of the priesthood keys of authority. Now, as the scriptures provide, he is the

only man on the earth who has the right to exercise all of the keys. But we all hold them as Apostles. There is one man among us called and ordained, and he becomes the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Already he was and had been sustained for years as a prophet, seer, and revelator.

With President Uchtdorf being called to the First Presidency, there was then a vacancy in the Twelve, and so yesterday we sustained a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder D. Todd Christofferson. He now joins that sacred brotherhood in that sacred circle, and the circle now stands filled. The calling of an Apostle goes back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also sustained a number of Seventies. They have taken their place now. The scriptures provide that it is the responsibility of the Quorum of the Twelve to direct all of the affairs of the Church, and when they need help, they are "to call upon the Seventy . . . instead of any others."¹ And now we have eight Quorums of Seventy scattered across the world, more than 300 Seventies, all holding the necessary authority to do whatever the Twelve direct them to do.

The Lord Himself set in motion this pattern of administration:

"He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them



Following his sustaining, Elder D. Todd Christofferson takes his place with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”²

Andrew had heard John speak and ran to his brother Simon and said, “We have found the Messias. . . .

“ . . . He brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”³

Simon and his brother Andrew were casting nets into the sea; James and John the sons of Zebedee were mending their fishing nets; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew, a publican, or tax collector; Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Canaanite; Judas the brother of James; and Judas Iscariot—they made up the Quorum of the Twelve.⁴

He bid them all, “Come, follow me.”⁵

He said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”⁶

And He told the Twelve, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”⁷

He gave His Apostles “power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick . . . every where.”⁸

And He said, “[The] Twelve hold the keys to open up the authority of my kingdom upon the four corners of the earth, and after that to send my word to every creature.”⁹

Jesus once asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? . . .

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”¹⁰

When Jesus taught in the synagogue, many disciples said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it? . . .

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

“ . . . Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”¹¹

After the Crucifixion, the Apostles remembered He had said they should stay in Jerusalem.¹² Then came the day of Pentecost, that great event when they received the Holy Ghost.¹³ They received “a more sure word of prophecy”¹⁴ and “spake as they were

moved by the Holy Ghost.”¹⁵ And so they were complete.

We know little of their travels and only where and how a few of them died. James was killed in Jerusalem by Herod. Peter and Paul died in Rome. Tradition holds that Philip went to the East. Much more than this we do not know.

They scattered; they taught, testified, and established the Church. And they died for their beliefs, and with their deaths came the dark centuries of apostasy.

The most precious thing lost in the Apostasy was the authority held by the Twelve—the priesthood keys. For the Church to be *His* Church, there must be a Quorum of the Twelve who hold the keys and confer them on others.

In time came the First Vision and the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John.¹⁶

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve were later told:

“Verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.

“ . . . Behold how great is your calling. Cleanse your hearts and your garments, lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands.”¹⁷

The restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was young when the First Presidency was organized, followed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, which was made up of ordinary men, and then the Quorums of the Seventy. The average age of that first Quorum of the Twelve was 28.

There has been an unbroken line of authority. The priesthood keys given to the Apostles have always been held by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve.

Yesterday Elder D. Todd Christofferson became the 96th Apostle to serve in the Twelve in this dispensation. He will be ordained an

Apostle and given all the priesthood keys conferred upon the other 14 prophets, seers, and revelators—Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Spencer W. Kimball desired to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the *Christus* and of the Twelve Apostles stand. He had visited there some years earlier and wanted all of us to see it, to go there.

To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the *Christus* with His arms turned forward and somewhat outstretched, the hands showing the imprint of the nails, and the wound in His side very clearly visible. Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front to the right and the other Apostles in order.

Most of our group was near the rear of the chapel with the custodian. I stood up front with President Kimball before the statue of Peter with Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Johan Helge Benthin, president of the Copenhagen stake.

In Peter's hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to those keys and explained what they symbolized. Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Benthin and with unaccustomed firmness pointed his finger at him and said, "I want you to tell everyone in Denmark that I hold the keys! We hold the *real* keys, and we use them every day."

I will never forget that declaration, that testimony from the prophet. The influence was spiritually powerful; the impression was physical in its impact.

We walked to the back of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing. Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian, "These are the dead Apostles." Pointing to me, he said,



"Here we have the *living* Apostles. Elder Packer is an Apostle. Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder L. Tom Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles.

"You read about the Seventies in the New Testament, and here are two of the living Seventies, Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Elder Robert D. Hales."

The custodian, who up to that time had shown no emotion, suddenly was in tears.

I felt I had had an experience of a lifetime.

"We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets,

pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth."¹⁸

When the Seventy are ordained, although they are not ordained Apostles nor do they hold keys, they have authority, and the Twelve are "to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others."¹⁹

Today there are 308 Seventies in 8 quorums. They represent 44 countries and speak 30 languages.

We do not hear of the priesthood keys being exercised in other Christian churches. It seems odd that we are described by some as being



The two newest members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder D. Todd Christofferson (left) and Elder Quentin L. Cook, exchange greetings.

non-Christian when we are the only ones who have the authority and the organization that He established.

The present Twelve are very ordinary people. They are not, as the original Twelve were not, spectacular individually, but collectively the Twelve are a power.

We come from a variety of occupations. We are scientists, lawyers, teachers.

Elder Nelson was a pioneer heart surgeon. He performed thousands of surgical operations. He told me he gave every heart surgery patient a lifetime guarantee on his work.

Several in this Quorum were military men—a sailor, marines, pilots.

They have held various positions in the Church: home teachers, teachers, missionaries, quorum presidents, bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, and of most importance, husbands and fathers.

They all are students and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What unites us is our love of the Savior and

His Father's children and our witness that He stands at the head of the Church.

Almost to a man, the Twelve come from humble beginnings, as it was when He was here. The living Twelve are welded together in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the call came, each has put down his nets, so to speak, and followed the Lord.

President Kimball is remembered for his statement, "My life is like my shoes—to be worn out in service."²⁰ That applies to all members of the Twelve. We also wear ourselves out in service of the Lord, and we do so willingly. It is not an easy life for us or our families.

It is not possible in words to describe the contribution, the service, the sacrifice given by the wives of priesthood leaders all across the world.

Some time ago, my wife and also Sister Ballard underwent consummately painful back surgery. Both are doing well; neither has complained.

The nearest my wife came to complaint was, "This is no fun!"

"It is the duty of the Twelve"—under the direction of the First Presidency—"to ordain and set in order all the other officers of the church, agreeable to the revelation."²¹

We now have means by which we can teach and testify to leaders and members all over the world electronically. But in order to confer the keys of authority in that unbroken line upon the priesthood leaders, "by the laying on of hands,"²² wherever they are in the world, one of us must be there every time.

The Lord said, "And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them."²³

The scriptures describe the Twelve as "traveling councilors."²⁴

I am no different from the Brethren of the Twelve and the Seventy and the Bishopric with whom I have served for these 47 years when I tell you that the records show I have been in Mexico and Central and South America more than 75 times, in Europe over 50 times, Canada 25 times, the islands of the Pacific 10 times, Asia 10 times, and Africa 4 times; also China twice; to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the Dominican Republic, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, and many, many other places around the globe. Others have traveled even more than that.

While the Apostles hold all of the priesthood keys, all leaders and members alike may receive personal revelation. Indeed, they are expected to seek it through prayer and to act on it by faith.

"For through him we . . . have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints,

and of the household of God;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”²⁵

Now Elder Christofferson may wonder, as I did, why one such as I should be ordained to the holy apostleship.

There are many qualifications that I lack. There is so much in my effort to serve that is wanting. There is only one single thing, one qualification that can explain it. Like Peter and all of those who have since been ordained, I have *that* witness.

I know that God is our Father. He introduced His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph Smith. I declare to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that He lives. He was born in the meridian of time. He taught His gospel and was tried. He suffered and was crucified and resurrected on the third day. He, like His Father, has a body of flesh and bone. He made His Atonement. Of Him I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness. This I bear in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 107:38.
2. Luke 6:12–13.
3. John 1:41–42.
4. See Luke 6:12–16.
5. See Matthew 4:19; 16:24; Mark 6:1; Luke 9:23; see also John 21:19; D&C 112:14.
6. Matthew 16:19.
7. John 14:12.
8. Luke 9:1–2, 6.
9. D&C 124:128.
10. Matthew 16:13, 16.
11. John 6:60, 66–68.
12. See Acts 1:4.
13. See Acts 2:1–4.
14. 2 Peter 1:19.
15. 2 Peter 1:21.
16. See D&C 27:12; Joseph Smith—History 1:72.
17. D&C 112:32–33.
18. Articles of Faith 1:6.
19. D&C 107:38.
20. In Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Gift of Self,” *Tambuli*, Dec. 1986, 4; “He Is at Peace,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, 41.
21. D&C 107:58; see also D&C 107:33.
22. Articles of Faith 1:5.
23. D&C 112:21.
24. D&C 107:23.
25. Ephesians 2:18–20.

Looking Back and Moving Forward

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Together we shall move forward doing His work.



I think this has been a remarkable session. The messages have been inspiring; the music has been beautiful, the testimonies sincere. I think anyone who has attended this session will never forget it—for the Spirit we’ve felt.

My beloved brothers and sisters, over 44 years ago, in October of 1963, I stood at the pulpit in the Tabernacle, having just been sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. On that occasion I mentioned a small sign I had seen on another pulpit. The words on the sign were these: “Who stands at this pulpit, let him be humble.” I assure you that I was humbled by my call to the Twelve at that time. However, as I stand at *this* pulpit today, I address

you from the absolute depths of humility. I feel very keenly my dependence upon the Lord. I humbly seek the guidance of the Spirit as I share with you the feelings of my heart.

Just two months ago we said farewell to our dear friend and leader Gordon B. Hinckley, the 15th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an outstanding ambassador of truth to the entire world and beloved of all. We miss him. More than 53,000 men, women, and children journeyed to the beautiful Hall of the Prophets in this very building to pay their last respects to this giant of the Lord, who now belongs to the ages.

With the passing of President Hinckley, the First Presidency was dissolved. President Eyring and I, who served as counselors to President Hinckley, returned to our places in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and that quorum became the presiding authority of the Church.

On Saturday, February 2, 2008, funeral services for President Hinckley were held in this magnificent Conference Center—a building which will ever stand as a monument to his foresight and vision. During the funeral, beautiful and loving tributes were paid to this man of God.

The following day, all 14 ordained Apostles living on the earth

assembled in an upper room of the Salt Lake Temple. We met in a spirit of fasting and prayer. During that solemn and sacred gathering, the Presidency of the Church was re-organized in accordance with well-established precedent, after the pattern which the Lord Himself put in place.

Members of the Church around the world convened yesterday in a solemn assembly. You raised your hands in a sustaining vote to approve the action which was taken in that meeting in the temple to which I have just referred. As your hands were raised toward heaven, my heart was touched. I felt your love and support, as well as your commitment to the Lord.

I know without question, my brothers and sisters, that God lives. I testify to you that this is His work. I testify as well that our Savior Jesus Christ is at the head of this Church, which bears His name. I know that the sweetest experience in all this life is to feel His promptings as He directs us in the furtherance of His work. I felt those promptings as a young bishop, guided to the homes where there was spiritual—or perhaps temporal—want. I felt them again as a mission president in Toronto, Canada, working with wonderful missionaries who were a living witness and testimony to the world that this work is divine and that we are led by a prophet. I have felt them throughout my service in the Twelve and in the First Presidency and now as President of the Church. I testify that each one of us can feel the Lord's inspiration as we live worthily and strive to serve Him.

I am keenly aware of the 15 men who preceded me as President of the Church. Many of them I have known personally. I have had the blessing and privilege of serving as a counselor to three of them. I am grateful for the abiding legacy left by each one of



those 15 men. I have the sure knowledge, as I am confident they had, that God directs His prophet. My earnest prayer is that I might continue to be a worthy instrument in His hands to carry on this great work and to fulfill the tremendous responsibilities which come with the office of President.

I thank the Lord for wonderful counselors. President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf are men of great ability and sound understanding. They are counselors in the true sense of the word. I value their judgment. I believe they have been prepared by the Lord for the positions they now occupy. I love the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and treasure my association with them. They, too, are dedicated to the work of the Lord and are spending their lives in His service. I look forward to serving with Elder Christofferson, who has now been called to that quorum and who has received your sustaining vote. He, too, has been prepared for the position to which he has been called. It has also been a joy to serve with the members of the quorums of the Seventy and with the Presiding Bishopric. New members of the

Seventy have been called and were sustained yesterday, and I look forward to associating with them in the work of the Master.

A sweet spirit of unity exists among the General Authorities. The Lord has declared, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."¹ We will continue to be united in one purpose—namely, the furtherance of the work of the Lord.

I feel to express thanks to my Heavenly Father for His countless blessings to me. I can say, as did Nephi of old, that I was born of goodly parents, whose own parents and grandparents were gathered out of the lands of Sweden and Scotland and England by dedicated missionaries. As those missionaries bore humble testimonies, they touched the hearts and the spirits of my forebears. After joining the Church, these noble men, women, and children made their way to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Many were the trials and heartaches they encountered along the way.

In the spring of 1848, my great-great-grandparents, Charles Stewart Miller and Mary McGowan Miller, who had joined the Church in their native Scotland, left their home in Rutherglen, Scotland, and journeyed to St. Louis, Missouri, with a group of Saints, arriving there in 1849. One of their 11 children, Margaret, would become my great-grandmother.

While the family was in St. Louis working to earn enough money to complete their journey to the Salt Lake Valley, a plague of cholera swept through the area, leaving death and heartache in its wake. The Miller family was hard hit. In the space of two weeks, four of the family members succumbed. The first, on June 22, 1849, was 18-year-old William. Five days later Mary McGowan Miller, my great-great-grandmother and the mother of the family, died. Two days afterward, 15-year-old Archibald passed away, and five days after his

death, my great-great-grandfather, Charles Stewart Miller, father of the family, succumbed. The children who survived were left orphans, including my great-grandmother Margaret, who was 13 years old at the time.

Because of so many deaths in the area, there were no caskets available, at any price, in which to bury the deceased family members. The older surviving boys dismantled the family's oxen pens in order to make caskets for the family members who had passed away.

Little is recorded of the heartache and struggles of the nine remaining Miller children as they continued to work and save for that journey their parents and brothers would never make. We know that they left St. Louis in the spring of 1850 with four oxen and one wagon, arriving finally in the Salt Lake Valley that same year.

Others of my ancestors faced similar hardships. Through it all, however, their testimonies remained steadfast and firm. From all of them I received a legacy of total dedication to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of these faithful souls, I stand before you today.

I thank my Father in Heaven for my sweet companion, Frances. This October she and I will celebrate 60 wonderful years of marriage. Although my Church service began at an early age, she has never once complained when I've left home to attend meetings or to fulfill an assignment. For many years my assignments as a member of the Twelve took me away from Salt Lake City often—sometimes for five weeks at a time—leaving her alone to care for our small children and our home. Beginning when I was called as a bishop at the age of 22, we have seldom had the luxury of sitting together during a Church service. I could not have asked for a more loyal, loving, and understanding companion.

I express gratitude to my Heavenly



Father for our three children and their companions, for eight wonderful grandchildren, and for four beautiful great-grandchildren.

It's difficult for me to find the words to convey to you, my brothers and sisters, my heartfelt appreciation for the lives you live, for the good you do, for the testimonies you bear. You serve one another willingly. You are dedicated to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During more than 44 years as a General Authority, I have had the opportunity to travel the world over. One of my greatest joys has been to meet with you, the members, wherever you may be—to feel of your

spirit and your love. I look forward to many more such opportunities.

Throughout the journey along the pathway of life, there are casualties. Some depart from the road markers which point toward life eternal, only to discover the detour chosen ultimately leads to a dead end. Indifference, carelessness, selfishness, and sin all take their costly toll in human lives.

Change for the better can come to all. Over the years we have issued appeals to the less active, the offended, the critical, the transgressor—to come back. "Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the Saints."²



In the private sanctuary of one's own conscience lies that spirit, that determination to cast off the old person and to measure up to the stature of true potential. In this spirit, we again issue that heartfelt invitation: Come back. We reach out to you in the pure love of Christ and express our desire to assist you and to welcome you into full fellowship. To those who are wounded in spirit or who are struggling and fearful, we say, Let us lift you and cheer you and calm your fears. Take literally the Lord's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."³

It was said of the Savior that He "went about doing good . . . for God was with him."⁴ May we follow that perfect example. In this sometimes precarious journey through mortality, may we also follow that advice from the Apostle Paul which will help to keep us safe and on course: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."⁵

I would encourage members of the Church wherever they may be to

show kindness and respect for all people everywhere. The world in which we live is filled with diversity. We can and should demonstrate respect toward those whose beliefs differ from ours.

May we also demonstrate kindness and love within our own families. Our homes are to be more than sanctuaries; they should also be places where God's Spirit can dwell, where the storm stops at the door, where love reigns and peace dwells.

The world can at times be a frightening place in which to live. The moral fabric of society seems to be unraveling at an alarming speed. None—whether young or old or in-between—is exempt from exposure to those things which have the potential to drag us down and destroy us. Our youth, our precious youth, in particular, face temptations we can scarcely comprehend. The adversary and his hosts seem to be working nonstop to cause our downfall.

We are waging a war with sin, my brothers and sisters, but we need not despair. It is a war we can and will win. Our Father in Heaven has given us the tools we need in order to do so. He is at the helm. We have nothing to fear. He is the God of light. He is the God of hope. I testify that He loves us—each one.

Mortality is a period of testing, a time to prove ourselves worthy to return to the presence of our

Heavenly Father. In order to be tested, we must sometimes face challenges and difficulties. At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel's end—no dawn to break the night's darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea "Is there no balm in Gilead?"⁶ We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face.

With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift my voice in testimony today as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He loves us with a love we cannot fully comprehend, and because He loves us, He gave His life for us. My gratitude to Him is beyond expression.

I invoke His blessings upon you, my beloved brothers and sisters, in your homes, in your work, in your service to one another and to the Lord Himself. Together we shall move forward doing His work.

I pledge my life, my strength—all that I have to offer—in serving Him and in directing the affairs of His Church in accordance with His will and by His inspiration, and I do so in His holy name—even the Lord Jesus Christ—amen. ■

NOTES

1. D&C 38:27.
2. First Presidency statement, in *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, 88.
3. Matthew 11:28–30.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Philippians 4:8.
6. Jeremiah 8:22.

“My Words . . . Never Cease”

ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

We invite all to inquire into the wonder of what God has said since biblical times and is saying even now.



President Monson, may I claim a moment of personal privilege? As the first of the Brethren invited to speak following your singular message to the Church this morning, may I say something on behalf of all your Brethren of the General Authorities and indeed on behalf of all the Church.

Of the many privileges we have had in this historic conference, including participation in a solemn assembly in which we were able to stand and sustain you as prophet, seer, and revelator, I cannot help but feel that the most important privilege we have all had has been to witness personally the settling of the sacred,

prophetic mantle upon your shoulders, almost as it were by the very hands of angels themselves. Those in attendance at last night's general priesthood meeting and all who were present in the worldwide broadcast of this morning's session have been eyewitness to this event. For all the participants, I express our gratitude for such a moment. I say that with love to President Monson and especially love to our Father in Heaven for the wonderful opportunity it has been to be “eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16), as the Apostle Peter once said.

In general conference last October, I said there were two principal reasons The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is accused, erroneously, of not being Christian. At that time I addressed one of those doctrinal issues—our scripturally based view of the Godhead. Today I would like to address the other major doctrine which characterizes our faith but which causes concern to some, namely the bold assertion that God continues to speak His word and reveal His truth, revelations which mandate an open canon of scripture.

Some Christians, in large measure because of their genuine love for the Bible, have declared that there can be no more authorized scripture beyond the Bible. In thus pronouncing the

canon of revelation closed, our friends in some other faiths shut the door on divine expression that we in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hold dear: the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the ongoing guidance received by God's anointed prophets and apostles. Imputing no ill will to those who take such a position, nevertheless we respectfully but resolutely reject such an unscriptural characterization of true Christianity.

One of the arguments often used in any defense of a closed canon is the New Testament passage recorded in Revelation 22:18: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of . . . this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.” However, there is now overwhelming consensus among virtually all biblical scholars that this verse applies only to the book of Revelation, *not* the whole Bible. Those scholars of our day acknowledge a number of New Testament “books” that were almost certainly written *after* John's revelation on the Isle of Patmos was received. Included in this category are at least the books of Jude, the three Epistles of John, and probably the entire Gospel of John itself.¹ Perhaps there are even more than these.

But there is a simpler answer as to why that passage in the final book of the current New Testament cannot apply to the whole Bible. That is because the whole Bible as we know it—one collection of texts bound in a single volume—did not exist when that verse was written. For centuries after John produced his writing, the individual books of the New Testament were in circulation singly or perhaps in combinations with a few other texts but almost *never* as a complete collection. Of the entire corpus of 5,366 known Greek New Testament manuscripts, only 35



contain the whole New Testament as we now know it, and 34 of those were compiled after A.D. 1000.²

The fact of the matter is that virtually every prophet of the Old *and* New Testament has added scripture to that received by his predecessors. If the Old Testament words of Moses were sufficient, as some could have mistakenly thought them to be,³ then why, for example, the subsequent prophecies of Isaiah or of Jeremiah, who follows him? To say nothing of Ezekiel and Daniel, of Joel, Amos, and all the rest. If one revelation to one prophet in one moment of time is sufficient for *all* time, what justifies these many others? What justifies them was made clear by Jehovah Himself when He said to Moses, “My works are without end, and . . . my words . . . never cease.”⁴

One Protestant scholar has inquired tellingly into the erroneous doctrine of a closed canon. He writes: “On what biblical or historical grounds has the inspiration of God been limited to the written documents that the church now calls its Bible? . . . If the Spirit inspired only

the written documents of the first century, does that mean that the same Spirit does not speak today in the church about matters that are of significant concern?”⁵ We humbly ask those same questions.

Continuing revelation does not demean or discredit existing revelation. The Old Testament does not lose its value in our eyes when we are introduced to the New Testament, and the New Testament is only enhanced when we read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. In considering the additional scripture accepted by Latter-day Saints, we might ask: Were those early Christians who for decades had access only to the primitive Gospel of Mark (generally considered the first of the New Testament Gospels to be written)—were they offended to receive the more detailed accounts set forth later by Matthew and Luke, to say nothing of the unprecedented passages and revelatory emphasis offered later yet by John? Surely they must have rejoiced that ever more convincing evidence of the divinity of Christ

kept coming. And so do we rejoice.

Please do *not* misunderstand. We love and revere the Bible, as Elder M. Russell Ballard taught so clearly from this pulpit just one year ago.⁶ The Bible is the word of God. It is always identified first in our canon, our “standard works.” Indeed, it was a divinely ordained encounter with the fifth verse of the first chapter of the book of James that led Joseph Smith to his vision of the Father and the Son, which gave birth to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our time. But even then, Joseph knew the Bible alone could not be the answer to *all* the religious questions he and others like him had. As he said in his own words, the ministers of his community were contending—sometimes angrily—over their doctrines. “Priest [was] contending against priest, and convert [was contending] against convert . . . in a strife of words and a contest about opinions,” he said. About the only thing these contending religions had in common was, ironically, a belief in the Bible, but, as Joseph wrote, “the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question [regarding which church was true] by an appeal to the Bible.”⁷ Clearly the Bible, so frequently described at that time as “common ground,” was nothing of the kind—unfortunately it was a battleground.

Thus one of the great purposes of continuing revelation through living prophets is to declare to the world through additional witnesses that the Bible is true. “*This* is written,” an ancient prophet said, speaking of the Book of Mormon, “for the intent that ye may believe *that*,” speaking of the Bible.⁸ In one of the earliest revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “Behold, I do not bring [the Book of Mormon forth] to destroy [the Bible] but to build it up.”⁹

One other point needs to be

made. Since it is clear that there were Christians long before there was a New Testament or even an accumulation of the sayings of Jesus, it cannot therefore be maintained that the Bible is what makes one a Christian. In the words of esteemed New Testament scholar N. T. Wright, “The risen Jesus, at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, does not say, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to the books you are all going to write,’ but [rather] ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.’”¹⁰ In other words, “Scripture itself points . . . away from itself and to the fact that final and true authority belongs to God himself.”¹¹ So the scriptures are *not* the ultimate source of knowledge for Latter-day Saints. They are manifestations of the ultimate source. The ultimate source of knowledge and authority for a Latter-day Saint is the living God. The communication of those gifts comes from God as living, vibrant, divine revelation.¹²

This doctrine lies at the very heart of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of our message to the world. It dramatizes the significance of a solemn assembly yesterday, in which we sustained Thomas S. Monson as a prophet, a seer, and a revelator. We believe in a God who is engaged in our lives, who is not silent, not absent, nor, as Elijah said of the god of the priests of Baal, is He “[on] a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be [awakened].”¹³ In this Church, even our young Primary children recite, “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”¹⁴

In declaring new scripture and continuing revelation, we pray we will never be arrogant or insensitive. But after a sacred vision in a now sacred grove answered in the affirmative the question “Does God exist?” what



Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints force us to face is the next interrogative, which necessarily follows: “Does He speak?” We bring the good news that He does and that He has. With a love and affection born of our Christianity, we invite all to inquire into the wonder of what God has said since biblical times and is saying even now.

In a sense Joseph Smith and his prophetic successors in this Church answer the challenge Ralph Waldo

Emerson put to the students of the Harvard Divinity School 170 years ago this coming summer. To that group of the Protestant best and brightest, the great sage of Concord pled that they teach “that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.”¹⁵

I testify that the heavens are open. I testify that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is truly another testament of Jesus Christ. I testify that Thomas S. Monson is God’s prophet, a modern

apostle with the keys of the kingdom in his hands, a man upon whom I personally have seen the mantle fall. I testify that the presence of such authorized, prophetic voices and ongoing canonized revelations have been at the heart of the Christian message whenever the authorized ministry of Christ has been on the earth. I testify that such a ministry *is* on the earth again, and it is found in this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In our heartfelt devotion to Jesus of Nazareth as the very Son of God, the Savior of the world, we invite all to examine what we have received of Him, to join with us, drinking deeply at the “well of water springing up into everlasting life,”¹⁶ these constantly flowing reminders that God lives, that He loves us, and that He speaks. I express the deepest *personal* thanks that His works never end and His “words . . . never cease.” I bear witness of such divine loving attention and the recording of it, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. For an introductory discussion on this topic, see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (1991), 46. The issue of canon is discussed on pages 45–56. *Canon* is defined as “an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture” (*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “canon”).
2. See Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Paleography* (1981), 54–55.
3. See Deuteronomy 4:2, for example.
4. Moses 1:4.
5. Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, rev. ed. (1995), 255–56.
6. See “The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2007, 80–82.
7. Joseph Smith—History 1:6, 12.
8. Mormon 7:9; emphasis added.
9. D&C 10:52; see also D&C 20:11.
10. N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (2005), xi.
11. Wright, *The Last Word*, 24.
12. For a full essay on this subject, see Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 6–9.
13. 1 Kings 18:27.
14. Articles of Faith 1:9.
15. “An Address,” *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1929), 45.
16. John 4:14.

Ask in Faith

ELDER DAVID A. BEDNAR

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work.



Ask in Faith and Act

The classic example of asking in faith is Joseph Smith and the First Vision. As young Joseph was seeking to know the truth about religion, he read the following verses in the first chapter of James:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:5–6).

Please notice the requirement to ask in faith, which I understand to mean the necessity to not only express but to do, the dual obligation to both plead and to perform, the requirement to communicate and to act.

Pondering this biblical text led Joseph to retire to a grove of trees near his home to pray and to seek spiritual knowledge. Note the questions that guided Joseph’s thinking and supplicating.

“In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

Joseph’s questions focused not just on what he needed to know but

I invite the Holy Ghost to assist us as we consider a principle that can help our prayers become more meaningful—the gospel principle of asking in faith.

I want to review three examples of asking in faith in meaningful prayer and discuss the lessons we can learn from each one of them. As we speak of prayer, I emphasize the word *meaningful*. Simply saying prayers is quite a different thing from engaging in meaningful prayer. I expect that all of us already know that prayer is essential for our spiritual development and protection. But what we know is not always reflected in what we do. And even though we recognize the importance of prayer, all of us can improve the consistency and efficacy of our personal and family prayers.

also on what was to be *done!* His prayer was not simply, “Which church is right?” His question was, “Which church should I join?” Joseph went to the grove to ask in faith, and he was determined to act.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to righteous action. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “faith [is] the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 1). Action alone is not faith in the Savior, but acting in accordance with correct principles is a central component of faith. Thus, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

The Prophet Joseph further explained that “faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth” (*Lectures on Faith*, 3). Thus, faith in Christ leads to righteous action, which increases our spiritual capacity and power. Understanding that faith is a principle of action and of power inspires us to exercise our moral agency in compliance with gospel truth, invites the redeeming and strengthening *powers* of the Savior’s Atonement into our lives, and enlarges the *power* within us whereby we are agents unto ourselves (see D&C 58:28).

I long have been impressed with the truth that meaningful prayer requires both holy communication and consecrated work. Blessings require some effort on our part before we can obtain them, and prayer, as “a form of work, . . . is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 753). We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say “amen,” by acting upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father.

Asking in faith requires honesty, effort, commitment, and persistence.



Let me provide an illustration of what I mean and extend to you an invitation.

We properly pray for the safety and success of the full-time missionaries throughout the world. And a common element in many of our prayers is a request that the missionaries will be led to individuals and families who are prepared to receive the message of the Restoration. But ultimately it is my responsibility and your responsibility to find people for the missionaries to teach. Missionaries are full-time teachers; you and I are full-time finders. And you and I as lifelong missionaries should not be praying for the full-time missionaries to do our work!

If you and I would truly pray and

ask in faith, as did Joseph Smith—if we would pray with the expectation to act and not just to express—then the work of proclaiming the gospel would move forward in a remarkable way. Such a prayer of faith might include some of the following elements:

- Thanking Heavenly Father for the doctrines and ordinances of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which bring hope and happiness into our lives.
- Asking for courage and boldness to open our mouths and share the gospel with our family and friends.
- Entreating Heavenly Father to help us identify individuals and families

who will be receptive to our invitation to be taught by the missionaries in our homes.

- Pledging to do our part this day and this week and petitioning for help to overcome anxiety, fear, and hesitation.
- Seeking for the gift of discernment—for eyes to see and ears to hear missionary opportunities as they occur.
- Praying fervently for the strength to act as we know we should.

Gratitude would be expressed, and other blessings might be requested in such a prayer, which would be closed in the name of the Savior. And then the consecrated work of that prayer would continue and increase.

This same pattern of holy communication and consecrated work can be applied in our prayers for the poor and the needy, for the sick and the afflicted, for family members and friends who are struggling, and for those who are not attending Church meetings.

I testify that prayer becomes meaningful as we ask in faith and act. I invite all of us to pray in faith about our divinely given mandate to proclaim the gospel. As we do so, I promise doors will open and we will be blessed to recognize and act upon the opportunities that will be provided.

After the Trial of Our Faith

My second example emphasizes the importance of persevering through the trial of our faith. A few years ago a family traveled to Europe from the United States. Shortly after arriving at their destination, a 13-year-old son became quite ill. The mother and father initially thought his upset stomach was caused by fatigue from the long flight, and the family routinely continued on its journey.

As the day continued, the son's condition became worse. Dehydration was increasing. The father gave his son a



priesthood blessing, but no improvement was immediately evident.

Several hours passed by, and the mother knelt by her son's side, pleading in prayer to Heavenly Father for the boy's well-being. They were far from home in an unfamiliar country and did not know how to obtain medical assistance.

The mother asked her son if he would like to pray with her. She knew that merely waiting for the anticipated blessing would not be enough; they needed to continue to act. Explaining that the blessing he had received was still in effect, she suggested again petitioning in prayer, as did the ancient Apostles, "Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). The prayer included a profession of trust in priesthood power and a commitment to persevere in doing whatever might be required for the blessing to be honored—if that blessing at that time was in accordance with God's will. Shortly after they offered this simple prayer, the son's condition improved.

The faithful action of the mother and her son helped to invite the promised priesthood power and in part satisfied the requirement that we "dispute not because [we] see not, for [we] receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith" (Ether 12:6). Just as the prison holding Alma and Amulek did not tumble to the earth "until after their faith," and just as Ammon and his missionary brethren did not witness mighty miracles in

their ministries "until after their faith" (see Ether 12:12–15), so the healing of this 13-year-old boy did not occur *until after their faith* and was accomplished "according to their faith in their prayers" (D&C 10:47).

Not My Will, but Thine, Be Done

My third example highlights the importance of recognizing and accepting the will of God in our lives. Several years ago there was a young father who had been active in the Church as a boy but had chosen a different path during his teenage years. After serving in the military, he married a lovely girl, and soon children blessed their home.

One day without warning their little four-year-old daughter became critically ill and was hospitalized. In desperation and for the first time in many years, the father was found on his knees in prayer, asking that the life of his daughter be spared. Yet her condition worsened. Gradually, this father sensed that his little girl would not live, and slowly his prayers changed; he no longer prayed for healing but rather for understanding. "Let Thy will be done" was now the manner of his pleadings.

Soon his daughter was in a coma, and the father knew her hours on earth were few. Fortified with understanding, trust, and power beyond their own, the young parents prayed again, asking for the opportunity to hold her close once more while she was awake. The daughter's eyes opened, and her frail arms reached out to her parents for one final embrace. And then she was gone. This father knew their prayers had been answered—a kind, compassionate Father in Heaven had comforted their hearts. God's will had been done, and they had gained understanding. (Adapted from H. Burke Peterson, "Adversity and Prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 18.)

Discerning and accepting the will of God in our lives are fundamental

elements of asking in faith in meaningful prayer. However, simply saying the words “Thy will be done” is not enough. Each of us needs God’s help in surrendering our will to Him.

“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer,” 752–53). Humble, earnest, and persistent prayer enables us to recognize and align ourselves with the will of our Heavenly Father. And in this the Savior provided the perfect example as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. . . . And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:42, 44).

The object of our prayers should not be to present a wish list or a series of requests but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is eager to bestow, according to His will and timing. Every sincere prayer is heard and answered by our Heavenly Father, but the answers we receive may not be what we expect or come to us when we want or in the way we anticipate. This truth is evident in the three examples I have presented today.

Prayer is a privilege and the soul’s sincere desire. We can move beyond routine and “checklist” prayers and engage in meaningful prayer as we appropriately ask in faith and act, as we patiently persevere through the trial of our faith, and as we humbly acknowledge and accept “not my will, but Thine, be done.”

I witness the reality and divinity of our Eternal Father, of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. I testify that our Father hears and answers our prayers. May each of us strive with greater resolve to ask in faith and thereby make our prayers truly meaningful. I so pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

We Will Not Yield, We Cannot Yield

ELDER W. CRAIG ZWICK

Of the Seventy

Live by your standards. Stand up for what you believe in.



With each of you, I gratefully sustain God’s will for His people. Thank you, President Monson, for the purity of your heart.

When young Joseph Smith told the truth about his sacred experience in the grove, he was persecuted and mistreated. The adversary used ridicule as a weapon against him. “I was an obscure boy, . . . yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution.”¹

Joseph grew in patience, temperance, and faith, notwithstanding the presence of enemies on every front. In Joseph’s own words: “Evil and designing men have combined to

destroy the innocent, . . . yet the glorious Gospel in its fullness is spreading.”² “No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing.”³

Even today there are those who misunderstand our doctrine and challenge the unchanging values by which we are invited to live.

Ethan, a young friend of mine, approached his mother with a weighty question. Like most teenagers, Ethan wants to be independent, self-sufficient, and surrounded by good friends. He is trying to make good choices on his own. He is exceedingly valiant, works hard on his grades, and studies the scriptures daily. Like all young people, Ethan faces tremendous temptations. It comes in the halls of his school, on the Internet, in the movies and music. It can be heard in bad language and seen in provocative clothing. That which is wrong is often made to look right. Anxiety and fear of rejection are common among teenagers. Peer pressure is often overpowering. Ethan was feeling bombarded with opposing values.

This is the question he asked his mother: “Mom, do I need to lower my standards to keep my friends?”

It is a profound question for each of us to consider at all stages of life. Are we lowering our standards to fit into our neighborhoods? Are we altering our values to suit the situation in



the workplace or to be popular at school?

Ethan's loving mother answered him with a resounding no.

I, too, unequivocally answer, "Don't do it, Ethan. Never forget that you are a son of God. He loves you. Live by your standards. Stand up for what you believe in. Sometimes it is not easy, and you may be standing alone for awhile. Look for friends with integrity and character, then go to them and express appreciation for their examples. You might even find someone who has been feeling as lonely as you. Pray for guidance and protection from the Lord. He will sustain you. He will become a trusted friend, and you will discover that your

example will attract many friends who will take courage from your strength of character."

Nephi taught us a powerfully simple principle in recounting his father's dream of the tree of life. He described a strait and narrow path leading to a tree and a great and spacious building. This building was filled with people who were dressed in exceedingly fine and fashionable clothing. They were all in an attitude of mocking and pointing fingers toward those who were partaking of the fruit. They were trying to get people off the path and into the building. From all appearances, the people inside seemed to be having a great time. What an indelible image of temptation. In Elder Neal A.

Maxwell's words, "The laughter of the world is merely loneliness pathetically trying to reassure itself."⁴

"And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. . . . They did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; *but we heeded them not.*"⁵

There at the end of the verse is Nephi's powerful principle, an answer to unwanted peer pressure: "But we heeded them not."

President Boyd K. Packer has recently emphasized this guiding principle: "However out of step we may seem, however much the standards are belittled, however much others yield, we will not yield, we cannot yield."⁶

Do we recognize temptation when it is so well camouflaged?

Are we willing to fight the unpopular battle?

Paul clearly warned that we should not be "men-pleasers; but [be] the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."⁷

The time has come when we must take an unyielding stand. We must shore up our spiritual underpinnings, listen to the prophets of God, and follow their counsel.

Said Paul to Timothy: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."⁸

It requires courage to make good choices, even when others around us choose differently. As we make righteous choices day by day in little things, the Lord will strengthen us and help us choose the right during more difficult times.

The teachings and values we cherish the most are not embraced by a secular world. To maintain a firm stance for ourselves and our children, the message of the restored gospel must be firmly planted in our hearts and taught in our homes.

Abinadi, a Nephite prophet, as recorded in just a few powerful pages in Mosiah, teaches us timeless lessons that perfectly meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Abinadi was a man of unwavering courage who stood for truth when it was unpopular to do so. As he courageously called the people to repentance, he knew his own life was in jeopardy. In your mind's eye, you can see the riveting scene of Abinadi, who has just had the death sentence pronounced upon him. He had an opportunity to save himself by denying his faith and testimony, but instead he fearlessly proclaimed, "I say unto you, I will not recall the words which I have spoken unto you concerning this people, for they are true."⁹

We may not have to lose our lives in defense of truth, but we can, just like Abinadi, draw ourselves to full stature, and with full heart and energy, valiantly proclaiming that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He was and is the Son of the Almighty. He lives and He loves us.

As we follow Him, we will be able to make sacrifices and keep our sacred covenants. The Lord has said to us: "Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . . Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."¹⁰

We must fortify ourselves. That sure spiritual fortification is found in two words—Jesus Christ. Of Him I humbly testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:22.
2. *History of the Church*, 2:22.
3. *History of the Church*, 4:540.
4. "Cleanse Us from All Unrighteousness," *Ensign*, Feb. 1986, 19.
5. 1 Nephi 8:33.
6. "The Standard of Truth Has Been Erected," *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 26.
7. Ephesians 6:6.
8. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.
9. Mosiah 17:9.
10. D&C 6:34, 36.

The Power of Light and Truth

ELDER ROBERT R. STEUER

Of the Seventy

For us to prosper in these times, spiritual light must burn within us.



As a young boy I discovered amazing power in a small flashlight. Turning it on at night, I saw a large lighted spot wherever I pointed it. My excitement increased when shining the flashlight inside a dusty barn. A cone of light was projected through the air. But the most interesting discovery came when I pressed the flashlight firmly against the palm of my hand. My entire hand glowed in the dark. The light was actually within me! To observe the physical properties of light can be exciting, but discovering the properties of spiritual light and truth is even more awe inspiring and essential.

We live in marvelous times, yet also an hour when peace has been taken from the earth.¹ For us to prosper in these times, spiritual light must burn within us. How do we obtain this spiritual light and ensure that the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ fill our souls? I would like to suggest three ways: (1) learn true doctrine, (2) gain pure testimony, and (3) live the gospel courageously.

First, learn true doctrine. Alma discovered that "the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had . . . more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God."² President Henry B. Eyring stated: "The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets. Alma knew that words of doctrine had great power. They can open the minds of people to see spiritual things not visible to the natural eye. And they can open the heart to feelings of the love of God and a love for truth."³

In 1832 the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a true and powerful doctrine about spiritual light, the Light of Christ:



them. . . . Spiritual knowledge is not available merely for the asking; even prayers are not enough. It takes persistence and dedication of one's life."¹²

Our testimonies are strengthened as we reverently observe the great universe God has created for us. The Lord declared to Enoch, "All things are created and made to bear record of me."¹³ Alma bore a similar testimony to Korihor, the anti-Christ: "All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator."¹⁴

The wrestle that Enos had before the Lord demonstrates the power of his father's testimony. Enos said, "The words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart."¹⁵ Elder M. Russell Ballard said: "Clear declaration of truth makes a difference in people's lives. That is what changes hearts."¹⁶

My wife and I attended a sacrament meeting near Recife, Brazil. A young boy, possibly 9 or 10 years of age, wearing his new blue suit on a very hot day, went to the pulpit and in a very relaxed way looked at the congregation. He said, "Our family has been studying about moral agency." He then read: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil."¹⁷ The boy then said, "Some of my older friends are choosing to smoke and use drugs, but we all will have to accept the consequences of our actions." He finished with his testimony, saying, "I can see that this is true." This testimony from one so young was powerful and touched our hearts deeply.

Third, we must live courageously in accordance with the light and

"Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

"The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne."⁴

President Boyd K. Packer reinforced this truth in saying: "The Light of Christ is also described in the scriptures as 'the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' . . . The Spirit of Christ can enlighten the inventor, the scientist, the painter, the sculptor, the composer, the performer, the architect, the author to produce great, even inspired things for the blessing and good of all mankind."⁵

Recent scientific thinking on the fundamental properties of light is

indeed stunning. Today scientists even describe light as a "carrier"⁶ or "messenger"⁷ or "mediator."⁸ How profound are the doctrines of the Lord!

Second, gain pure testimony. This testimony is the confirmation by the Holy Ghost that God is our Father and Jesus is the Christ.⁹ The light and truth we see in all things urge us to obtain knowledge by study and by faith, which precedes the confirmation by the Spirit.¹⁰ We can learn much of God's handiwork and goodness by our physical senses. But an even deeper testimony is revealed as we spiritually seek the truth "with real intent."¹¹ President Spencer W. Kimball said: "The treasures of both secular and spiritual knowledge are hidden ones—but hidden from those who do not properly search and strive to find

testimony that we have received. We are promised, “He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”¹⁸ It takes real effort and sacrifice to live the gospel courageously. For some years temple worship for the Saints who live near Manaus, Brazil, has meant traveling two days in a crowded riverboat on the Amazon River, followed by two days’ travel in buses through the hot tropics to the Recife temple. Arriving worn out and tired, they would shower, dress appropriately, and immediately begin their temple worship. After several days of service to the Lord, they would make the long, difficult journey home. The words “but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”¹⁹ were beautifully reflected by their sacrificing actions.

To be at peace in these wonderful yet challenging times, we must learn true doctrine, gain pure testimony, and live the truths of the gospel courageously. As we live in harmony with the light and truth taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets, we will see more clearly our eternal destiny. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See D&C 1:35.
2. Alma 31:5.
3. “The Power of Teaching Doctrine,” *Liabona*, July 1999, 85; *Ensign*, May 1999, 73.
4. D&C 88:12–13.
5. “The Light of Christ,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Apr. 2005, 8, 10.
6. See 2 Nephi 33:1; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:54.
7. See D&C 45:9.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:27–28.
9. See M. Russell Ballard, “Pure Testimony,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 40–41.
10. See D&C 9:7–8.
11. Moroni 10:4.
12. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 389–90.
13. Moses 6:63.
14. Alma 30:44.
15. Enos 1:3.
16. *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 41.
17. 2 Nephi 2:27.
18. D&C 50:24.
19. Joshua 24:15.

One among the Crowd

ELDER DENNIS B. NEUENSCHWANDER

Of the Seventy

Let us quietly and resolutely press forward to the Savior, having faith that He cares about us and has the power to heal and save us.



In the book of Luke we read of a woman who for 12 long years had suffered from a bleeding condition. She had exhausted her means in search of a medical solution but had found none. In a crowd of people, the woman approached the Savior from behind and touched the hem of His garment. Jesus wanted to know who had touched Him because He felt that power had gone out of Him. The Apostles could not understand the question and asked, “Master, the multitude throng[s] thee and press[es] thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?”¹ The woman then with great fear and trembling confessed that it was

she who had approached Him and had been immediately healed. The Savior sent her away in peace, telling her that her faith had made her whole.

There is much to learn and ponder in this interesting little story.

I picture the crowd itself. It must have been fairly large, as people were pressing in on Jesus. It might even have been a noisy crowd, as people pushed and shoved trying to get a better look at Him. I wonder why they were there. Most, I think, came out of curiosity. Wherever He went, news of His arrival and stories of His miracles preceded Him. Perhaps they expected to see something out of the ordinary, an event not to be missed. Though not mentioned, there were likely Pharisees in the crowd, who always seemed to be close by, watching for opportunity to entrap, embarrass, or find something with which they could condemn Jesus. Could it be possible that some in the crowd even came to mock?

Among the crowd was a woman. I see a humble woman, perhaps even a timid woman, approaching the Savior from behind and then with embarrassment confessing that she had touched the hem of His garment. She was a woman exhausted and impoverished by her difficulties. She was desperate for help. Outwardly, there was little to



distinguish her from any other person in the crowd. No one tried to stop her from moving toward Jesus. Certainly, the Apostles neither noticed her nor made any attempt to stop her. But there was something that set her apart from all others in the crowd that day. Though buried among the thronging mass, she resolutely and quietly pressed forward with a single purpose in mind: to come to the Savior, having faith that He had the power to heal her, that He cared about her and would respond to her need. In this one thing she set herself apart from the crowd. The crowd came to see, but the woman came to be healed.

There are other interesting accounts in the scriptures of one faithful person among a crowd. Alma

was among the wicked priests of King Noah. These were men described as being lifted up in the pride of their hearts, lazy and idolatrous, who spoke lying and vain words to the people.² They had perverted the ways of the Lord because they had not applied their hearts to understanding.³ When Abinadi delivered his message of repentance, they mocked him and finally put him to death. This was indeed an evil crowd. Yet as the scriptures point out, “there was one among them”⁴ who believed. Alma alone took to heart what Abinadi had taught. With courage he stepped away from the crowd to follow the Lord. The influence of this one man among the crowd on the course of Nephite history is immeasurable.

One of the most well-known crowds in the Book of Mormon is the one that occupies the great and spacious building in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. The building was filled with people, old and young, male and female, who were mocking and pointing their fingers toward those who were partaking of the fruit of the tree.⁵ Unfortunately, some who had tasted of the fruit listened to the crowd and “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”⁶ There were others, however, who partook of the fruit and paid no heed to the crowd.⁷ These were the ones who enjoyed the full blessings of the tree of life.

In reality these stories are not about crowds but individuals among those crowds. They are really about you and me. All of us are among the crowds of this world. Almost all of us are like the woman who, despite the crowd, comes to the Savior. We all have faith that just a touch will bring healing to our aching souls and relief to our innermost needs.⁸ New members of the Church in many lands are often like Alma. They hear the words of life when no one else in their family or circle of friends does. Yet they still have the courage to accept the gospel and chart a course through the crowds. I think each one of us understands what it means to partake of the fulfilling fruit of the tree of life within sight and sound of those who mock and what it means to exert every courageous effort to pay them no heed.

Struggling through the crowds of the world can be lonely and hard. Their pull and tug on the individual who wishes to step away to something better can be very strong and very difficult to overcome.

Who better than the Savior can reach, support, and ultimately rescue the one among the crowd? He understands what it is to persevere among a disrespectful crowd and still remain true. The worldly crowds do not recognize Him, saying that “he hath no

form nor comeliness” and that “there is no beauty that we should desire him.”⁹ King Benjamin says that the world “shall consider him a man.”¹⁰

Isaiah further describes Christ’s place among the crowds of the world with these words:

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief . . . ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”¹¹

Nephi writes that “the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught.”¹²

Yet ultimately this Firstborn Son of God, who is so often misjudged and misunderstood, will emerge from being one among the crowd as the Anointed One, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. This emergence is humbly predicted in the Savior’s own statement to certain chief priests and elders that “the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”¹³

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that each one of us can pass safely through the crowds of this world. In all of life’s circumstances let us quietly and resolutely press forward to the Savior, having faith that He cares about us and has the power to heal and save us. Let us heed His words of life and partake fully, continually, and courageously of the fruit that comes therefrom. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 8:45.
2. See Mosiah 11:5–11.
3. See Mosiah 12:25–27.
4. Mosiah 17:2.
5. See 1 Nephi 8:27.
6. 1 Nephi 8:28.
7. See 1 Nephi 8:33.
8. See Luke 4:18.
9. Isaiah 53:2.
10. Mosiah 3:9.
11. Isaiah 53:3–4.
12. 1 Nephi 19:9.
13. Matthew 21:42.

Today

ELDER LANCE B. WICKMAN

Of the Seventy

Provided we have so lived Today that we have claim on the Atonement’s cleansing grace, we will live forever with God.



Three weeks ago, I stepped into Yesterday. In that moment, I rediscovered Today. And it is about Today that I wish to speak.

A Church assignment had carried me across the vast reaches of the Pacific to the land of Vietnam. For me, this was more than a flight over an ocean. It was a step back in time. More than 40 years ago, I had served on the battlefields of that land as an infantry officer. Etched in my mind over those intervening decades were memories of that place, its people, and my comrades in arms with whom I had served. Jacob once wrote, “Our lives passed away like . . . unto us a dream” (Jacob 7:26). So it had been for me. And now I was returning from my hall of memories to that place of memory after a near half-century. My Church business concluded, I

determined to once again visit those fields of desperate struggle. Accompanied by my dear wife, I made the pilgrimage.

I am not quite sure what I expected to find after so many years. What I did find was most unexpected. Instead of a war-ravaged people, I found a youthful, vibrant population. Instead of a countryside pockmarked by shell fire, I found peaceful, verdant fields. Even the jungle growth was new. I guess that I had half expected to find Yesterday, but what I found was Today and the promise of a bright Tomorrow. I was reminded that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

As I once again set foot upon the field and walked once more a jungle path, in my mind I heard again the stutter of the machine gun, the whistle of shrapnel, and the clatter of small arms. I saw again the bronzed, youthful faces of friends who “gave the last full measure of devotion” (Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address). And I thought of one in particular and one day—a single day, April 3, 1966, Palm Sunday, the Easter season—42 years ago almost to this very day.

Our infantry battalion had been in Vietnam for several months. I was a lieutenant, the leader of a rifle platoon. We were involved almost constantly in combat operations. That day dawned with our battalion deep in hostile territory. Very early we sent



out a reconnaissance patrol of about 10 men. One of them was Sergeant Arthur Morris. Several of the men were wounded in a firefight, including Sergeant Morris, who received a slight flesh wound. Eventually the men of the patrol limped back to our lines.

We radioed for a medical evacuation helicopter. Loading the wounded men on the chopper, I urged Sergeant Morris also to get aboard. He demurred. Again I urged him. Again he demurred. Once again I admonished him. Once again he refused. Finally I

said, "Sergeant Morris, get on that chopper."

He looked at me, his eyes earnest, pleading. "Please, sir," he said, and then these words that will forever haunt me: "*They can't kill a tough old bird like me.*"

The entire scene is etched in my mind like a battle tableau: the jungle clearing; the impatient, throbbing rotor blade of the helicopter; the pilot looking at me expectantly; and my friend begging to stay with his men. I relented. I waved away the chopper

with its lifeline to Tomorrow. Before the sun had set that very day, my dear friend Sergeant Arthur Cyrus Morris lay dead upon the ground, felled by hostile fire. And echoing in my mind over and over again, I hear his exclamation, "They can't kill, they can't kill, they can't kill . . ."

Of course, in one sense he was dreadfully wrong. Mortality is so fragile. Only one heartbeat, the drawing of a single breath, separates this world from the next. One moment, my friend was a vital, living person; the next, his immortal spirit had fled, leaving the mortal tabernacle a lump of lifeless clay. Death is a curtain through which each must pass, and like Sergeant Arthur Morris, none of us knows when that passage will occur. Of all the challenges we face, perhaps the greatest is a *misguided sense that mortality goes on forever* and its corollary, that we can postpone until tomorrow the seeking and offering of forgiveness, which as the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches, are among mortality's central purposes.

This profound truth is taught by Amulek in the Book of Mormon:

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold *the day of this life* is the day for men to perform their labors.

". . . Therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; . . .

". . . For that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:32–34; emphasis added).

What a pungent expression Amulek uses—"the *day* of this life"! The Apostle James put it this way: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). And

the person we are when we depart this life is the person we will be as we enter the next. Thankfully, we do have Today.

If Sergeant Morris was dreadfully wrong, he was also magnificently right! We really are immortal in the sense that Christ's Atonement conquers death, both physical and spiritual. And *provided* we have so lived *Today* that we have claim on the Atonement's cleansing grace, we will live forever with God. This life is not so much a time for getting and accumulating as it is a time for giving and becoming. Mortality is the battlefield upon which justice and mercy meet. But they need not meet as adversaries, for they are reconciled in the Atonement of Jesus Christ for all who wisely use Today.

It remains only for you and me to both *seek* and *tender* that forgiveness—to both repent and to extend charity to others—which enables us to pass through the door the Savior holds open, thus to cross the threshold from this life into exaltation. *Today* is the day to forgive others their trespasses, secure in the knowledge that the Lord will thus forgive ours. As Luke significantly recorded, “Be ye therefore *merciful*” (Luke 6:36; emphasis added). Perfection may elude us here, but we can be merciful. And in the end, repenting and forgiving are among God's chief requirements of us.

My pilgrimage back in time completed, I looked around upon those peaceful fields of Today and saw in their fertility the promise of Tomorrow. I thought of my friend Sergeant Arthur Cyrus Morris. I thought of that fateful Palm Sunday of Yesterday. And I was profoundly grateful for the Redeemer of Easter morning, who grants us life, whose descent below all things makes possible our rising above all things—Tomorrow, if we but seize Today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

A Book with a Promise

ELDER CRAIG C. CHRISTENSEN

Of the Seventy

I pray that we will continue to use the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ to share the gospel message with family and friends.



My dear brothers and sisters, it has been a sacred privilege to join with you in sustaining President Thomas S. Monson, his counselors in the First Presidency, and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that prophets “speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

“And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, . . . and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:3–4).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have the benefit and blessing of living

scripture as declared by those sustained as prophets, as well as canonized scripture found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The prophet Nephi wrote, “My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children” (2 Nephi 4:15). Written scripture, especially the Book of Mormon, brings us to believe in God and “be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:11).

Several months ago a friend and I had the opportunity of presenting a set of scriptures to an associate who is not a member of the Church. Knowing that this might be a life-changing event for him—and for us—we took the time to have his name embossed on each volume. As we presented these sacred records to him, we could tell he was deeply moved by the significance and sincerity of our offering. For several minutes he examined each book without speaking, rubbing his hand on the cover and turning some of the pages.

Recognizing the importance of the moment, we helped him turn to the title page of the Book of Mormon and began to explain that the Book of



A mother and daughter in the Rio Acima Ward, Sorocaba Brazil Barcelona Stake, study the scriptures.

Mormon was another testament, or witness, of Jesus Christ. He then asked a question that all missionary-minded members are anxious to hear: “Why do we need additional witnesses of Jesus Christ other than the Bible?” Rather than responding quickly, we asked him why he thought this might be important. His answer seemed even more inspired than his question. He suggested that since there appeared to be so many

variations of the Bible and its teachings, we needed some kind of clarifying voice, something that would help us understand the Bible better. His observation opened the door for us to share our feelings and testimonies regarding both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

We began by expressing our devotion and deep conviction to the doctrines and teachings of the Bible, especially the New Testament. Being

able to read many of the Savior’s words as He taught the gospel during His earthly ministry strengthens us, helps us come to know Him, and teaches us that we can become more like Him. We then declared that, like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is additional evidence that God loves all of His children and has provided a way for us to return and live with Him once again. We spent the next hour or so reviewing many aspects of the Book of Mormon, including its history and divine origin. Allow me to share a few of the things we discussed.

A Book with a Promise

We first explained that the Book of Mormon is a book with a promise. Although its history is compelling by itself, it is a book of scriptural significance that should be received and read under the influence of the Holy Ghost. All who study and ponder its teachings are given a promise found in the last chapter of Moroni (see Moroni 10:3–4) as well as in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, where we read: “We invite all men [and women] everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost.” We then spent several minutes teaching about prayer and how the Holy Ghost can speak to our hearts and confirm that the Book of Mormon is true.

A Book with a Purpose

Next we stated that the Book of Mormon is a book with a purpose. From the title page we read that the Book of Mormon was “written by way of commandment” and “by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation” to “come forth by the gift and power of God” to the convincing of each of us

“that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” In a personal expression of this purpose, Nephi, as one of the authors of the Book of Mormon, wrote, “The fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved” (1 Nephi 6:4).

A Book That Teaches the Great Plan of Happiness

Additionally, we explained that the Book of Mormon is a book that teaches “the great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8; see also vv. 5, 13, 31; 2 Nephi 9). In profound yet understandable terms, the Book of Mormon teaches the purpose of life, from whence we came, and what happens when we die. We learn of faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, of repentance, of the importance of baptism by immersion, and of the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. By studying and feasting upon the doctrines of the Book of Mormon, we gain “a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men,” with a desire to “endure to the end” that we may “have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

A Book That Testifies That Jesus Is the Christ

Most importantly, we declared that the Book of Mormon is a book that testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. Great prophets throughout the Book of Mormon have borne solemn witness that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the earth (see Mosiah 3:8), the Redeemer of mankind (see Helaman 5:9–12), the Only Begotten of the Father (see 1 Nephi 11:18–21; Jacob 4:11). These Book of Mormon prophets knew Him, as Abraham and Moses did, and received and taught His everlasting gospel. As we read and study their words, we gain a deeper understanding of the Savior’s matchless love, His

perfect life and example, and the blessings of His great atoning sacrifice.

A Book That Authenticates the Prophetic Mission of Joseph Smith

We then testified that the Book of Mormon is tangible evidence that Joseph Smith was chosen by the hand of the Lord to restore the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth in these latter days. As stated in the introduction to the Book of Mormon, “Those who gain [a] divine witness from the Holy Spirit [of the divinity of the Book of Mormon] will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth.”

Ever since Samuel Smith set out to preach the gospel with a few first-edition copies, the Book of Mormon has blessed the lives of millions

around the world. I pray that we will continue to use the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ to share the gospel message with family and friends. If we do this, as was the case with our dear friend, many will respond with great interest to know more about the life and mission of the Savior and His great plan of happiness for each of us.

I express my solemn witness that the Book of Mormon is true. It is a book that has brought about a mighty change in my life. I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His gospel has been restored to the earth. President Thomas S. Monson is His prophet and living oracle at this time. The Spirit I feel as I daily read, ponder, and pray about the Book of Mormon strengthens my understanding and testimony of these things and reaffirms to me that they are true. I humbly share this testimony and my personal witness with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Daughters of God

ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

There is no role in life more essential and more eternal than that of motherhood.



Brothers and sisters, recently my wife, Barbara, had back surgery and could not lift, twist, or bend. Consequently, I have done more lifting, twisting, and bending than ever before—and it has made me more appreciative of what women, and especially you mothers, do every day in our homes.

While women live in homes under many different circumstances—married, single, widowed, or divorced, some with children and some without—all are beloved of God, and He has a plan for His righteous daughters to receive the highest blessings of eternity.

This afternoon I want to focus my remarks primarily on mothers, particularly on young mothers.

As a young father, I learned the demanding role of motherhood. I

served as a counselor and then as bishop for a period of 10 years. During that time we were blessed with six of our seven children. Barbara was often worn-out by the time I got home Sunday evening. She tried to explain what it was like to sit on the back row in sacrament meeting with our young family. Then the day came that I was released. After sitting on the stand for 10 years, I was now sitting with my family on the back row.

The ward's singing mothers' chorus was providing the music, and I found myself sitting alone with our six children. I have never been so busy in my whole life. I had the hand puppets going on both hands, and that wasn't working too well. The Cheerios got away from me, and that was embarrassing. The coloring books didn't seem to entertain as well as they should.

As I struggled with the children through the meeting, I looked up at Barbara, and she was watching me and smiling. I learned for myself to more fully appreciate what all of you dear mothers do so well and so faithfully!

A generation later, as a grandfather, I have watched the sacrifices my daughters have made in rearing their children. And now, still another generation later, I am watching with awe the pressures on my granddaughters as they guide their children in this busy and demanding world.

After observing and empathizing

with three generations of mothers and thinking of my own dear mother, I surely know that there is no role in life more essential and more eternal than that of motherhood.

There is *no* one perfect way to be a good mother. Each situation is unique. Each mother has different challenges, different skills and abilities, and certainly different children. The choice is different and unique for each mother and each family. Many are able to be “full-time moms,” at least during the most formative years of their children's lives, and many others would like to be. Some may have to work part- or full-time; some may work at home; some may divide their lives into periods of home and family and work. What matters is that a mother loves her children deeply and, in keeping with the devotion she has for God and her husband, prioritizes them above all else.

I am impressed by countless mothers who have learned how important it is to focus on the things that can only be done in a particular season of life. If a child lives with parents for 18 or 19 years, that span is only one-fourth of a parent's life. And the most formative time of all, the early years in a child's life, represents less than one-tenth of a parent's normal life. It is crucial to focus on our children for the short time we have them with us and to seek, with the help of the Lord, to teach them all we can before they leave our homes. This eternally important work falls to mothers and fathers as equal partners. I am grateful that today many fathers are more involved in the lives of their children. But I believe that the instincts and the intense nurturing involvement of mothers with their children will always be a major key to their well-being. In the words of the proclamation on the family, “Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the

World," *Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

We need to remember that the full commitment of motherhood and of putting children first can be difficult. Through my own four-generation experience in our family, and through discussions with mothers of young children throughout the Church, I know something of a mother's emotions that accompany her commitment to be at home with young children. There are moments of great joy and incredible fulfillment, but there are also moments of a sense of inadequacy, monotony, and frustration. Mothers may feel they receive little or no appreciation for the choice they have made. Sometimes even husbands seem to have no idea of the demands upon their wives.

As a Church, we have enormous respect and gratitude to you mothers of young children. We want you to be happy and successful in your families and to have the validation and support you need and deserve. So today, let me ask and briefly answer four questions. While my answers may seem extremely simple, if the simple things are being tended to, a mother's life can be most rewarding.

The first question: What can *you* do, as a young mother, to reduce the pressure and enjoy your family more?

First, recognize that the joy of motherhood comes in moments. There will be hard times and frustrating times. But amid the challenges, there are shining moments of joy and satisfaction.

Author Anna Quindlen reminds us not to rush past the fleeting moments. She said: "The biggest mistake I made [as a parent] is the one that most of us make. . . . I did not live in the moment enough. This is particularly clear now that the moment is gone, captured only in photographs. There is one picture of [my three children] sitting in the grass on a quilt in the shadow of the swing set on a summer day, ages



A family in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, arrives at the stake center for conference.

six, four, and one. And I wish I could remember what we ate, and what we talked about, and how they sounded, and how they looked when they slept that night. I wish I had not been in such a hurry to get on to the next thing: dinner, bath, book, bed. I wish I had treasured the doing a little more and the getting it done a little less" (*Loud and Clear* [2004], 10–11).

Second, don't overschedule

yourselves or your children. We live in a world that is filled with options. If we are not careful, we will find every minute jammed with social events, classes, exercise time, book clubs, scrapbooking, Church callings, music, sports, the Internet, and our favorite TV shows. One mother told me of a time that her children had 29 scheduled commitments every week: music lessons, Scouts, dance, Little

League, day camps, soccer, art, and so forth. She felt like a taxi driver. Finally, she called a family meeting and announced, "Something has to go; we have no time to ourselves and no time for each other." Families need unstructured time when relationships can deepen and real parenting can take place. Take time to listen, to laugh, and to play together.

Third, even as you try to cut out the extra commitments, sisters, find some time for yourself to cultivate your gifts and interests. Pick one or two things that you would like to learn or do that will enrich your life, and make time for them. Water cannot be drawn from an empty well, and if you are not setting aside a little time for what replenishes you, you will have less and less to give to others, even to your children. Avoid any kind of substance abuse, mistakenly thinking that it will help you accomplish more. And don't allow yourself to be caught up in the time-wasting, mind-numbing things like television soap operas or surfing the Internet. Turn to the Lord in faith, and you will know what to do and how to do it.

Fourth, pray, study, and teach the gospel. Pray deeply about your children and about your role as a mother. Parents can offer a unique and wonderful kind of prayer because they are praying to the Eternal Parent of us all. There is great power in a prayer that essentially says, "We are stewards over Thy children, Father; please help us to raise them as Thou wouldst want them raised."

The second question: What more can a husband do to support his wife, the mother of their children?

First, show extra appreciation and give more validation for what your wife does every day. Notice things and say thank you—often. Schedule some evenings together, just the two of you.

Second, have a regular time to talk with your wife about each child's needs and what you can do to help.



Third, give your wife a "day away" now and then. Just take over the household and give your wife a break from her daily responsibilities. Taking over for a while will greatly enhance your appreciation of what your wife does. You may do a lot of lifting, twisting, and bending!

Fourth, come home from work and take an active role with your family. Don't put work, friends, or sports ahead of listening to, playing with, and teaching your children.

The third question: What can children, even young children, do? Now, you children, please listen to me because there are some simple things you can do to help your mother.

You can pick up your toys when you are finished playing with them, and when you get a little older, you can make your bed, help with the dishes, and do other chores—without being asked.

You can say thank you more often when you finish a nice meal, when a story is read to you at bedtime, or when clean clothes are put in your drawers.

Most of all, you can put your arms around your mother often and tell her you love her.

The last question: What can the Church do?

There are many things the Church offers to mothers and families, but for my purpose today may I suggest that the bishopric and the ward council members be especially watchful and considerate of the time and resource demands on young mothers and their families. Know them and be wise in what you ask them to do at this time in their lives. Alma's counsel to his son Helaman applies to us today: "Behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6).

I hope all of you dear sisters, married or single, never wonder if you have worth in the sight of the Lord and to the leaders of the Church. We love you. We respect you and appreciate your influence in preserving the family and assisting with the growth and the spiritual vitality of the Church. Let us remember that "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"). The scriptures and the teachings of the prophets and apostles help all family members to prepare together now to be together through all eternity. I pray that God will continually bless the women of the Church to find joy and happiness in their sacred roles as daughters of God.

Now, in closing, I want to add my witness of President Monson's prophetic call. I have known him since he was 22 and I was 21. That's 58 years. I have watched the hand of the Lord prepare him for this day to preside over the Church as the prophet and President. And I add my testimony, along with all of the other testimonies that have been borne through this conference, of his special calling as President of the Church, and add my testimony, along with all of the others, that Jesus is the Christ and this is His Church. We are doing His work, to which I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Abundantly Blessed

PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON

Our testimonies have been strengthened. I believe we are all the more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



I've been attending conference for a long time. But I think I've never felt quite as richly blessed as during this session. We've had rapid-fire messages from a lot of speakers, but every one touched on a very important subject. We've had a smorgasbord today of faith, of love, and of counsel. Let's incorporate these things in our lives.

Brother Ballard, several years ago my dear wife went to the hospital. She left a note behind for the children: "Dear children, do not let Daddy touch the microwave"—followed by a comma, "or the stove, or the dishwasher, or the dryer." I'm embarrassed to add any more to that list.

I think it was Brother Uchtdorf who said, "You told the audience today about your heritage on your mother's side. What about your father's side?" So I conclude with just a word or two about my father's side.

My father's father came from Sweden, and his wife from England. They met on the ship coming over. He waited for her to grow up, and then he proposed marriage. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple, and he wrote in his journal, "Today is the happiest day of my life. My sweetheart and I were married for time and eternity in the holy temple."

Three days later, on April 23, 1898, he wrote, "Took the train at the Rio Grande Western Depot enroute eventually to Scandinavia, where I have been called as a missionary." Off he went to Sweden, leaving his bride of three days.

His journal, written in pencil, came to me from an uncle who somehow chose me to receive his father's journal. The most frequent entry in the journal was, "My feet are wet." But the most beautiful entry said: "Today we went to the Jansson home. We met Sister Jansson. She had a lovely dinner for us. She is a good cook." And then he said, "The children all sang or played a harmonica or did a little

dance, and then she paid her tithing. Five krona for the Lord and one for my companion, Elder Ipson, and one for me." And then there were listed the names of the children.

When I read that in the journal, there was my wife's father's name as one who was in that household, one who probably sang a song, one who became the father of only one daughter, the girl whom I married.

The first day I saw Frances, I knew I'd found the right one. The Lord brought us together later, and I asked her to go out with me. I went to her home to call on her. She introduced me, and her father said, "'Monson'—that's a Swedish name, isn't it?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Good."

Then he went into another room and brought out a picture of two missionaries with their top hats and their copies of the Book of Mormon.

"Are you related to this Monson," he said, "Elias Monson?"

I said, "Yes, he's my grandfather's brother. He too was a missionary in Sweden."

Her father wept. He wept easily. He said, "He and his companion were the missionaries who taught the gospel to my mother and my father and all of my brothers and sisters and to me." He kissed me on the cheek. And then her mother cried, and she kissed me on the other cheek. And then I looked around for Frances. She said, "I'll go get my coat."

My sweet Frances had a terrible fall a few years ago. She went to the hospital. She lay in a coma for about 18 days. I sat by her side. She never moved a muscle. The children cried, the grandchildren cried, and I wept. Not a movement.

And then one day, she opened her eyes. I set a speed record in getting to her side. I gave her a kiss and a hug, and I said, "You're back. I love you." And she said, "I love you, too, Tom, but we're in serious trouble." I



President Thomas S. Monson and his wife, Frances, leave together following a conference session.

thought, What do you know about trouble, Frances? She said, "I forgot to mail in our fourth-quarter income tax payment."

I said to her, "Frances, if you had said that before you extended a kiss to me and told me you love me, I might have left you here."

Brethren, let's treat our wives with dignity and with respect. They're our eternal companions. Sisters, honor your husbands. They need to hear a good word. They need a friendly

smile. They need a warm expression of true love.

Leaving my own family for a moment, my brothers and sisters, this has been a wonderful conference. We have been edified by wise and inspired messages. Our testimonies have been strengthened. I believe we are all the more determined to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not only have we been blessed by the fine talks which have been given; we have also been uplifted by the

beautiful music which has been provided. We are abundantly blessed in the Church by those who share their musical talents with us. Every choir and chorus has performed so well during the past two days.

I express my great love for all those who have participated and to all of you who have listened. I have felt your prayers in my behalf and have been sustained and blessed during the two months since our beloved President Hinckley left us. Once again, I appreciate your sustaining vote.

I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days and for what that has meant in my life. Each of us has been influenced and shaped as we have followed the Savior and have adhered to the principles of His gospel.

To you who are parents, I say, show love to your children. You know you love them, but make certain they know it as well. They are so precious. Let them know. Call upon our Heavenly Father for help as you care for their needs each day and as you deal with the challenges which inevitably come with parenthood. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them.

We commend our wonderful young people who stand up to the iniquity in the world and who live the commandments to the best of their ability.

To you who are able to attend the temple, I would counsel you to go often. Doing so will help to strengthen marriages and families.

Let us be kind to one another, be aware of each other's needs, and try to help in that regard.

My dear brothers and sisters, I love you, and I pray for you. Please pray for me. And together we will reap the blessings our Heavenly Father has in store for each one of us. This is my prayer, my plea as I add my testimony. This work is true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Stand as a Witness

SUSAN W. TANNER

Young Women General President

You . . . can stand as a witness of God by nurturing a spirit of faith, love, peace, and testimony in your homes now.



As I stand at this pulpit, I picture the faces of young women all over the world. How I love you! I especially love to promise with you that we will “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”¹ How can we do this? As I speak, I pray that the Spirit will guide us and testify to each of us as to how we can stand as witnesses for God.

When our children were missionaries, they learned that when we stand as a witness of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost will confirm that testimony. One of our daughters had a golden investigator named JieLei. This young adult woman obeyed each new commandment she was taught, no matter how difficult. She was a student struggling to make ends meet financially, but she began paying her tithing when she learned about that law. Her

part-time job required her to work on Sunday, but she had the courage to ask her employer if he could change her hours to another day so that she could attend sacrament meeting.

In spite of her diligence, JieLei still did not have a firm testimony of the Book of Mormon. Our daughter and her companion knew that she needed a witness from the Spirit to confirm its truth, so they prepared a lesson for her about the Holy Ghost. As they worked on it, somehow it didn’t feel quite right. When they prayed about it, they felt impressed to go a different direction, to give a lesson instead about Jesus Christ.

When the appointed meeting came, these missionaries began teaching JieLei about Jesus Christ. Tears started streaming down her cheeks. She kept asking, “What is this I am feeling?” Then they bore witness to her that it was the Spirit. Exactly what they had wanted to have happen did happen. It was then that our daughter remembered that one of the great roles of the Holy Ghost is as a testifier of Christ. Jesus Himself said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall testify of me.”² Our daughter realized that as she stood as a witness of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost confirmed it. We too can stand as witnesses as “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ” and look to Him as the source for “a remission of [our] sins.”³

Righteous King Benjamin in the

Book of Mormon gathered his people to come to the temple so that he could talk of Christ and preach of Christ. He taught his people about the Lord’s goodness, power, wisdom, patience, and, most of all, Atonement. As he stood as a witness, the Spirit bore witness to them that Jesus Christ is the Savior, as it had to JieLei. King Benjamin then admonished his people to stand steadfast in their faith in Christ. The people all cried out:

“We believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us . . . because of the Spirit of the Lord . . . , which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. . . .

“And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God . . . to be obedient to his commandments in all things.”⁴

King Benjamin’s people made a covenant to obey God’s commandments, as has each of us.

As you keep that covenant, you will stand as a witness among your peers. Recently my own children and their spouses were remembering times through the years when they had stood for correct values in the face of peer pressure. One would not participate in a cheer competition on Sunday; another told his employer that he could not work on the Sabbath day. One refused to watch a pornographic movie at a friend’s house when he was only 11; another refused to look with classmates at pornographic magazines. Both were ostracized socially for some time thereafter. Another child refused to succumb to bad, crass, vulgar language in her work environment. One refused liquor that his friend had stolen out of his parents’ locked cabinet. Another, who was the only Latter-day Saint member in her class, stood to give an English-class presentation and ended up fielding questions about the Book of Mormon. Our married children



have continued to bear children in the face of worldly criticism.

In these moments they could have felt alone; but as they stood as witnesses, they felt the companionship and sustaining presence of the Holy Ghost. They also were armed with blessings that come from obedience to God's commandments. He has promised us: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."⁵

My children were truly upheld by His hand as they witnessed of God by standing steadfast in keeping His commandments. I have been blessed and strengthened by their examples.

As you stand as a witness in your home, you will strengthen your family. Too often we think the phrase of the Young Women theme "to strengthen home and family"⁶ applies

only to the future responsibilities of young women as wives and mothers, but it also applies to their responsibilities as daughters and sisters in their homes here and now.

My own mother helped strengthen her home and family in her youth. The oldest child in a less-active family, she was born with the gift of faith. She took herself to Primary and Mutual. She qualified for a temple marriage even before her parents were able to go. She became an agent for righteousness, a steadfast witness whose example helped strengthen her parents and siblings. You young women too can stand as a witness of God by nurturing a spirit of faith, love, peace, and testimony in your homes *now*, preparing you to do the same when you establish your own future homes. I am the product of a righteous young woman who stood "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works."⁷

We also witness of Jesus Christ as we rejoice in Him. As King Benjamin's people learned more about Jesus, they said, "The things which our king has spoken unto us [have] brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy."⁸ When we rejoice in our Savior, we remember Him and His great blessings to us. We stand as witnesses as we express gratitude and radiate joy. As the young women sang, opening this meeting, "Hast thou not seen how all thou needest hath been granted in what he ordaineth?"⁹

Recently I learned of two valiant young women who, as they lived the commandments and radiated the joy of the gospel, stood as witnesses of God. This is the story as told by a senior missionary at the MTC.

She said that years earlier she was at home one day ironing, watching a soap opera, and smoking a cigarette when there was a knock at the door.

When she opened it, there were two men in white shirts and ties, and one of them introduced himself as her bishop. He said that as he was praying, he had felt inspired to ask her to teach Young Women. She told him that she had been baptized at age 10 but had never been active. He seemed undeterred as he showed her the manual and explained where they met on Wednesday night. Then she emphatically said, "I can't teach 16-year-olds; I'm inactive, and besides I smoke." Then he said, "You won't be inactive anymore, and you have until Wednesday to quit smoking." Then he left.

She said, "I remember shouting in the air in anger, but then I couldn't resist the urge to read the manual. In fact, I was so curious, I read it from cover to cover and then memorized every word of that lesson.

"By Wednesday I was still not going to go, but I found myself driving to church, scared to death. I had never been scared of anything before. I had grown up in the slums, been in detention once myself, and rescued my father from the 'drunk tank.' And all of a sudden there I was at Mutual being introduced as the new Laurel adviser. I sat before two Laurels and gave the lesson word for word, even the parts that said 'Now ask them . . .' I left immediately after the lesson and cried all the way home.

"A few days later there was another knock at the door, and I thought, 'Good. It's the bishop here to retrieve his manual.' I opened the door, and standing there were those two lovely Laurels, one with flowers, the other with cookies. They invited me to go to church with them on Sunday, which I did. I liked those girls. They began by teaching me about the Church, the ward, the class. They taught me how to sew, read scriptures, and smile.

"Together we started teaching the other girls in the class who weren't



coming. We taught them wherever we could find them—in cars, in bowling alleys, and on porches. Within six months, 14 of them were coming, and in a year all 16 girls on the roll were active. We laughed and cried together. We learned to pray, study the gospel, and serve others."¹⁰

These two valiant young women stood as witnesses for truth and righteousness, for goodness and the joy of the gospel.

When I was called to be the Young Women general president, I received a blessing in my setting apart that my faith in Jesus Christ would be strengthened through my service. I have been surrounded by valiant women: my counselors and board, other auxiliary presidencies, and my noble predecessors—the former Young Women general presidents. They have stood as witnesses of Jesus Christ by their exemplary lives and selfless service.

Strengthened by these women, my family members, and steadfast and immovable women and leaders the world over, I feel "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." This has helped me to "run with patience the race that is set before [me], looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."¹¹

The promise of increased faith in Jesus Christ in my setting-apart blessing has been fulfilled as I have had the opportunity to stand as a witness for Him every day and everywhere. I have talked of Him, preached of Him, and rejoiced in Him. When I have felt that my words were insufficient, they have been confirmed by His Spirit. When I have felt afraid or inadequate, I have been strengthened and upheld by His omnipotent hand. I know He will bless each of us as we stand as witnesses. He will "never, no never, no never forsake"¹² us.

May we press forward with steadfast faith in Christ, standing as witnesses of Him "at all times and in all things, and in all places," is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mosiah 18:9.
2. John 14:26; 15:26.
3. 2 Nephi 25:26.
4. Mosiah 5:2, 5.
5. Isaiah 41:10.
6. "Young Women Theme," *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2001), 5.
7. Mosiah 5:15.
8. Mosiah 5:4.
9. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72.
10. For another account of this experience, see Joan Atkinson, "Not Me—I Smoke and Drink," *Tambuli*, Feb. 1989, 19–20; *Ensign*, July 1988, 55–57.
11. Hebrews 12:1–2.
12. "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85.

At All Times, in All Things, and in All Places

ELAINE S. DALTON

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

*As you stand as a witness, obey the commandments,
and press forward with “a steadfastness in Christ,”
you will never be alone.*



It is a privilege to stand before you and bear testimony of the Savior and His matchless life. He came to the earth to show us how to live the plan that was authored in heaven—a plan that, if lived, will make us happy. His example showed us the way to return home to our Heavenly Father. No other who has ever lived has been so “steadfast and immovable” (Mosiah 5:15). He was never distracted. He was focused on carrying out the will of the Father, and He remained true

to His divine mission. Indeed it can be said of Him that He was true at all times, in all things, and in all places (see Mosiah 18:9).

You are a part of that wondrous plan that was presented in the pre-mortal realms. Your coming to the earth now has been anticipated since the plan was accepted. Your position in time and place is no accident. Your “exceeding faith and good works” (Alma 13:3) then has laid the foundation for what you may accomplish now if you are faithful and obedient. You are God’s precious daughters, and you have a great work to do. In order to accomplish your divine mission and live the plan of happiness, you too must be steadfast and immovable “at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9).

Several years ago I was given a photograph of three sheds, two of which were leaning on the third and smallest shed. The accompanying caption read: “You need to be strong when you are the last one to take a stand.” You too need to be strong. As you are faithful and righteous, others will look to you for support and strength.

Helaman describes how this is possible: “And now, . . . remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; . . . which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

Your foundation of faith must be firmly centered on Jesus Christ. Having that kind of faith means you rely on Him, you trust in Him, and even though you do not understand all things, you know that He does. You also know that you are a daughter of God, that He knows you by name, that He hears your prayers, and that He will help you accomplish your earthly mission.

A young man I know well was elected to be the student body president at a large university. The university sent him to a leadership seminar where student leaders from across the United States gathered in Chicago, Illinois, to be trained and educated. They participated in an initial game outdoors on the college campus so that they could become acquainted with each other. The students were presented with current issues facing today’s youth and were asked to take a position. In response to the issue presented, they were directed to run to several trees in the grassy area marked “strongly agree,” “partially agree,” “strongly disagree,” or “mildly disagree.”

Toward the end of this exercise, the leader asked, “Do you believe in premarital sex?” Without hesitation, this young man ran to the tree marked “strongly disagree.” To his amazement, he was the only one there! All the other student leaders were laughing and pointing at him and saying, “Oh, Jess, you are so funny. We all know you’re not really serious.” At that moment Jess said he knew exactly what he must do and so he loudly declared, “I’m not funny. I’m serious!” There was a stunned silence, and then

the group dispersed, leaving Jess standing alone by the tree. He felt out of place and, yes, weird. But he wasn't weird. He was right. And he was not alone. During the week, many of the student leaders came to him privately and said that they wished they had known years earlier what he knew. Jess later said, "It was easy because I knew that I represented not only the university but my family, the Church, and the Savior."

A testimony that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer made Jess firm and quick to respond. You can gain that same confidence as you pray daily, search for answers in your scriptures, and obey the commandments. As you sincerely seek to gain a testimony, the knowledge that will come through the Holy Ghost will assist you with your challenges, with questions, and with living the standards. And it will be easy for you also to commit to be steadfast and immovable at all times and in all things and in all places.

Being steadfast and immovable means being obedient. One of the reasons you are here on the earth is to see if you will exercise your agency and "do all things whatsoever the Lord . . . shall command" (Abraham 3:25). When you renew your covenants each week by partaking of the sacrament, you covenant that you will always remember the Savior and keep His commandments.

The precious gift of your body enables you to exercise your agency and put your faith and obedience into action. Have you ever noticed that nearly all of Satan's attacks are directed at your body? Pornography, immodesty, tattoos, immorality, drug abuse, and addictions are all efforts to take possession of this precious gift. This was a gift that was denied Satan. Obedience to the commandments and standards enables each of you to be steadfast and immovable in protecting the precious gifts of your agency and your body.



Being steadfast and immovable also means that you keep moving forward with "a steadfastness in Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20). Several years ago, I had the opportunity to run the Boston Marathon. I had trained hard and felt I was prepared, but at mile 20 there are hills. The locals call the steepest and longest hill Heartbreak Hill. When I reached that point, I was physically spent. The hill was long, and because I was a novice, I allowed myself to do something no seasoned runner ever does—I started to think negatively. This slowed my pace, so I tried to think positively and visualize the finish line. But as I did this, I suddenly realized that I was in a big city,

there were thousands of people lining the route, and I had not made any arrangements to locate my husband at the end of the marathon. I felt lost and alone, and I started to cry. I was wearing a big red T-shirt with the word *Utah* printed on the front in big block letters. As the spectators saw that I was crying, they would yell, "Keep going, Utah." "Don't cry, Utah." "You're almost finished, Utah." But I knew I wasn't, and I was lost. I also knew that even if I stopped running and dropped out of the race, I would still be lost.

Do any of you ever feel like you're running up Heartbreak Hill and that even though there are people lining

the route, you are alone? That's how I felt. So I did what every one of you would do—I began to pray right there on that marathon route. I told Heavenly Father that I was alone and that I was on a hill. I told Him that I was discouraged and afraid and that I felt lost. I asked for help and strength to be steadfast and to finish the race. As I continued to run, these words came into my mind:

*Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*
("How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85)

That sweet answer to my prayer gave me the strength to continue on until I crossed the finish line. And despite my fears, my husband was right there and all was well.

That day I experienced more than a marathon. I learned some important lessons. First of all, never wear a big red shirt with the word *Utah* printed on it. Second, I learned that no matter how well prepared you think you are, there are hills on the course. I learned that people cheering for you along the way are absolutely essential. I learned again that day that we are never alone. Our Heavenly Father is only a prayer away, and the Holy Ghost is within whispering distance.

I testify that as you stand as a witness, obey the commandments, and press forward with "a steadfastness in Christ," you will never be alone. You can rely on the enabling power of the Savior's Atonement. And I testify that building on this firm foundation will help you to become like Him—steadfast and immovable at all times, in all things, and in all places. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Video Presentation

A video shown during the general Young Women meeting featured counsel from President Thomas S. Monson—as well as comments from a group of young women and their leader about an experience they had learning to seek and receive the Lord's guidance.

Sister Clayton

Last summer our young women had a burning question. They wanted to know what the official position of the Church was relative to swimsuits. Rather than give them an answer that we were inclined to give them ourselves, we determined that we'd be wiser, as their leaders, to turn them to the Source. They could ask; they could find out for themselves and have a process and an understanding of how it feels and how it works to seek and to get information from heaven personally so that they could replicate that process later in their lives.

First Young Woman

When we first started out, I just thought, "Well, OK. It's just another assignment to take home and study on."

Second Young Woman

This experience helped me come closer to Heavenly Father.

First Young Woman

It'll help me too when I am older with my own daughters.

Third Young Woman

As soon as I started really searching for the answer, it came really quickly.

Sister Clayton

As we looked at this from a doctrinal point of view, there was no more fundamental source than the scriptures.

Third Young Woman

At first I really tried to find the answer in the scriptures, and it didn't seem to be there.

First Young Woman

But as I got deeper in the subject, I felt myself wanting to learn more and find out more.

Third Young Woman

I kept on finding all these scriptures about modesty, like a virtuous woman is modest, and at first, that didn't make sense to me. And then prayer—I was kind of expecting specific answers through prayer, and I wasn't getting them. And then as I realized, after I got my answer, prayer just brought the Spirit and the scriptures did have the answer all along, that [modesty] was more of an attitude.

Second Young Woman

I've gotten some answers, but they weren't very specific, of course, because I always have to do my part and learn for myself.

Third Young Woman

And I was expecting to be told, "This is what you can wear. This is



what you can't wear." I didn't want it to be like [it is] because then it was my choice and I didn't have the exact rules. But I actually am really grateful now that that is the answer that I got because I think that's much more applicable to all the girls around the world.

First Young Woman

I just felt myself becoming closer to my Heavenly Father, and my heart just grew, and especially with these girls, finding out everything that they went through to find their answers just made my heart swell for all of them; I have so much love for all of them.

Sister Clayton

As we engaged in this process together and shared our hearts and received inspiration and felt the effect of the Spirit, we became something different. They learned that Heavenly Father cares about what they care about. They learned that He loves them. They learned that whatever they ask, He'll listen and He'll answer.

Third Young Woman

I think that through this process I've kind of realized that getting answers is not just a once-in-a-lifetime thing, that it's something I can use all the time. And in order to get those answers, I have to be steadfast in saying my prayers and in reading my scriptures and continuously keep that Spirit with me.

First Young Woman

I can pray to Him whenever I need to, and He is there for me, no matter what. He is always by me, and He is always helping me through every situation.

Second Young Woman

Whenever I feel sad or whenever I need help, I can always ask Him.

First Young Woman

I know who I am, and I know what I stand for, and I know how I feel when I wear the right kind of clothing. And I know that if I dress modestly that I can be closer to

my Heavenly Father and closer to the Spirit.

Third Young Woman

It's an amazing realization when you look back through my journal and find out that almost every day I've had prayers answered and my questions answered through the Lord.

President Thomas S. Monson

We can find truth in the scriptures, the teachings of the prophets, the instructions from our parents, and the inspiration that comes to us as we bend our knees and seek the help of God.

Sometimes the best answers that young people can get to the questions of life are found when they are upon their knees calling upon our Heavenly Father.

And I testify that if they will remember that the Lord is mindful of them and will answer their prayers, they will be able to meet every challenge that comes to them. ■

Anchors of Testimony

MARY N. COOK

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Strengthen your faith by following this pattern of prayer, study, and obedience to the commandments.



When I lived in Asia, I saw many ponds covered with beautiful flowering water lilies. They added a serene beauty and sweet fragrance to otherwise muddy, stagnant ponds. The leaves of the water lily floated on the water's surface, and a long, firm stalk anchored its position in the pond. The continued growth of the stalk ensured the flower's stability, even when torrential rains raised the level of the water in the pond.

My dear young sisters, you are much like this beautiful flower. Your freshness, purity, and beauty add much goodness to our lives and to the lives of your family. You live in a

challenging world polluted with temptations and trials, yet your testimony of Jesus Christ can be your anchor. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will strengthen and help your testimony grow, and you will be able to rise above the evils of the world and maintain your position of righteousness.

An anchor is defined as something "that provides stability or confidence in an otherwise uncertain situation."¹ Your testimony will be your anchor and will give you the confidence to stand "steadfast and immovable"² in keeping the Lord's commandments in an uncertain world.

Right now, your testimony is growing, like the stalk of the water lily. Your faith will help it grow and keep it strong, even when you face challenges and temptations of a world polluted with drugs, immorality, pornography, and immodesty.

"Faith is a gift from God, but you must nurture your faith to keep it strong. . . . You can nurture the gift of faith by praying to Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. . . . You can strengthen your faith by keeping the commandments. . . . You can also develop your faith by studying the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets."³

I know some young women who had questions about modest clothing.

To find answers to their questions, they followed this exact pattern: they prayed to Heavenly Father, they studied the scriptures and the words of our latter-day prophets, and they were obedient in living the standard of modesty. As they received answers to their questions, their faith increased and their testimonies were strengthened. I would invite each of you to follow this pattern.

First, pray to your Heavenly Father. Ask Him for help in finding answers to your questions.

Our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, said in his first news conference:

"Sometimes the best answers that young people can [get] to the questions of life are found there upon their knees calling upon our Heavenly Father.

"If they will remember that the Lord is mindful of them and will answer their prayers, they will be able to meet every challenge that comes to them."⁴ Prayer will strengthen your faith and anchor your testimony.

In addition to prayer, study the scriptures about faith. Alma 32:27 is a great place to begin learning the process of increasing your faith: "But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words."

Are you willing to try Alma's experiment to increase your faith? Can you exercise even a particle of faith? Do you have a desire to believe?

As you learn from the scriptures, I know the Lord will bless you with His Spirit, and like the young women we heard from tonight, your understanding will be enlightened. The scriptures will increase your faith and help anchor your testimony.

Studying the words of our latter-day

prophets will also increase your faith. “You can always trust the living prophets. Their teachings reflect the will of the Lord”⁵ and will help anchor your testimony.

President Spencer W. Kimball, one of our latter-day prophets, counseled youth to drive down stakes to help them be “steadfast and immovable” when he taught: “Our young people should drive down stakes early. . . . The stakes are of two kinds: ‘This I *will do*’ and ‘This I *will not do*.’ . . . Very early, youth should have been living by a plan. . . . When such a course is charted and the goal is set, it is easier to resist the many temptations and to say ‘no’ to the first cigarette, ‘no’ to the first drink, . . . ‘no’ to the first improper advances which lead eventually to immoral practices.”⁶

We have a great tool to help us drive down those stakes. It is *For the Strength of Youth*. In this little book you will find the words of our latter-day prophets. The “stakes” that President Kimball described are in this book: the things “I *will do*” and the things “I *will not do*.”

It’s not enough, however, to just read the words of the prophets. You must follow the final step in our pattern and “keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures.”⁷ This is the challenging part, but by planning ahead what you will and will not do and then living by that plan, you can do it!

Faith is a principle of action. Let me tell you about some young women who studied the words of the prophets in *For the Strength of Youth*, then took action. They made a plan, decided what they would and would not do, and then lived by that plan.

One of the guidelines in *For the Strength of Youth* states: “Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ.”⁸

After studying these words, one



young woman realized that perhaps some of her clothes were not completely modest. Through prayer and study of the scriptures, she was reminded that she was a disciple of Jesus Christ and that, as His representative, she needed to make some changes. She didn’t want to have anything in her wardrobe that was a temptation, so she went through her closet and drawers and got rid of anything that wasn’t modest. She said, “I would be smart if I didn’t even try on anything in stores that I knew I shouldn’t wear. Why be tempted?” That firm resolve showed the Lord that she respected her body, and she drove down a deep stake for modesty.

Another young woman in the class recognized that her choices in clothing were affecting the way her little sister was dressing. A line in *For the Strength of Youth* states: “Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way

you and others act.”⁹ She decided to make some changes in her clothing, realizing that she had a responsibility to be a good example to her little sister. She drove her stake down more deeply and influenced her sister’s clothing choices.

The standard of “Entertainment and the Media” teaches us to “choose only entertainment and media that uplift you. Good entertainment will help you to have good thoughts and make righteous choices.”¹⁰ I know of a young woman and her sister who were listening to a CD when they realized that the words were not uplifting and did not help them have good thoughts. They both looked at each other and knew through the Spirit that they shouldn’t be listening to this kind of music. The older sister got a hammer, and together they took the CD, and they smashed it into bits. Earlier they had driven down stakes regarding music. They knew what they would and would not listen to



lives of these young women expressed their faith. And note that their faith and exemplary lives resulted in good works. Sisters blessed sisters, and a daughter helped her mother return to Church activity.

Some of you may feel that you can't rise above the polluted pond, that your circumstances are too difficult, your trials too hard, your temptations too great. But remember Alma's promise: "Whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day."¹² Remember, the stalk of the water lily grows in adversity, and as the stalk lifts the water lily, your faith will support and lift you.

My dear young sisters, your testimony of Jesus Christ is your anchor. Strengthen your faith by following this pattern of prayer, study, and obedience to the commandments. Drive down stakes by deciding now what you will and will not do, and then act on your plan.

I testify that the Lord loves each of you and will bless you in your efforts to be "steadfast and immovable." The gospel of Jesus Christ is true, and your knowledge and testimony of Jesus Christ will keep you well anchored, and you will be able to maintain your position as you stand for truth and righteousness. Of this I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Apple Computer Inc. Dictionary, version 1.0.1, "anchor."
2. Mosiah 5:15.
3. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 55.
4. "16th President Fields Questions from Media," *Church News*, Feb. 9, 2008, 15.
5. *True to the Faith*, 129.
6. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 236.
7. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 2.
8. *For the Strength of Youth*, 14.
9. *For the Strength of Youth*, 15.
10. *For the Strength of Youth*, 17.
11. *True to the Faith*, 54.
12. Alma 36:3.

and were able to live their plan by following the promptings of the Spirit. This small act strengthened them and gave them confidence to obey in more challenging situations.

Another young woman decided that one of the stakes in her life was to observe the Sabbath, regardless of her circumstances. One year after she was baptized a member of the Church with her family, her ward was divided. Her family was assigned to the newly formed ward, and she was the only young woman in the new ward. Her parents resisted the change and stopped attending church, but she wanted to follow the guidelines in *For*

the Strength of Youth on "Sabbath Day Observance." She decided to go to church in the new ward whenever she could, even though it meant attending all of her meetings alone.

On Sundays she read her scriptures and worked on Personal Progress. Her decision to be "steadfast and immovable" in observing the Sabbath encouraged her mother and younger sister to begin attending church again. Her mother testified that her daughter's steadfast example of living the gospel and her goodness helped them return to activity.

"You express your faith through action—by the way you live."¹¹ The

Walk in the Light

PRESIDENT HENRY B. EYRING

First Counselor in the First Presidency

You make choices every day and almost every hour that keep you walking in the light or moving away toward darkness.



For each of us, life is a journey. Heavenly Father designed it for us out of love. Each of us has unique experiences and characteristics, but our journey began in the same place before we were born into this world.

We all were taught by Elohim, the Father of our spirits. We loved Him and wanted to be like Him and to be with Him forever. He told us plainly what it would require for us to have that joy. We would have to receive a physical body, with all of the trials that would bring. We would be subject to illness and have within our bodies the processes which would finally lead to death. And our bodies would have in them powerful cravings for physical satisfaction.

Heavenly Father explained to us

what it would take to make the journey from where we were then to be with Him forever and live the life that He lives. We would make the journey through life without a memory of our time with Him in the spirit world. And the only way back to Him would be for us to overcome physical death and the effects of sin which would come from our breaking commandments. He told us that we could not overcome the effects of either death or sin by ourselves—without our having a Savior who would break the bands of death and provide a way for us to be washed clean from the sin which we would surely commit.

You know from the scriptures revealed by God through prophets that there was a rebellion in the spirit world when the plan for our journey was offered to us. Those who rebelled did not want to accept and to depend upon a Savior nor run any risk that they might not return again to Heavenly Father. Every one of you was among the brave, the faithful, and the true in that conflict. You accepted the Savior and the plan for this journey to return to the joy of our Heavenly Father's presence.

You are remarkable, even among those who chose right in the contest in the spirit world. You qualified to come into mortality and to make this journey at a time when the gospel of Jesus Christ was on the earth. And among the billions of Heavenly

Father's children now living, you were privileged to find the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church. Even more than that, the fact that you are listening tonight means that you have chosen to make the journey of life walking in the light.

Every child of Heavenly Father born in the world is given at birth, as a free gift, the Light of Christ. You have felt that. It is the sense of what is right and what is wrong and what is true and what is false. That has been with you since your journey in life began. The fact that you were baptized and received the Holy Ghost is evidence that you chose to walk in the Light of Christ.

When you were confirmed a member of the Church, you were given the right to have the Holy Ghost as your companion. The Holy Ghost is a powerful source of light to recognize truth, to follow and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to find your way back to God after this life.

But the spirit who led the rebellion in the world before still opposes the plan and wants you to be miserable. He wants you never to find your way home again. That enemy of your soul knows you and your goodness. He knows that if he can turn you away from walking in the light, he can both capture you and stop you from helping others along the journey. He knows how good you are and your power to teach and influence hundreds of Heavenly Father's children in this life—and thousands over the generations that will follow your path. If he can get you to wander away from the light on your journey, he can do harm and bring misery to many.

The fact that you are listening now is evidence that God recognizes your great importance and that you have chosen to walk in the light He offers you. Such choices are not always easy to see clearly. You make choices every day and almost every hour that keep you walking in the light or moving



to satisfy my desires for companionship and a sense of recognition were taking me either toward or away from the light to guide my path.

Long ago Heavenly Father, through His prophets, gave us a way to know which choices matter most and why—and how to make them.

The best summary I know is in the words from Moroni as he quotes his father, Mormon. I only wish I had understood them better when I was your age, and I pray that the Lord will carry them into your heart tonight.

“But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

“Wherefore, take heed . . . that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

“For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.”¹

The scriptures tell us the source and the power of the light.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

“But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.”²

I can see now, better than I could

away toward darkness. Some of the most important choices are about what you set your heart upon.

There are so many things you may consider desirable. For instance, all of us want, to some degree, the approval of other people. All of us feel a need for friends. All of us are searching for some evidence that we are persons of worth. We make choices based on those desires. Some might lead us away from the light God offers us as a guide. Some may brighten that light by which we can find our way.

As I look back, I realize that I was

unaware of the importance of some of those desires and choices. I wanted to be selected for athletic teams. I wanted to do well in school. I wanted to find good and true friends. And when I made the choices that came from those desires, more than I realized, I was either moving away from the light or toward it.

Some of my achievements and some of my friends were major factors in my sensing light. Others, more than I knew at the time, were edging me away from the light. In important and long-lasting ways, choices I made



as a young man, how I might have used that guidance. There were sports teams that had players and coaches who influenced me to do good. There were some that did not. There were friends, some of them not members of the Church of Jesus Christ, who by their example influenced me to do good and to remember the Savior.

There were schoolmates and teachers whose approval and friendship I sought who somehow made me want to do good and enhance my feelings for the Savior. I was blessed to find my way. But I would have done even better had I understood both the importance of my choices and the way to choose.

Mormon knew that. Had I read more carefully his words in the Book of Mormon, and others like them, I would have been even more blessed and more protected. Here are Mormon's words:

"Seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.

"Wherefore, . . . ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye

may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

"And now, . . . how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?"³

It is by faith that you can lay hold upon every good thing. I pray with all my heart that your faith will be increased that you are a daughter of a loving God. I testify to you that you have been one of the valiant ones to reach the point where you now are in this journey of life. Just as you are marked as a target by the enemy of righteousness, you have been protected and watched over by your Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They know you. They know all of the forces and individuals around you. They know what is ahead of you. And so They know which of the choices you make, which of the desires you decide to satisfy, and which of the circumstances around you will make the most difference in keeping you walking in the light. I testify that by the Spirit of Christ and by the Holy Ghost, you may walk confidently in whatever difficulties will come. Because you are so valuable, some of your trials may be severe. You

need never be discouraged or afraid. The way through difficulties has always been prepared for you, and you will find it if you exercise faith.

You must have faith to pray. You must have faith to ponder the word of God. You must have faith to do those things and go to those places which invite the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost.

I promise you that within the next few days you will feel the illumination of the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost in your everyday life. When you walk in the light, you will feel at that moment some of the warmth and the happiness that will finally be yours when you are welcomed home again with the hundreds and perhaps thousands of others whom you will bring with you, who have walked in the light because you did.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. There is a living prophet, Thomas S. Monson. And there are both true servants and angels to help you along the lighted path. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Moroni 7:13–15.
2. Moroni 7:16–17.
3. Moroni 7:18–20.

CONFERENCE STORY INDEX

The following is a list of selected experiences from general conference addresses for use in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. Numbers refer to the first page of the talk.

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Elder Quentin L. Cook	great-grandfather helps rescue handcart companies, 47 Thomas S. Monson's Church leadership experience, 47	courage, devotion Church service, ministering
Bishop H. David Burton	accounts of Church humanitarian aid, 51	humanitarian aid, service
Elder John M. Madsen	12-year-old Gordon B. Hinckley attends first stake priesthood meeting, 55	Joseph Smith, testimony
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf	airplane crashes into a mountain, 57	obedience, repentance
President Thomas S. Monson	boy imitates Thomas S. Monson, 65 stalwart missionary with cancer, 65	example example, faith
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf	Thomas S. Monson visits bedridden member in Germany, 68 conversion of Harriet Uchtdorf and family, 68	compassion, ministering conversion
Elder Sheldon F. Child	young Sheldon F. Child pays tithing after selling calf, 79 breadfruit falls from tree in front of family who paid tithing, 79 West African mother's testimony of tithing, 79	tithing faith, tithing tithing
President Thomas S. Monson	pioneer ancestors' hardships, 87	dedication, faith
Elder David A. Bednar	mother and sick son pray that he will be healed, 94 parents pray to embrace dying daughter, 94	faith, prayer comfort, prayer
Elder W. Craig Zwick	young man asks if he must lower standards to keep friends, 97	righteousness, standards
Elder Robert R. Steuer	testimony of boy in Recife, Brazil, 99	agency, testimony
Elder Lance B. Wickman	wounded soldier in Vietnam begs to stay with his men, 103	commitment, mortality
Susan W. Tanner	investigator receives testimony of Jesus Christ, 113 youth live gospel standards amid peer pressure, 113 less-active woman is asked to teach Young Women, 113	missionary work, testimony integrity, obedience example, reactivation
Elaine S. Dalton	young man stands up for chastity, 116 runs the Boston Marathon, 116	courage, testimony prayer
Mary N. Cook	young woman learns to be modest, 120 two sisters smash a CD that did not have uplifting lyrics, 120 young woman's example helps her family return to Church activity, 120	example, standards standards example, Sabbath

Teachings for Our Time

Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays will be devoted to “Teachings for Our Time.” Each lesson can be prepared from one or more talks given in the most recent general conference. Stake and district presidents may choose which talks should be used, or they may assign this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents. Leaders should stress the value of Melchizedek Priesthood brethren and Relief Society sisters studying the same talks on the same Sundays.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study and bring to class the latest general conference issue of the magazine.

Suggestions for Preparing a Lesson from Talks

Pray that the Holy Spirit will be with you as you study and teach the talk(s). You

may be tempted to prepare the lesson using other materials, but the conference talks are the approved curriculum. Your assignment is to help others learn and live the gospel as taught in the most recent general conference of the Church.

Review the talk(s), looking for principles and doctrines that meet the needs of class members. Also look for stories, scripture references, and statements from the talk(s) that will help you teach these truths.

Make an outline of how to teach the principles and doctrines. Your outline should include questions that help class members:

- Look for principles and doctrines in the talk(s).
- Think about their meaning.
- Share understanding, ideas, experiences, and testimonies.
- Apply these principles and doctrines in their lives. ■

Months	Fourth-Sunday Lesson Materials
May 2008–October 2008	Talks published in the May 2008 <i>Liabona</i> or <i>Ensign</i> *
November 2008–April 2009	Talks published in the November 2008 <i>Liabona</i> or <i>Ensign</i> *

*These talks are available (in many languages) at www.lds.org.

Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women Resource Guides

The following resources may be used to supplement, but not replace, lessons in *Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3* and *Young Women Manual 3*. Some *Duty to God* and *Personal Progress* activities listed in the guides may be worked on during lesson time, or you may encourage quorum or class members to complete them at home.

Please teach the lessons in the order they are printed. The manual does not include a specific Christmas lesson. If you want to teach a special Christmas lesson, consider using scriptures, conference addresses, Church magazine articles, pictures, and hymns that focus on the Savior.

To find non-English versions of the resource guides in some languages, go to www.lds.org, click on **Languages**, and select a language. Click on *Liabona*, then the **May 2008** issue. The English version of the resource guides can be found at www.lds.org by clicking on **Gospel Library**. There are links to the resource guides in the right column.

Young Women Manual 3

Lesson 26: Repentance

Russell M. Nelson, “Repentance and Conversion,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 102. You could introduce the lesson with the definitions of *repentance* from the article. “Repentance Brings Peace and Happiness to Our Lives” could be supplemented by the “Fruits of Repentance” section from the article.

Personal Progress, “Choice and Accountability Value Experiences,” no. 4.

Lesson 27: Forgiving Ourselves

Anthony D. Perkins, “The Great and Wonderful Love,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 76. Consider selecting appropriate sections from the article about needless guilt and forgiving oneself to supplement the section “Forgiving Ourselves Is an Important Part of Repentance.”

Personal Progress, “Knowledge Value Experiences,” no. 4.

Lesson 28: Consecration and Sacrifice

Elaine S. Dalton, “It Shows in Your Face,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 109. Consider replacing the story about the Missionary Training Center with the story about Mary Goble. After reading the story, ask how Mary’s sacrifice in crossing the plains brought blessings to her life despite the trials she experienced.

Personal Progress, “Good Works Value Experiences,” no. 3.

Lesson 29: A Change of Heart

M. Russell Ballard, “Pure Testimony,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 40. You might use Elder Ballard’s description of real testimony to conclude the lesson. Encourage the young women to look at their lives and see what changes they need to make in order to have a real testimony.

David A. Bednar, “Ye Must Be Born Again,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 19. Consider using Elder Bednar’s explanation of how a cucumber becomes a pickle to replace the discussion at the beginning of the lesson. Discuss how we need to have a change of heart if we desire to truly follow our Savior.

Personal Progress, “Choice and Accountability Value Experiences,” no. 4.

Lesson 30: Scripture Study

Julie B. Beck, “My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 107. You might use Sister Beck’s talk to supplement the lesson. You could use a quote from this talk in place of Elder Asay’s.

Personal Progress, “Choice and Accountability Value Experiences,” no. 1.

Lesson 31: Service in the Church

Boyd K. Packer, “The Weak and the Simple of the Church,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 6. Consider using the first part of President Packer’s talk to supplement the section “We Should Prepare Now to Serve in the Church.”



Young women in the Bell Ville Argentina District.

Personal Progress, "Good Works Value Experiences," no. 1.

Lesson 32: Service in the Community

Steven E. Snow, "Service," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 102. This talk could be used to supplement throughout the lesson. The section about serving in the community could supplement the section "It Is Important for Young Women to Serve in the Community."

Personal Progress, "Good Works Value Project," bullet 5.

Lesson 33: Each Person Is Divine and Eternal

Susan W. Tanner, "Daughters of Heavenly Father," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 106. Portions of this talk could be used throughout the lesson. For example, replace the story under the heading "We Should Help Others Feel Loved and Valued" with the story Sister Tanner shares about the young woman in Chile.

Personal Progress, "Divine Nature Value Experiences," no. 1.

Lesson 34: Avoiding Dishonesty

Richard C. Edgley, "Three Towels and a 25-Cent Newspaper," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 72. Consider replacing the case studies at the beginning of the lesson with a discussion of the blessings that come from being honest. Replace the story of the ice cream with the story of the 25-cent newspaper.

Personal Progress, "Integrity Value Experiences," no. 2.

Lesson 35: Dating Decisions

Elaine S. Dalton, "It Shows in Your Face," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 109. You might share Sister

Dalton's experiences in West Africa, in South America, and on Ensign Peak to express the importance of making righteous decisions.

Personal Progress, "Choice and Accountability Value Project," bullet 2.

Lesson 36: Marriage Standards

Russell M. Nelson, "Nurturing Marriage," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 36. Consider using the three suggestions from the section "Strengthening Marriage" to enhance the lesson.

Personal Progress, "Choice and Accountability Value Experiences," no. 2.

Lesson 37: The Word of God as a Standard

Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 40. Consider incorporating this article throughout the lesson.

For the Strength of Youth, "Go Forward with Faith," 40.

Lesson 38: Good Health Habits

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "See the End from the Beginning," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 42. You might use President Uchtdorf's laundry delivery experience as an introduction.

Personal Progress, "Knowledge Value Project," bullet 3.

Lesson 39: Recognizing Our Individual Worth

Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Abundant Life," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 99. Consider sharing Elder Wirthlin's story about Snowman in the section "We Each Have the Potential for Greatness."

Personal Progress, "Choice and Accountability Value Experiences," no. 6.

Lesson 40: Loving Ourselves and Others

Anthony D. Perkins, "The Great and Wonderful Love," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 76. Consider using Elder Perkins's three snares in the scripture discussion.

Personal Progress, "Divine Nature Value Experiences," no. 6.

Lesson 41: Being Dependable

Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Life's Lessons Learned," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 45. You might replace the story of Cindy with Elder Wirthlin's experience on the football team.

Personal Progress, "Integrity Value Experiences," no. 4.

Lesson 42: Preparing for Change

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Have We Not Reason to Rejoice?" *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 18. Consider using President Uchtdorf's story of his family during WWII.

Personal Progress, "Knowledge Value Project," bullet 2.

Lesson 43: Associations with Others

Michael J. Teh, "Out of Small Things," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 35. Consider using this article to supplement the section "Be Willing to Reach Out to Others," emphasizing the need to use our gifts for good.

Personal Progress, "Integrity Value Project," bullet 3.

Lesson 44: Avoiding Crisis Living

Keith K. Hilbig, "Quench Not the Spirit Which Quickens the Inner Man," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 37. You might use the four questions from this article when discussing "We Should Do All Things in Wisdom and Order."

Personal Progress, "Knowledge Value Experiences," no. 2.

Lesson 45: Choosing a Vocation

James E. Faust, "Message to My Grandsons," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 54. Consider using President Faust's advice about choosing a vocation to supplement any of the discussion sections.

Personal Progress, "Knowledge Value Experiences," no. 5.

Lesson 46: Money Management

Thomas S. Monson, "Constant Truths for Changing Times," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 19. You might add President Monson's comments to the debt section of the lesson.

Personal Progress, "Choice and Accountability Value Experiences," no. 7.

Lesson 47: Messages of Latter-day Prophets

Thomas S. Monson, "Be Thou an Example," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May

2005, 112. Consider beginning the lesson with counsel from President Monson.

Personal Progress, "Knowledge Value Experiences," no. 4.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3

Lesson 26: Blessings of Chastity

Thomas S. Monson, "True to the Faith," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 18. Consider using the first two paragraphs of President Monson's article to supplement the section "Satan Attacks Chastity." Replace the quote by President Lee with President Monson's examples of the maka-feke of immorality and pornography.

Duty to God (Deacon, Teacher, and Priest), "Family Activities," no. 2.

For the Strength of Youth, "Sexual Purity," 26.

Lesson 27: The Body Is a Temple

Henry B. Eyring, "God Helps the Faithful Priesthood Holder," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 55. You might use sections of the article to supplement the section "Physical Consequences of Disobedience."

For the Strength of Youth, "Physical Health," 36.

Lesson 28: Withstanding Temptation

Thomas S. Monson, "Constant Truths for Changing Times," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 19. Consider beginning the lesson with President Monson's warning of the dangers of complacency and the need to stand up to the dangers around us.

Duty to God (Deacon, Teacher, and Priest), "Family Activities," no. 2.

Lesson 29: Sabbath Observances

Robert C. Oaks, "Who's on the Lord's Side? Who?" *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 48. You may want to use this article to enhance the section "A Day of Rejuvenation."

Preach My Gospel, "Keep the Sabbath Day Holy," 74.

Lesson 30: An Aaronic Priesthood Holder Cherishes Womanhood

James E. Faust, "Message to My Grandsons," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 54. Consider using the article to expand the section "An Aaronic Priesthood Holder Honors the Young Women He Knows." Also consider using "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (*Liabona*, Oct. 2004, 49; *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102) to supplement the section "Women and Men Have God-Given Differences."

Duty to God (Deacon), "Citizenship and Social Development," no. 7;

(Teacher), "Citizenship and Social Development," no. 10 and "Spiritual Development," no. 5; (Priest), "Citizenship and Social Development," no. 1.

Preach My Gospel, "Eternal Marriage," 85.

Lesson 31: Choosing an Eternal Companion

Dallin H. Oaks, "Divorce," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 70. You may use this article to support the discussion of the section "Finding the Right Person."

Duty to God (Priest), "Citizenship and Social Development," nos. 2, 4, and 5.

Lesson 32: Preparing for the Temple Endowment

Robert D. Hales, "To the Aaronic Priesthood: Preparing for the Decade of Decision," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 48. You may use this talk to supplement the section "Requirements for a Temple Recommend."

Duty to God (Deacon and Teacher), "Quorum Activities," no. 6; (Priest), "Family Activities," no. 10.

For the Strength of Youth, "Dress and Appearance," 14.

Lesson 33: Celestial Marriage—A Preparation for Eternity

Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Tongue of Angels," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 16. You might supplement the section "Temple Marriages Can Become Celestial" with this article.

Duty to God (Priest), "Citizenship and Social Development," nos. 2, 4, and 5.

For the Strength of Youth, "Dating," 24.

Lesson 34: Obedience

Richard G. Scott, "The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 40. Consider using Elder Scott's story on rock climbing to supplement the section "Obedience Indicates True Love of the Lord."

Lesson 35: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Quentin L. Cook, "Live by Faith and Not by Fear," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 70. You might conclude the lesson with Elder Harold B. Lee's four critical points, as shared by Elder Cook.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Spiritual Development," no. 3; (Teacher), "Spiritual Development," no. 4; (Priest), "Spiritual Development," no. 10.

Lesson 36: Patriarchal Blessings

Gordon B. Hinckley, "Seek Ye the Kingdom of God," *Liabona* and



Young men and their leaders in Sydney, Australia.

Ensign, May 2006, 81. You might begin the lesson with President Hinckley's quote about his patriarchal blessing.

Duty to God (Priest), "Family Activities," no. 3.

Lesson 37: Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit

James E. Faust, "The Light in Their Eyes," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 20. Consider using the story of the nurse during the section "Serving Others through the Gifts of the Spirit."

Lesson 38: The Pure Love of Christ

Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Great Commandment," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 28. Consider replacing the scripture and chalkboard discussion with the story of the 14-year-old boy and Joseph Smith.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Family Activities," no. 7; (Teacher and Priest), "Quorum Activities," no. 7.

Lesson 39: Feasting on the Words of Christ

M. Russell Ballard, "The Miracle of the Holy Bible," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 80. You might use Elder Ballard's remarks on the Bible to introduce the lesson.

Duty to God (Deacon, Teacher, and Priest), "Family Activities," no. 1.

Lesson 40: Doing Missionary Work

Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Bear Testimony to the World," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 4. You might use President Hinckley's declaration that "we bear testimony to the world" as part of the introduction.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Spiritual Development," nos. 10 and 11; (Teacher), "Quorum Activities," no. 5; (Priest), "Quorum Activities," no. 3.

Lesson 41: Becoming More like Our Savior

David A. Bednar, "Clean Hands

and a Pure Heart," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 80. Consider replacing the chalkboard discussion with Elder Bednar's instructions on overcoming sin and the desire to sin.

Lesson 42: Being Humble and Teachable

L. Tom Perry, "Raising the Bar," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 46. You might supplement the lesson with Elder Perry's experience of his son and the high jump.

Preach My Gospel, "Humility," 120–21.

Lesson 43: Thoughts and Language

John B. Dickson, "Commitment to the Lord," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 14. Consider sharing Elder Dickson's suggestions on other commitments that will bless our lives before presenting the case studies.

For the Strength of Youth, "Language," 22.

Lesson 44: Service to Others

Boyd K. Packer, "The Weak and the Simple of the Church," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 6. You might add the story of President Packer's son to the conclusion of the lesson.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Quorum Activities," no. 5; (Teacher and Priest), "Quorum Activities," no. 7.

For the Strength of Youth, "Service to Others," 38.

Lesson 45: Strengthening Testimonies by Bearing Them

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Power of a Personal Testimony," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 37. Consider replacing the story of Elder Croft with "What Is a Testimony Good For?" and discuss the five clear and simple truths of a testimony as listed by President Uchtdorf.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Spiritual Development," no. 5; (Teacher and Priest), "Quorum Activities," no. 2.

Lesson 46: Effective Home Teaching

Thomas S. Monson, "Do Your Duty—That Is Best," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 56. Consider using the section in the article about home teaching to begin the lesson.

Lesson 47: Honesty

Richard C. Edgley, "Three Towels and a 25-Cent Newspaper," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 72. Consider replacing Elder Mickelsen's story with Bishop Edgley's story.

Duty to God (Priest), "Spiritual Development," no. 1.

For the Strength of Youth, "Honesty," 31.

Lesson 48: Preparing to Serve through Education

Gordon B. Hinckley, "Rise Up, O Men of God," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 59. You might use President Hinckley's advice on education to begin the lesson.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Educational, Personal, and Career Development," nos. 1, 2, and 12; (Teacher), "Educational, Personal, and Career Development," nos. 2 and 3; (Priest), "Educational, Personal, and Career Development," nos. 1 and 8.

For the Strength of Youth, "Education," 9.

Lesson 49: We Have a Wonderful Legacy

H. David Burton, "If These Old Walls Could Talk," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 32. Consider supplementing the last section of the lesson with important things that have happened since the days of the pioneers as listed in the article.

Duty to God (Deacon), "Family Activities," no. 4; (Teacher), "Spiritual Development," no. 6; (Priest), "Family Activities," no. 9. ■

General Auxiliary Presidencies

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Daniel K Judd
First Counselor



A. Roger Merrill
President



William D. Oswald
Second Counselor

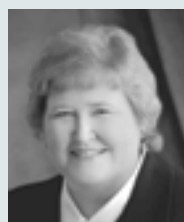
RELIEF SOCIETY



Silvia H. Allred
First Counselor



Julie B. Beck
President



Barbara Thompson
Second Counselor

YOUNG MEN



Dean R. Burgess
First Counselor



Charles W. Dahlquist II
President



Michael A. Neider
Second Counselor

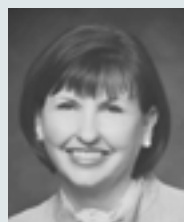
YOUNG WOMEN



Mary N. Cook
First Counselor

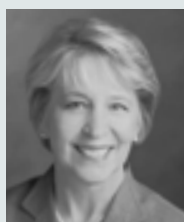


Elaine S. Dalton
President



Ann M. Dibb
Second Counselor

PRIMARY



Margaret S. Lifferth
First Counselor



Cheryl C. Lant
President



Vicki F. Matsumori
Second Counselor

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Millions Sustain New Church Leaders in Solemn Assembly

Members of the Church around the world met in meetinghouses and homes by satellite, television, radio, or Internet to sustain in solemn assembly the new President and First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 5, 2008.

President Thomas S. Monson and his counselors in the First Presidency, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, were announced on February 4, 2008, following the passing of President Gordon B. Hinckley on January 27. However, the 178th Annual General Conference of the Church held on April 5 and 6, 2008, was the first opportunity that members of the Church as a whole had to sustain their new leaders.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were also sustained during the solemn assembly originating

in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City. Elder D. Todd Christofferson was sustained as the newest member of that quorum. Members also sustained the other General Authorities and general auxiliary leaders of the Church.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the First Quorum of the Seventy was called to fill the vacancy left in the Presidency of the Seventy by Elder Christofferson's call.

Fifteen men were sustained as new members of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, along with the sustaining of a new Young Women general presidency. (See accompanying biographical information.) Two members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, Elders Craig C. Christensen and William R. Walker, were sustained to the First Quorum of the Seventy. Additionally, 38 new Area Seventies were called to serve in their respective areas of the





Church. (See pages 4–7 for a complete list of those called and released during general conference.)

President Monson is the first Church President sustained in a solemn assembly held in the Conference Center. According to Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, Church Historian and Recorder, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his presidency were sustained in a solemn assembly held in the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. Brigham Young and his presidency were first sustained on December 27, 1847, in the Kanesville Tabernacle at Council Bluffs, Iowa. Beginning with President John Taylor on October 10, 1880, every

President until President Monson had been sustained in a solemn assembly held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

“While Church members in early solemn assemblies were able to participate only by attendance in the Tabernacle,” Elder Jensen says, “in recent years congregations around the world have participated via satellite broadcast, with stake presidencies observing the vote of the congregations. Beginning in 1945, Church members listening to the proceedings of conference in their homes have been asked to sustain the new President wherever they may be.”

The Old Testament first records the Lord instructing the Israelites to hold solemn assemblies at the Feast of

the Passover (see Exodus 23:14–17; Deuteronomy 16:8, 16) and the Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Ingathering, or Sukkot (see Leviticus 23:33–36; Nehemiah 8:18).

“For members of the Church, sustaining Church officers is not a passive act of casting a vote,” says Elder Jensen. “Sustaining in a solemn assembly indicates a willingness to offer continued faith, prayers, and support for the new Church President.”

Elder Jensen points out that a solemn assembly is not the only time members are asked to sustain Church leaders. A sustaining vote is taken as part of general conferences, stake conferences, and

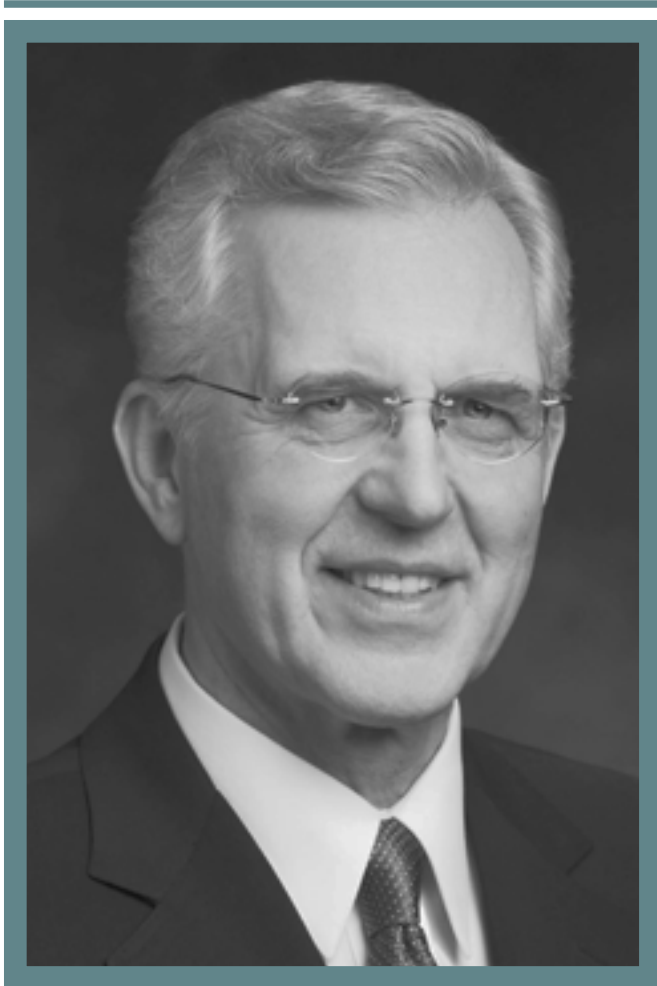
ward or branch conferences.

“As members regularly sustain the leadership of the Church, they will have an opportunity to renew the commitments they made in this solemn assembly,” Elder Jensen says.

More than 100,000 people attended sessions at the Conference Center, with millions more watching or listening by television, radio, satellite, and Internet broadcasts.

Sessions of the April general conference were translated and broadcast in as many as 92 languages, more than any preceding general conference. ■

Text, audio, and video versions of the conference are available at LDS.org.



Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

There's something you can learn from everyone," says Elder David Todd Christofferson, newly called and sustained member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "I haven't found anybody—in or out of the Church—I couldn't draw something from that made me better."

Learning from the best that others have to offer is something Elder Christofferson has done his entire life, beginning with his parents.

Born to Paul Vickery Christofferson and Jeanne

Swenson Christofferson on January 24, 1945, Elder Christofferson was raised in Pleasant Grove and Lindon, Utah, USA. He says he and his four younger brothers enjoyed a childhood that was "idyllic" and "wholesome."

"We had a very secure, happy home life," he remembers. "Father and Mother showed us how to live according to the pattern of the gospel."

At the beginning of high school, Elder Christofferson moved with his family to

Somerset, New Jersey, USA. There he found new places, new people, and new opportunities.

"I enjoyed friendships and relationships with people from all over and with all kinds of religious beliefs," he says. "The interactions were very positive."

Following high school, Elder Christofferson attended Brigham Young University for a year before leaving to serve a full-time mission in Argentina. There, he says, he learned from "two exceptional mission presidents," President Ronald V. Stone for the first several months of his mission and President Richard G. Scott (now Elder Scott, a fellow member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) for the remainder of his mission.

Of Elder Scott, Elder Christofferson remembers: "We learned to be exacting of ourselves, as he was of himself. He always focused on the higher possibilities of being able to grow more and do more and accomplish more. Because of that, we began to see a higher vision of ourselves, the work, and

what we could accomplish."

When he returned from Argentina, Elder Christofferson again enrolled at BYU, where he studied English and became involved in student government and intramural athletics. He also met and married his wife, Katherine (Kathy) Thelma Jacob; they married at the end of their junior year on May 28, 1968, in the Salt Lake Temple. Today they have five children and eight grandchildren.

Elder Christofferson graduated from BYU with a bachelor's degree in 1969 and then pursued a law degree at Duke University. Upon graduating in 1972, he was hired as a law clerk for Judge John J. Sirica, serving during the Watergate proceedings.

"It was an exciting experience for a first job out of school," Elder Christofferson says. "I saw some of the best and some of the worst in the legal profession all mixed together. But that experience showed me what good legal work could do, and that gave me confidence and aspiration."

Elder Christofferson spent





his legal career working first at a law firm and then as in-house counsel for banks and other corporations, mostly in the Eastern United States. What he most enjoyed about those years, Elder Christofferson says, “was association with good people of all walks of life and all faiths. I found that a lot of people really do want to help others and are dedicated to making that happen.”

Elder Christofferson was called in 1993 to serve as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, a period he describes as “very formative.” His assignments took him briefly to the North America Southwest Area and the Mexico South Area.

Elder Christofferson fondly remembers conducting interviews during the reorganization of one particular stake in Mexico. “One of the people we interviewed was a very humble man, small in stature. We had a good interview, and I gave him an *abrazo* [hug]. After this man went out, he said to the stake president, ‘*La autoridad me abrazó.*’ [‘The authority hugged me.’] He said it over and over. That experience taught me to appreciate the small things that people do. It

also taught me that you can always do something to help others feel valued as a son or daughter of God.

“You really can learn something good from every contact and every association,” he adds. “Hopefully, we’re doing the same for others.”

Elder Christofferson was called in 1998 as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, where he served until his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He says that when he first received his new calling from President Thomas S. Monson, it initially “seemed impossible.”

“The responsibility seems overwhelming as I contemplate it. But I have had wonderful tutors as I have worked in the Quorum of the Seventy and with members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles over the last 15 years. And I have the additional reassurance of knowing that the Lord has always sustained me. In every crisis, in every transition, in every need I’ve ever had, He’s been accessible through prayer. I have trusted in Him and have not been disappointed. Surely His promises are still in place. I know that He’ll give me the help I need here too.” ■

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Of the Presidency of the Seventy



Along with being raised in a loving home, two pivotal events in Elder Lyndon Whitney Clayton’s life have made all the difference, he says. One was serving as a missionary in Peru. The second was marrying his wife, Kathy Ann Kipp, on August 3, 1973, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are parents of seven children.

“Our children joke that time at home with Mother and Dad often turns into spontaneous family firesides,” says Elder Clayton. “And that is a fairly accurate description.” The Clayton family loves to sit and discuss a wide variety of subjects; they also love to sing together.

Elder Clayton was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on February 24, 1950, to L. Whitney Clayton Jr. and Elizabeth Touchstone Clayton. He grew up in Whittier, California, USA, received a bachelor’s degree in finance from the University of Utah and a law degree from the University of the

Pacific in California.

In 1970 he was called to serve in the Andes Mission in Peru. It was there that he learned to love studying the scriptures. “One of the great joys of my life is a quiet hour each day studying the scriptures,” he says. “I find great comfort and peace and guidance in that.”

Elder Clayton has served as branch president, bishop, mission president’s counselor, and Area Seventy. Serving as bishop in a Spanish-language ward in Santa Ana, California, “was a tremendous blessing,” he says. “It enhanced my ability to see that those who keep the commandments are happy.”

He has found the same to be true in his travels as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. “No matter where people live in this world, the Lord will bless them if they keep the commandments,” he says. “Those who put their trust in Him will find that He will enrich their lives in every way.” ■

Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis

Of the Seventy



When Elder Marcos Antony Aidukaitis's oldest son was eight, he drew a picture of his family for a school assignment. At the time, Elder Aidukaitis was putting in long hours as general manager of a company in São Paulo, Brazil. "I was working a lot and was traveling to many places around the world," he recalls.

Elder Aidukaitis was noticeably absent from his son's illustration. "Where is your father?" the teacher asked the boy. "Oh, he's working," he replied.

For Elder Aidukaitis, the experience was a wake-up call. "I changed jobs and fixed what had to be fixed," he says, renewing his efforts to put family first.

Elder Aidukaitis was born to Antony Aidukaitis and Maria Dittrich Aidukaitis on August 30, 1959, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. His father, baptized in 1940, was the first member of the Church in his family, as was Elder Aidukaitis's wife, Luisa Englert Aidukaitis.

Elder and Sister Aidukaitis were married on January 13, 1986, less than a month after he baptized her. They were sealed in the Provo Utah Temple the following year. They are the parents of five children.

Elder Aidukaitis, who served in the Brazil São Paulo South Mission from 1979 to 1981, says his mission changed his life. It enhanced his love for the Savior, prepared him to serve his family and his Heavenly Father, and, he says, "gave me the courage to teach and baptize my wife."

Following his mission, he earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and an MBA, both from Brigham Young University, where he played on the soccer team. After graduating he went to work as an executive for multinational companies, first in the United States and then in Brazil, eventually opening his own business.

Prior to his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Aidukaitis served as president of the Brazil Brasilia Mission, Area Seventy, stake president, regional welfare agent, and high councilor. ■

Elder Gérald Caussé

Of the Seventy



Elder Gérald Caussé loves people.

"As a stake president in Paris, France, I met a lot of people from all parts of the world," he says. "As I served them, I discovered that we are all of one heart and one testimony when it comes to the gospel."

Serving as an Area Seventy in the Europe West Area at the time of his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Caussé has also served in a bishopric, as a high priests group leader, and as a counselor in a stake presidency.

Born in Bordeaux, France, on May 20, 1963, to Jean Caussé and Marie-Blanche Bonnet Caussé, Elder Caussé moved to Paris when he was 19. There he served one year of military service in a NATO Agency. He began dating Valérie Babin when they were in the same ward in Paris. Both were from faithful LDS families, and they had known each other since they were children. They were sealed on August 5, 1986, in the

Bern Switzerland Temple, and they are now the parents of five children.

Elder Caussé, who has had a long career in the food industry, received a master's degree in 1987 from ESSEC, a business school in Paris. At the time of this call he was a managing director and on the board of a company that deals with food distribution to catering and supermarket chains.

Elder Caussé developed a love for music when he began taking piano lessons at age seven. Today, singing and instrumental music fill the Caussé home, with every family member playing the piano, violin, or cello.

"When Jesus chose His Apostles, several of them were fishermen, and they immediately left their nets and followed Him," says Elder Caussé. "I see the Church working today the same. I feel that my calling is from the Lord through His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I too will follow the Savior." ■

Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge

Of the Seventy



Elder Lawrence Edward Corbridge acknowledges his reliance on the Lord.

“Christ is our only hope and our every hope and the only way that we can do all He has asked us to do,” he says. “We can have full confidence that He will help us succeed.”

Elder Corbridge has gained this testimony from years of Church service, including as bishop, high councilor, stake president, and president of the Chile Santiago North Mission from 2002 to 2005.

Born on April 6, 1949, to Ivan Corbridge and Agnes Howe Corbridge, Elder Corbridge was raised in Provo, Utah, USA. From 1968 to 1970 he served full-time in the Argentina North Mission.

He received a bachelor of science degree in business management and a juris doctorate degree from Brigham Young University. After graduation he began a career in law, and at the time of his call

to the First Quorum of the Seventy, he was a shareholder and senior attorney at a Salt Lake City law firm.

He married Jacquelyn Shamo in the Provo Utah Temple on December 21, 1974. As a young man, Elder Corbridge spent the summers working on cattle ranches in Idaho and Utah, where he learned to love the outdoors, a love he shares with his wife and five sons through various activities, including rock climbing, river rafting, skiing, and snowboarding.

“Knowledge, character, and relationships, especially with family, are among the few things in life that really matter,” he says. Another is “to remember Christ always.”

Elder Corbridge continues: “We covenant every week to do just that when we partake of the sacrament. We sometimes fall short. Yet the Lord says to look to Him in every thought. So whether we are working to support a family, being a mother and a homemaker, or lying in a hospital bed with six months to live, that is still our essential challenge—to remember Him and to do what He would do.” ■

Elder Eduardo Gavarret

Of the Seventy



Considering his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Eduardo Gavarret testifies, “Sometimes events that don’t seem significant come together like a puzzle to prepare you.”

Elder Gavarret was born on May 11, 1956, in Minas, Uruguay, to Juan Gavarret and Elsa Inzaurrealde Gavarret. He served as a missionary in Paraguay and Uruguay from 1975 to 1977 and upon his return married Norma Beatriz Gorgoroso on October 20, 1978. They were later sealed in the São Paulo Brazil Temple.

Elder Gavarret graduated in business administration from the Escuela Superior de Administracion Empresas in 1986. In 2000 he received a master of business administration degree in marketing from INPG (Instituto Nacional de Pos-graduação) in Brazil.

“Looking back, I can see the hand of the Lord in my life, moving me from one place to the next and from one calling to the other in

order to serve Him better,” says Elder Gavarret.

While serving as a bishop in Paraguay, he joined a pharmaceutical company that moved him to Bolivia to start a new branch. There he was called as president of a new stake, then as a regional representative. When the company moved the family to Peru to open another new branch, he was called as an Area Authority. The company moved them again, this time to Brazil, where he served as an Area Seventy. He later served as mission president.

“Calls are not about holding positions,” Elder Gavarret says. “Calls help us draw nearer to Christ. They are means to an end, not the end. In them we must seek inspiration, learn to pray, and focus on others rather than ourselves.”

At the time of his call, he was the general manager of a pharmaceutical company in Lima, Peru. He and his wife have three children.

“When Christ is the center of our lives, everything else falls into its place,” Elder Gavarret says. “All is in His control.” ■

Elder Carlos A. Godoy

Of the Seventy



Your family can become your closest friends,” says Elder Carlos Augusto Godoy, recently called to the First Quorum of the Seventy. “You might move away from other friends, but family is consistent.”

Elder Godoy speaks from experience. Because of educational opportunities, professional positions, and Church assignments, Elder Godoy; his wife, Mônica Soares Brandão; and their four children have lived in many places, including Porto Alegre, Brazil; São Paulo, Brazil; Provo, Utah, USA; and Belem, Brazil.

Even before his assignments took him across his country and abroad, Elder Godoy appreciated close family relationships. It was in accompanying his younger sister to a Church activity that he was first introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That experience led to his meeting with the missionaries and being baptized a month later.

Elder Godoy was born on

February 4, 1961, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to Moacir Godoy and Ivone Poersch Godoy. He joined the Church in 1977 and later served a full-time mission in São Paulo. He and Mônica, whom he met at a summer youth conference shortly after he joined the Church, were married in 1984 in the São Paulo Brazil Temple.

Elder Godoy received a bachelor’s degree in economics and political science from Pontificia Universidade Católica and a master’s degree in organizational behavior from Brigham Young University. He spent his career in various business positions before starting his own company.

Elder Godoy has served as bishop, high councilor, mission president, and Area Seventy. He says that through these opportunities to serve, he has learned more about the process of “becoming” and looks forward to learning in his new calling.

“I feel a sense of inadequacy,” he says, “but I know that the Savior is guiding this work and that He can help all of us become more like Him.” ■

Elder James J. Hamula

Of the Seventy



If there is anything that qualifies me for this calling it is the testimony that I gained at age 18 while I prepared for a mission,” says Elder James Joseph Hamula. “I had a most remarkable experience where I received a strong witness of the divinity of the Lord and of His Church.”

Born on November 20, 1957, in Long Beach, California, USA, to Joseph and Joyce Hamula, Elder Hamula remembers reading the account of the First Vision. He read of how the young Joseph Smith wanted to know what was right, and felt that he too needed to go to the Lord in prayer. “So I knelt at my bedside and earnestly prayed to the heavens. And in response I got an answer that was as clear and as unmistakable as anything that I’ve experienced in life. I got up off my knees knowing that the Church was true.”

After serving in the Germany Munich Mission, Elder Hamula graduated from

Brigham Young University with a degree in political science and philosophy. He then earned a master of arts in political philosophy and a juris doctorate, also from BYU. At the time of his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, he worked as an attorney in Mesa, Arizona, USA.

It was in Arizona that Elder Hamula met his wife, Joyce Anderson. They were married in the Mesa Arizona Temple on April 27, 1984, and are now parents of six children. Their two youngest sons, twins, were born while Elder Hamula was serving as president of the Washington D.C. South Mission.

Elder Hamula has also served as a bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. “All my experiences in the Church have been refinements of that singular experience as a young man of 18 preparing for my mission,” he says. “That was the foundation of it all.” ■

Elder Allan F. Packer

Of the Seventy



Elder Allan Forrest Packer remembers that as a boy of 10 or 12, he didn't always feel that he was getting answers to his prayers. One day while working with his father, Boyd K. Packer, now President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, young Allan expressed his concern.

His father taught him by analogy, saying that pilots don't use their parachutes every time they fly, but they are still in the practice of wearing them. President Packer encouraged his son to continue to pray, to be patient, and to have the faith that when an answer was needed, he would have one.

"That lesson helped me through the early years of developing my testimony," says Elder Packer, recently called to the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Packer was born in Brigham City, Utah, USA, on July 7, 1948, to Boyd Kenneth Packer and Donna Smith Packer. Although he and his

wife, Terri Bennett Packer, are both native Utahns, they met in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, where they attended high school. Following Elder Packer's mission to the Andes Mission and Colombia-Venezuela Mission, he and Terri were married in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1970. They are the parents of 8 children and have 17 grandchildren.

Elder Packer received a bachelor's degree in electronics engineering technology from Brigham Young University. He has worked in business and has served as a vice president for several companies.

Elder Packer has also served in numerous Church callings, including bishop, Scoutmaster, counselor in a stake presidency, president of the Spain Málaga Mission, and as a Young Men general board member.

"I know the work is true," Elder Packer says. "The Savior is our Redeemer. He opened the door and gave us the opportunity to return to our Father. I'm honored to be able to help Him do His work." ■

Elder Kevin W. Pearson

Of the Seventy



Elder Kevin Wayne Pearson believes that if we truly understand the principle of faith, the Lord can do wonders in our lives.

"I grew up thinking if I was smart enough or strong enough or fast enough or hardworking enough, somehow I could control any situation," he says. "The reality is, we cannot control all the circumstances of our lives. We simply have to trust the Lord and learn to have faith in Him that everything will work out for the good. When you do that, the Lord will make you capable."

As a mission president, Elder Pearson often taught his missionaries about five challenges that can overcome or weaken faith if faith isn't continually strengthened. He says, "You've got to get rid of doubt, distraction, disobedience, discouragement, and lack of diligence in order for your faith to be effective."

Elder Pearson was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on

April 10, 1957, to Wayne F. Pearson and Velda Labrum Pearson. Later he received a bachelor of science degree in finance from the University of Utah and a master of business administration degree from Harvard University. Prior to his call as a mission president, he was working as CEO of a health care information company.

At the time of his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Pearson was serving as the president of the Washington Tacoma Mission. His prior Church callings have been invaluable in preparing him for his calling today. He has served as a full-time missionary in Finland, a ward Young Men president, elders quorum president, high counselor, and bishop. Elder Pearson married June Langeland on June 24, 1980, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have six children. ■

Elder Rafael E. Pino

Of the Seventy



For Elder Rafael Eduardo Pino, the strength of his testimony and the power of his conviction that Jesus is the Christ trace back to two key events. One of them was reading the Book of Mormon for the first time at age 17.

"The missionaries asked me to read just a few passages," he says, "but I couldn't stop reading it. I carried it around with me everywhere I went. Every time I read it, I felt those same feelings of joy and peace. I am a witness that the system God established to prove the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon works, just as it says in Moroni 10. I received a testimony that the Book of Mormon is true by the power of the Holy Ghost."

The second key event for Elder Pino was serving a full-time mission in the Venezuela Maracaibo Mission. Even though Elder Pino served in numerous Church callings prior to being sustained to the First Quorum of the

Seventy, including as bishop, high councilor, stake president, mission president, and Area Seventy, he is quick to emphasize the importance of his missionary service. "Each calling helps prepare you for future service," he says, "but the things that are most important to me have their root in the mission field. I still receive blessings from having served a full-time mission."

Elder Pino was born in Valencia, Venezuela, on October 27, 1955, to Arturo Pino and Josefina Gimenez de Pino. He received a certificate in administration in Caracas, Venezuela. Elder Pino has worked for the Church in a variety of capacities since 1980. He and his wife, Patricia Monica Villa Dassler, were sealed in the Washington D.C. Temple on March 31, 1981. They are the parents of three children. ■

Elder Gary E. Stevenson

Of the Seventy



After what he describes as "a knee-buckling experience," Elder Gary Evan Stevenson is grateful for the call to serve in the First Quorum of the Seventy.

"My initial thoughts after receiving this call were deep feelings of inadequacy, but at the same time I was filled with a sense of duty," Elder Stevenson says. "We hear so often that the Lord will qualify those whom He calls, and He will have to do that for me."

Elder Stevenson was born on August 6, 1955, in Ogden, Utah, USA, to Evan Stevenson and Jean Stevenson. He attended Utah State University, where he graduated in business administration and also met his wife, Lesa Jean Higley. They were married on April 20, 1979, in the Idaho Falls Idaho Temple and are the parents of four sons.

Together, Elder and Sister Stevenson have established a pattern of service in their lives and firmly believe that true happiness is found through service to others.

"When you are serving others, you are serving the Lord," Elder Stevenson says. "That precept permeates our lives and allows us to bring joy to others and ourselves."

They have most recently served together as Sunday School teachers in their ward in Providence, Utah, USA. Elder Stevenson also served as president of the Japan Nagoya Mission in addition to serving as a young missionary in southern Japan, as a bishop, and in a stake presidency.

Having grown up in a gospel-centered home, Elder Stevenson honors diligent parents for teaching him early about hard work. As the president of a health and fitness equipment company that he helped start as a young college graduate, Elder Stevenson believes hard work is a necessary principle in all aspects of life.

"Hard work applies in our professions and Church callings and has great application in missionary work," he says. "We may not be blessed with extraordinary abilities, but anyone can work hard to accomplish great things." ■

Elder José A. Teixeira

Of the Seventy



Elder José Augusto Teixeira of the First Quorum of the Seventy was part of the harvest that took place when Latter-day Saint missionaries were allowed into Portugal in late 1975. In 1976 his parents, Fernando Teixeira and Benilde Teixeira, and the rest of the family were introduced to the restored gospel, and the whole family was baptized in 1977.

Prior to that, Elder Teixeira attended his church regularly, assisted during worship, and did everything expected of a young believer. But he had questions about his faith.

When the missionaries invited him to read the Book of Mormon and pray about it, he did. "That was the beginning of my testimony of the Book of Mormon and of Joseph Smith," he says.

Elder Teixeira was born on February 24, 1961, in Vila Real, Portugal, but grew up in the old university city of Coimbra, which is where he joined the Church at age 16.

Like all converts, he was faced with decisions about friends. Fortunately, his friends soon came to accept his new standards. "They knew when I came into the circle that there were certain things that could not be done," he recalls.

Following service in the Portugal Lisbon Mission, Elder Teixeira joined the Portuguese Air Force and was stationed in Oeiras as part of a NATO international unit. While there, he was called as the Church's public affairs director for the country. At a training meeting, he met the Lisbon stake's public affairs coordinator, Filomena Lopes Teles Grilo, who also lived in Oeiras. They were married in the Bern Switzerland Temple on June 5, 1984, and are the parents of two sons and one daughter.

Elder Teixeira has degrees in accounting and business administration and prior to this call was an international controller for the Church, stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. Elder Teixeira has served as a district president, stake president, Area Seventy, and president of the Brazil São Paulo South Mission. ■

Elder F. Michael Watson

Of the Seventy



Thirty-eight years of working with apostles and prophets on a daily basis has only strengthened the testimony of Elder Frank Michael Watson of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Watson served as Assistant Secretary, then Secretary, to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from 1970 to 1972. Beginning in 1972 he served as Assistant Secretary to the First Presidency and since April 1986 has served as Secretary to the First Presidency.

"What I have seen in that personal, day-to-day interaction through the years has only increased my testimony," he says. "There is no question in my mind that God lives, Jesus is the Christ, and whomever He has called is His prophet for that time."

Elder Watson was born on March 9, 1943, in Spring City, Utah, USA, to Frank C and Genniel Baxter Watson. He served a full-time mission to the Northeast British Mission from 1962 to 1964, followed

by military service from 1966 to 1969, one year of which was in the Republic of South Vietnam. He earned his bachelor's degree from Utah State University.

He married Jolene Mann on September 3, 1965, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of 12 children. He has served as elders quorum president, stake mission president, bishop, stake president, and sealer in the Bountiful Utah Temple.

"I've associated with General Authorities all these years, but being one among them is a humbling experience," he says. After having worked with them for so long, Elder Watson is desirous of simply being in a position to strengthen others' testimonies of the prophets and apostles and of the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ■

Elder Jorge F. Zeballos

Of the Seventy



Just 12 years after Elder Jorge Fernando Zeballos was born on July 19, 1955, the first Latter-day Saint missionaries came to his hometown of Ovalle, Chile, in 1967.

The four North Americans walking around town piqued his curiosity, as did a favorable interview with them in the local newspaper. When the missionaries began playing in a local basketball league, Jorge, who loved basketball, followed their games with interest. Once he managed to slip behind the officials' table to catch a glimpse of their team roster. Surprisingly, all were named "Elder."

When a classmate told young Jorge that he and his family had joined the missionaries' church, Jorge asked if he could come too. He attended meetings faithfully for seven months before the missionaries discovered that Jorge had not been taught or baptized. With the permission of his parents, Alberto Zeballos and Ines Zeballos, that was soon remedied.

Later, while at Santa Maria University in Valparaiso, Jorge met Carmen Gloria Valenzuela. "When I saw her for the first time, I knew I was going to marry her," he recalls. "It was very strange, because I already had my mission call, and she was not a member." Within a few weeks she was taking the missionary discussions, and he baptized her before leaving to serve in the Chile Concepción Mission.

Jorge and Carmen corresponded during his mission, began a courtship afterward, and were married on June 26, 1982, in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They are the parents of five children.

Elder Zeballos has a degree in civil engineering from Santa Maria University and a master of business administration degree from Brigham Young University. Prior to his call as president of the Chile Concepción South Mission in 2005, he was a manager of corporate affairs for a mining company in Chile. Elder Zeballos, newly called to the First Quorum of the Seventy, has also served as a bishop, stake president, regional representative, and Area Seventy. ■

Elder Tad R. Callister

Of the Seventy



Resolved to go wherever the Lord sends him, Elder Tad Richards Callister testifies that serving the Lord brings many blessings.

"The Lord helps you even when you feel inadequate," Elder Callister says. "Every calling is bigger than the person, and the Lord offers His help. Though His guidance is quiet and gentle, He does not leave you alone."

Elder Callister was born to Reed Callister and Norinne Callister on December 17, 1945, in Glendale, California, USA. He has served as a full-time missionary in the Eastern Atlantic States Mission, bishop, stake president, regional representative, Area Seventy, and was serving as president of the Canada Toronto East Mission when he received his call to the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Serving as a mission president has been an experience beyond description for Elder Callister, who most enjoys spending time with his family.

"You learn to love the missionaries almost as though they are your own sons and daughters," he says. "They constantly rise to your level of expectations, and they seem to have unlimited potential."

After earning a bachelor's degree in accounting from Brigham Young University, a law degree from UCLA, and a master's degree in tax law from New York University, Elder Callister practiced law for 34 years with a family law firm in the Los Angeles, California, area.

Applying principles learned in both professional and personal matters, Elder Callister says, "The practice of law has been a good discipline to learn to analyze the core of a problem, recognize not to jump to conclusions, and understand you need to get all the facts before making a decision. Likewise, I believe the Lord expects you to do your homework in the process of seeking personal revelation."

Elder Callister and his wife, Kathryn Louise Saporiti, met while attending BYU and were married in the Los Angeles California Temple on December 20, 1968. They are the parents of six children. ■

Elder Kent D. Watson

Of the Seventy



In looking back over his life, Elder Kent D. Watson has always felt he was a believer and that he always had a testimony, but there was one event that had a profound effect on him.

"The decision I made as a young man to go on a mission has affected all facets of my life," says Elder Watson, recently called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

He received a call to the Southern Far East Mission and served in Taiwan. "As a result of my mission I changed from being a mediocre student to a good student," he continues. "It was because of my mission that I met my wife. I was introduced to her by a former mission companion. It was because of my mission that I studied Chinese. It was because of my mission that I found a profession in which I had an enjoyable career. It was because of my mission that our family has had the opportunity to live in several cities."

Elder Watson earned bachelor's and master's degrees

from Brigham Young University and spent his professional career as a certified public accountant, eventually becoming the chair and CEO of an international accounting firm.

Elder Watson also had the opportunity to return to his mission area with his wife to serve as president of the Taiwan Taichung Mission and interim president of the Taiwan Kaohsiung Mission. Working with so many young missionaries has given him confidence in the strength of the youth in the Church.

Elder Watson has served in a number of other Church callings, including as a bishop and a counselor in a stake presidency.

Elder Watson was born in Cedar City, Utah, USA, to Lorenzo Dee Watson and Joyce Watson on May 8, 1943. He married Connie Lingmann on August 23, 1967, in the Salt Lake Temple, and they are the parents of five children. ■

Elaine S. Dalton

Young Women General President



As a young girl, Elaine Schwartz Dalton found great joy in dancing.

But as a young mother with six children, she found that dancing seemed impractical, so she started running as a way to enjoy movement each day. At first she would run 10 steps and then walk 10 steps until she could run a mile. Since that modest start, she has run 18 marathons.

"Running gives me a time to be still in my mind and contemplate life," says Sister Dalton. It's one hour when she can think about the scriptures she has just read.

Sister Dalton was born in Ogden, Utah, USA, on November 1, 1946, to Melvin Leo Schwartz and Emma Martin Schwartz. She married Stephen Eugene Dalton on September 13, 1968, in the Salt Lake Temple. She earned her bachelor's degree in English from Brigham Young University. She has served on the Young Women general board and as first and second counselor in the Young

Women general presidency. She has also served as a stake Young Women president, Laurel adviser, adviser to a young single adult Relief Society, and Relief Society teacher.

As the new Young Women general president, Sister Dalton says, "My key message to the young women of the Church is the same thing they hear from their parents every time they walk out the front door: 'Remember who you are.'"

She hopes to help young women understand that they are daughters of their Heavenly Father, who loves them. "They say that in the Young Women theme every week, but for so many young women, it has not entered their hearts," Sister Dalton says. "Once a young woman understands that she is a daughter of God, it defines all her other relationships."

She encourages them to be pure. "One of the major works they have been reserved to perform is temple work," she says. "No wonder Satan is raging, distracting young women from being worthy. Be pure. There is power in a pure life." ■

Mary N. Cook

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency



As she repeats the Young Women theme with young women throughout the world, Mary Nielsen Cook, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, is grateful to know that she is a daughter of God.

"My father passed away in November 2007, and I believe the Lord was willing to carry me through this trying time," Sister Cook says. "We teach our young women that we are all daughters of God; this sacred experience reconfirmed that He knows and loves me individually."

Born on June 8, 1951, to Kenneth Nielsen and Fern Swan Nielsen, Sister Cook grew up in Midvale, Utah, USA, and offers her experiences as an example to young women who face times of uncertainty in their lives.

"I was not married until I was 37, and I know a lot of the concerns and fears that women face," Sister Cook says. "You have to have faith and the courage to continue moving forward,

despite uncertainty."

She married Richard E. Cook on July 16, 1988, in the Salt Lake Temple and is now the stepmother to 4 children and step-grandmother to 17 grandchildren.

"Having a good education has been a great help in my life," says Sister Cook, who received bachelor's and master's degrees in speech pathology and audiology as well as an EdS (education specialist) degree from Brigham Young University. "It has better prepared me to serve as a mother and to serve in the Church."

Sister Cook served as a full-time missionary in Mongolia with her husband, whom she calls her best friend. She previously served as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency and on the Young Women general board.

Sister Cook believes it is important to focus on individuals. "We want each young woman to stand as a witness of Christ," Sister Cook says. "Those aren't just words. We need to help give her the will and the confidence to be a righteous daughter of God." ■

Ann M. Dibb

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency



When asked what experiences best prepared her for being called as the second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, Ann Monson Dibb responds with a broad smile and a generous laugh, "Motherhood! And being a daughter!" She quickly adds, "And applying the Savior's teachings in my life."

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on June 30, 1954, to Thomas S. Monson and Frances J. Monson, Sister Dibb has learned through many sweet experiences that "Heavenly Father is mindful of what I need" but that "we have to trust in the Lord and in His timetable."

She hopes that young women will apply one of her favorite passages of scripture, Proverbs 3:5-7: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

While attending Brigham Young University, Sister Dibb

met her future husband, Roger Dibb, whom she married in the Salt Lake Temple on March 5, 1974. They are the parents of four children. Sister Dibb focused her energies on taking care of the home. However, when her children were a little older and she felt the timing was right, she began taking a few classes each year, eventually graduating with a degree in elementary education.

Sister Dibb has served in a variety of Church callings in each of the auxiliaries. She was serving on the Young Women general board prior to her calling to the Young Women general presidency.

She believes that truth resonates with all people, and that we can all feel the Spirit through the teachings of our leaders. "I learned as a young woman that you can hold onto the prophet's testimony as you make the effort to gain your own," she says. "Everyone has access to that if you open your heart and want to be taught by the Spirit." ■

Conference Experiences

The Monday following general conference, subscribers to *LDS Gems*, a daily inspirational e-mail, received an invitation to share experiences of the solemn assembly and other sessions of conference. The e-mails that follow represent the more than 1,200 responses the Church magazines received.

On Saturday morning just before conference began, our home was buzzing with our Saturday routine, when our television was suddenly filled with the scenes and sounds of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the opening of general conference. We gathered our two young sons and kept them in “pause mode” long enough for the opening prayer. Then when President Uchtdorf came to the pulpit to begin the solemn assembly, the atmosphere changed in our home. The four of us knelt in front of the television, the Spirit filling our home. I felt momentarily embarrassed that we were present for this sacred moment casually dressed in a room made chaotic with the morning playtime. And yet, as we stood in turn to raise our hands in sustaining support, my heart filled with utter joy. Finally we stood as a family, even the toddler raising his right arm, and there was a sense of holiness that one usually feels in the temple. We stood together witnessing what the Spirit confirmed was right.

Moments later, the whirlwind of children began again and we had to turn the volume up to hear the speakers, but that brief moment of peace remained in our home and hearts.

Christina N., Utah, USA

Well, I can't say enough about how I felt at this conference. The Spirit was so strong; I was able to watch in my home, and I could feel the Spirit all around me. I



haven't been very active lately, and watching President Monson welcoming me back into the fold really made me feel like he was talking right to me. I was so pleased with all the talks. Heavenly Father was speaking through them, and I could really feel it. I know that I am not perfect, but I really felt that I need to go back to church so that I can be fed and start fresh. I just couldn't get enough of the conference this time. I have already gone back on the Internet to listen again. I am hoping to attend my ward next week.

Jeanne U.

It was wonderful to hear the conference messages, particularly that of the living prophet, President Monson, despite the fact that I am halfway across the world in a land where the gospel still cannot be preached. But through technology I was still able to participate and feel of the Spirit and be edified. Hearing the counsels given and the testimonies borne, however, made me wish even more that all our brothers and sisters could partake of the bounteous blessings of the gospel. I pray this happens soon.

Janryll E.

The most powerful conference moment for me was the talk given by President Uchtdorf about the plane

crash that occurred in Antarctica. That hit me deeply on how a matter of such tiny proportion can have the lasting effect that may be irreversible with lasting consequences. It also showed no matter how far off we may stroll from the straight and narrow, we need to admit we have wronged and seek forgiveness from our ever-loving Heavenly Father. He cares deeply for our well-being and loves us when we can accept our wrongs, learn from them, and grow spiritually from them.

Orion H., Colorado, USA

My good friend at school asked me what I did over the weekend. I told her, and the topic of general conference paved the way for her follow-up questions about my beliefs and the Book of Mormon. I was able to use the Articles of Faith to share some essential differences of our Church from other Christian churches, and I was also able to clearly explain what the Book of Mormon is and how it relates to the Bible.

I am so grateful for this opportunity I had! I know the Spirit guided me with my answers to her questions, and if it weren't for general conference, I probably wouldn't have been in the right spirit to readily answer them.

Ellie W., England



As a convert in 1972, I became inactive for over 20 years. I became active again about 10 years ago and have been sealed in the temple to my husband, also a convert. I loved President Hinckley and felt that no prophet could take his place. As President Monson was offered for our sustaining vote, I felt angry and somewhat bitter, because I didn't think he could do the job. Oh, how stiffnecked I was! When President Monson rose to speak, I looked into his eyes and watched his every movement. There was the very same sparkle and gleam in his eyes that had been in my beloved President Hinckley's! I was overcome with joy and recognition of the presence of the Holy Spirit in this man—my new prophet, seer, and revelator.

Mary Lou R., New Mexico, USA

I was motivated by the Spirit during conference to change my life. Although I have been "active" in the Church all my life, I have not been motivated by the Spirit as fully as I was in this conference. I feel that every message was directed especially to me. I am going to reach out to my family and friends and ask forgiveness for any and all offenses I have done to them and forgive others who have offended me. I am going to

treat others as I would like to be treated and follow the Savior's example as closely as I can.

Delbert C., USA

Our family rotates family home evening duty. My husband's was the Monday following the conference. During Sunday afternoon's session, Elder Zwick gave a lesson on maintaining our standards. My husband used this talk to emphasize the need to maintain our standards. I had downloaded the MP3 file from the Web site. We sat together as a family and listened once again to the talk. This gave us an opening to bring up the topics of



choosing friends, making good decisions, and making a life plan with our 14-year-old son.

Gwen D., Washington, USA

During the solemn assembly, I felt so privileged, humbled, and grateful to be able to participate from my home and to stand and raise my hand to sustain our new prophet, President Monson. It brought tears to my eyes when my son, who just recently turned 12, was able to stand with the Aaronic Priesthood and my daughter with the Young Women to do the same. The sweetness of the Spirit that confirmed to my heart that Thomas S. Monson is the man the Lord wants at the head of His Church today was so strong! There is no doubt in my mind as to the divinity of his sacred calling.

Maridee H., New Mexico, USA



Being single, during Elder Ballard's talk, my mind and heart were touched with ways in which I can prepare myself to better love my future wife and better serve her and lift her burdens, that they may be light. Nothing in my life right now is more important than finding a wife I can marry in the temple and raising a family to her recognition and praise. I am excited and look forward to loving her with all my heart, might, mind, and strength.

Mike S., Florida, USA

For more about conference, including additional photos, go to www.liabona.lds.org and www.ensign.lds.org. To subscribe to LDS Gems, go to www.lds.org/gems



The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Seated (from left) are President Boyd K. Packer, Elder L. Tom Perry, Elder Russell M. Nelson, Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder M. Russell Ballard, and Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin. Standing (from left) are Elder Richard G. Scott, Elder Robert D. Hales, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Elder David A. Bednar, Elder Quentin L. Cook, and Elder D. Todd Christofferson.



"I invoke [our Redeemer's] blessings upon you, my beloved brothers and sisters, in your homes, in your work, in your service to one another and to the Lord Himself. Together we shall move forward doing His work," said President Thomas S. Monson during the 178th Annual General Conference. "I pledge my life, my strength—all that I have to offer—in serving Him and in directing the affairs of His Church in accordance with His will and by His inspiration."