



John S. Tanner

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

From his childhood, John Sears Tanner has found joy in learning.

That excitement has extended to his education, career, and his many opportunities to teach the gospel: first as a missionary in the Brazil South Mission and then as a bishop, stake president, high councilor, Gospel Doctrine teacher, president of the Brazil São Paulo South Mission (which concludes this summer), and now as first counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

“When [teaching] happens right, the Holy Ghost is there and you feel the excitement of learning; you feel like you’re on sacred ground,” President Tanner says.

Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on July 27, 1950, to William Coats Tanner Jr. and Athelia Sears Tanner, President Tanner grew up in South Pasadena, California, USA, as the fifth of 13 children. His parents created a rich educational environment in the home, including a strong gospel core. “I don’t remember learning anything at church that I hadn’t already learned at home,” he says. He also developed a love for literature that was nurtured as he pursued an English degree from Brigham Young University and a doctorate in English at the University of California, Berkeley.

While at BYU he met Susan Winder. The two developed a strong friendship from which they later built a romantic relationship. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1974. Together they have raised five children.

President Tanner began his academic career as an assistant professor at Florida State University. He became a member of the faculty at BYU in 1982; he has worked there ever since as an assistant, associate, and full professor of English, and as department chairman and academic vice president.

The most important part of gospel teaching, he says, comes from something he learned early in his career: teaching must come not from a place of fear or ambition but from a place of love—from charity, the pure love of Christ. ■



Devin G. Durrant

Second Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

When Devin G. Durrant was called as the second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, it’s possible many Church members flashed back to his glory days in a Brigham Young University basketball jersey.

Sports, of course, have played an important role in President Durrant’s life. He even spent a season competing in the NBA against the top players in the United States. But he’s been much more than a star athlete: a missionary in Madrid, Spain, a husband, a father, a grandfather, an author, a businessman, a faithful member, and the Texas Dallas Mission president for the past two and a half years.

President Durrant, born October 20, 1960, in Brigham City, Utah, says his childhood home played a pivotal role in preparing him for each of those life roles. His parents, George and Marilyn Durrant, were gifted teachers.

“Certainly, they taught through their words—but really, the great teachings that I experienced in the home were by watching them live their lives.”

President Durrant and his wife, Julie Mink Durrant, know well the importance of strong teachers in preparing future missionaries.

“[Future missionaries] are being well taught by their parents in the home and by their teachers at church and in excellent seminary and institute programs.”

The Sunday School program, he added, allows instructors and students of all ages “to teach in the Savior’s way.”

President and Sister Durrant were married in the Salt Lake Temple on April 23, 1983, and are the parents of six children and have six grandchildren.

Prior to his calling as a mission president, he served as a bishop, stake presidency counselor, stake Sunday School presidency member, and institute instructor.

He earned an undergraduate degree in American Studies from Brigham Young University and an MBA from the University of Utah. He is the owner of a real estate investment company. ■