

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2018

# Ensign



## General Conference Addresses

Two New Apostles  
Sustained

New General Authorities  
and General Auxiliary  
Officers Sustained

Seven New Temples  
Announced





The First Presidency

*President Russell M. Nelson (center) was sustained as the 17th President of the Church during the 188th Annual General Conference.  
His counselors in the First Presidency are President Dallin H. Oaks (left) and President Henry B. Eyring.*

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# The 188th Annual General Conference

## Saturday Morning, March 31, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Mervyn B. Arnold.  
Benediction: Elder W. Mark Bassett.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: "Sweet Is the Work," *Hymns*, no. 147; "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," *Hymns*, no. 19, arr. Wilberg; "We Listen to a Prophet's Voice," *Hymns*, no. 22, arr. Murphy; "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81; "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, 57, arr. Murphy; "My Redeemer Lives," *Hymns*, no. 135, arr. Wilberg.

## Saturday Afternoon, March 31, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks.  
Invocation: Elder Mark A. Bragg.  
Benediction: Elder Peter F. Meurs.  
Music by a combined choir from institutes of religion in Salt Lake City, Utah; Marshall McDonald and Richard Decker, directors; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: "Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice," *Hymns*, no. 21, arr. Matthews and Goodliffe; "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, 129, arr. McDonald and Parker; "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239; medley, arr. McDonald: "As Zion's Youth in Latter Days," *Hymns*, no. 256, and "The Iron Rod," *Hymns*, no. 274; "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270, arr. Wilberg.

## Saturday Evening, March 31, 2018, General Priesthood Session

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: M. Joseph Brough.  
Benediction: Elder K. Brett Nattress.  
Music by a priesthood choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho; Randall Kempton, Paul Busselberg, and David Lozano-Torres, directors; Brian Mathias and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Busselberg, pub. by Sharpe Music Press; "Father in Heaven," *Hymns*, no. 133, arr. Busselberg, pub. by Sharpe Music Press; "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72; "Rise Up, O Men of God," *Hymns*, no. 324.

## Sunday Morning, April 1, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Russell M. Nelson.  
Invocation: Elder S. Mark Palmer.  
Benediction: Elder Joaquin E. Costa.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: "On This Day of Joy and Gladness," *Hymns*, no. 64; "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," *Hymns*, no. 200, arr. Wilberg; "He Sent His Son," *Children's Songbook*, 34–35, arr. Hoffheins; "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66; "He Is Risen!" *Hymns*, no. 199, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford University Press.

## Sunday Afternoon, April 1, 2018, General Session

Conducting: President Dallin H. Oaks.  
Invocation: Elder Weatherford T. Clayton.  
Benediction: Elder Valeri V. Córdón.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott and Brian Mathias, organists: "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy," *Hymns*, no. 335, arr. Murphy; "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd," *Hymns*, no. 221, arr. Wilberg; "Redeemer of

Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6; "Love One Another," *Hymns*, no. 308, arr. Wilberg; "Let Us All Press On," *Hymns*, no. 243, arr. Elliott, pub. by Jackman.

## Conference Talks Available

To access general conference talks online in many languages, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org) and select a language. Talks are also available on the Gospel Library mobile app. Generally within six weeks following general conference, English video and audio recordings are available at distribution centers. Information on general conference in accessible formats for members with disabilities is available at [disability.lds.org](http://disability.lds.org).

## On the Cover

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# Ensign

A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF  
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May 2018 Volume 48 • Number 5

**The First Presidency:** Russell M. Nelson,  
Dallin H. Oaks, Henry B. Eyring

**The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:**

M. Russell Ballard, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf,  
David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson,  
Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson,  
Dale G. Renlund, Gerrit W. Gong, Ulisses Soares

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## Highlights from the 188th Annual General Conference

**T**his general conference was historic for many reasons, including the restructuring of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and the beginning of a new era of ministering. But perhaps most anticipated was our individual opportunity to sustain President Russell M. Nelson as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### A Solemn Assembly

When we stood and sustained a new prophet and President, our raised hands weren't counted by any human record keeper; they were noted in heaven as a covenant with God.

Throughout conference, we saw evidence that this is the Savior's Church, led by Him through His servants. We witnessed the position a living prophet takes in relation to each of us—not standing between us and the Savior but standing beside us and pointing the way to the Savior. We experienced the opportunity to receive “a personal witness that

President Nelson's call is from God” and to anchor “our souls to the Lord Jesus Christ [by] listening to those He sends” (see Elder Neil L. Andersen on page 26).

- You can learn more about President Nelson in the 16-page special supplement accompanying the May 2018 *Ensign* and *Liahona*.

### Sustaining New Leaders

In addition to sustaining President Nelson, we sustained more than 70 new leaders.

- Find a list of those sustained, including the new Area Seventies, on pages 6–8, 28–29.
- Read brief biographies of new leaders beginning on page 121.

### Changes to Quorums and Ministering

Though overseen by prophets, the changes announced during conference “are examples of the revelation [from God] that has guided this Church from its beginning,” Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said (see page 101).

- Read the instructions on restructuring quorums from President Nelson, Elder D. Todd Christofferson, and Elder Ronald A. Rasband, beginning on page 54.
- Read the instructions on ministering from President Nelson, Elder Holland, and Sister Jean B. Bingham, beginning on page 100.
- Find more information about these changes and instructional resources in the news section on pages 132–33.

### Additional Temples

To punctuate “our message to the world” that “we invite all of God's children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life,” President Nelson announced seven new temples.

- Find out where the seven new temples will be located, on page 133. ■









**Presented by President Henry B. Eyring**  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# Solemn Assembly

**B**rothers and sisters, President Nelson has asked that I handle the business of the solemn assembly for which we are gathered today.

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 of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, each of these occasions has been designated as a formal solemn assembly of the body of the Church to express the voice of the Church.

We will vote by quorums and groups. Wherever you are, you are invited to stand only when requested and express by your uplifted hand that 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 the Assembly Hall on Temple Square will observe the voting in those facilities. In stake centers, a member of the stake presidency will observe the voting. If anyone casts a contrary vote, those individuals should contact their respective stake presidents.

We will now proceed. Again, please stand and vote only when asked to do so.

We ask members of the First Presidency to please arise.

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

Those of the First Presidency in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Dallin Harris Oaks as First Counselor and Henry Bennion Eyring as Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

Those members of the First Presidency in favor may manifest it.







It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain Dallin Harris Oaks as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Melvin Russell Ballard as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Members of the First Presidency in favor may manifest it.

It is proposed that the First Presidency sustain as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: M. Russell Ballard, Jeffrey R. Holland, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen, Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, Dale G. Renlund, Gerrit Walter Gong, and Ulisses Soares.

Members of the First Presidency, please manifest it.

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

Members of the First Presidency will please manifest it.

The First Presidency will now be seated.

We invite Elder Gong and Elder Soares to take their places with the Quorum of the Twelve.

The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles only, including Elder Gong and Elder Soares, will please arise.

It is proposed that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles sustain Russell Marion Nelson 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 by the First Presidency.

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in favor, please manifest it.

You may be seated.

We ask the General Authority Seventies and members of the Presiding Bishopric to please arise.

It is proposed that all General Authority Seventies and members of the Presiding Bishopric sustain Russell Marion Nelson 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 by the First Presidency.

All General Authority Seventies and members of the Presiding Bishopric who are in favor, please manifest it.

You may be seated.

We ask the following to please arise wherever you may be throughout the world: all Area Seventies, ordained patriarchs, high priests, and elders.

It is proposed that Russell Marion Nelson 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 so manifest it.

Please 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 Russell Marion Nelson 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.

You may be seated.

Will all those holding only the Aaronic Priesthood—that is, all ordained priests, teachers, and deacons—please arise.

It is proposed that Russell Marion Nelson 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.

You may be seated.

Will the young women who are ages 12 to 18 please arise.

It is proposed that Russell Marion

Nelson 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.

You may be seated.

We now ask that the entire membership, wherever you are located, including all of those who have previously stood, please arise.

It is proposed that Russell Marion Nelson 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 indicate by the uplifted hand.

Any opposed may so indicate.

You may all be seated.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your love and support. ■



**By President M. Russell Ballard**  
Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Precious Gifts from God

*Life can be filled with faith, joy, happiness, hope, and love when we exercise the smallest amount of real faith in Christ.*

**M**y brothers and sisters, we have just participated in a solemn assembly, a practice that can be traced back to the Bible when ancient Israel gathered to feel the Lord's presence and celebrate His blessings.<sup>1</sup> We are privileged to live in a time when this ancient practice has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>2</sup> I urge you to record in your personal journal what you felt regarding this most sacred occasion in which you have taken part.

Recently, we said goodbye to our dear friend and prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Although we all miss him, we are deeply grateful the Lord has called a new prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, to preside over His Church. In an orderly way we have now begun a new chapter in our Church history. This is a precious gift from God.

As we each sustained President Nelson by our uplifted hands, we stood as witnesses before God and acknowledged that he is President Monson's rightful successor. With our raised hands, we promised to hearken unto his voice as he receives direction from the Lord.

The Lord has said:

"Thou shalt give heed unto all his [meaning the President of the Church] words and commandments which he

shall give unto you as he receiveth them . . . ;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."<sup>3</sup>

I have known our new prophet-president for over 60 years. I have served with him in the Quorum of the Twelve for 33 years, and I am a witness that the hand of the Lord has been preparing him to become our presiding apostle and prophet to administer all the keys of the holy priesthood on the earth. May each one of us completely sustain him and his counselors and follow their direction. We also warmly

welcome Elder Gong and Elder Soares as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

After Jesus's Resurrection, an event we celebrate this glorious Easter weekend, He appeared to His disciples and said, "Peace be unto you: *as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*"<sup>4</sup>

Notice a twofold action—God sends His Son. The Son sends His servants—mortal men and women—to accomplish Their work.

We should not be surprised to know that those individuals called to do the Lord's work are not humanly perfect. Stories in the scriptures detail incidents about men and women who were called of God to accomplish a great work—good sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father called to serve in their assignments in the Church, striving to do their best, but none of them yet perfect. The same is true of us today.

Given the reality of our human weaknesses and shortcomings, how do we move forward in supporting and sustaining each other? It begins with faith—real, sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in the Savior is the first principle of the doctrine and gospel of Christ.







Several years ago I was visiting the Holy Land. As we drove by a mustard plant, the director of the BYU Jerusalem Center asked if I had ever seen a mustard seed. I hadn't so we stopped. He showed me the seeds from the mustard plant. They were surprisingly small.

I then remembered Jesus's teachings: "For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."<sup>5</sup>

If we have faith as small as a mustard seed, the Lord can help us remove the mountains of discouragement and doubt in the tasks ahead of us as we serve with God's children, including family members, Church members, and those who are not yet members of the Church.

Brothers and sisters, life can be filled with faith, joy, happiness, hope, and love when we exercise the smallest amount of real faith in Christ—even a mustard seed of faith.

Elder George A. Smith remembered some advice the Prophet Joseph Smith gave to him: "He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I

ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last."<sup>6</sup>

We should remember Paul's declaration: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."<sup>7</sup> Knowing this is another precious gift from God.

In addition to the gifts I have mentioned, there are many, many more. I speak now of just a few—the gift of the Sabbath day, the sacrament, service to others, and the matchless gift from God of our Savior.

The power of the Sabbath day is to experience in church and at home the delight, the joy, and the warmth of feeling the Spirit of the Lord without any kind of distraction.

Too many allow themselves to almost live online with their smart devices—screens illuminating their faces day and night and earbuds in their ears blocking out the still, small voice of the Spirit. If we do not find time to unplug, we may miss opportunities to hear the voice of Him who said, "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>8</sup> Now, there is nothing wrong with taking advantage of the advances in the technologies inspired by the Lord, but we must be wise in their use. Remember the gift of the Sabbath day.

The blessing of receiving the sacrament in sacrament meeting must never

become routine or just something we do. It is only 70 minutes in a whole week when we can pause and find more peace, joy, and happiness in our lives.

Partaking of the sacrament and renewing our covenants is a sign by us to the Lord that we do always remember Him. His Atonement is a gracious gift from God.

The privilege of service to Heavenly Father's children is another opportunity to follow the example of His Beloved Son by serving one another.

Some service opportunities are formal—in our family, our Church callings, and our participation in community service organizations.

Church members—both men and women—should not hesitate, if they desire, to run for public office at any level of government wherever they live. Our voices are essential today and important in our schools, our cities, and our countries. Where democracy exists, it is our duty as members to vote for honorable men and women who are willing to serve.

Many opportunities to serve are informal—without assignment—and come as we reach out to others we meet in life's journey. Remember Jesus taught the lawyer that we should love God and our neighbor as ourselves using the good Samaritan as an example.<sup>9</sup>

Service opens a window by which we understand the life and ministry of Christ. He came to serve, as the scriptures teach, "even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>10</sup>

Peter may have given the best description of the Savior's mortal ministry in five words when he referred to Jesus, "who went about doing good."<sup>11</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ is our most precious of all gifts from God. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”<sup>12</sup>

Nephi captured the importance of our Savior when he declared, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”<sup>13</sup> We must keep Christ as the center of our lives at all times and in all places.

We should remember that it is His name that appears on our places of worship; we are baptized in His name; and we are confirmed, ordained, endowed, and sealed in marriage in His name. We partake of the sacrament and promise to take upon ourselves His name—and become true Christians. Finally, we are asked in the sacrament prayer to “always remember him.”<sup>14</sup>

As we prepare for Easter Sunday tomorrow, let us remember that Christ is supreme. He is the righteous Judge, our faithful Advocate, our blessed Redeemer, the Good Shepherd, the promised Messiah, a true Friend, and much, much more. He is indeed a very precious gift to us from our Father.

In our discipleship, we have many demands, concerns, and assignments. However, some activities must always be at the heart of our Church membership. “Wherefore,” the Lord commands, “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.”<sup>15</sup>

This is the Church in action! This is pure religion! This is the gospel in its true sense as we succor, lift, and strengthen those in spiritual and temporal need! Doing so requires us to

visit them and to assist them,<sup>16</sup> that their testimonies of faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement will be anchored in their hearts.

May the Lord help and bless us to treasure our many precious gifts from God, including our membership in His restored Church. I pray we will be filled with love for our Heavenly Father’s children and be able to see their needs and be willing to answer their questions and concerns about the gospel in clear and kind ways that will increase understanding and appreciation for one another.

I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior. What we will be taught at this general conference comes to us by inspiration from apostles and prophets, from General Authorities, and sister leaders who are General Officers of

the Church. May the joy and peace of the Lord abide with each one is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992), “Solemn Assemblies,” 3:1390–91.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:70.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
4. John 20:21; emphasis added.
5. Matthew 17:20.
6. George A. Smith, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 235.
7. Philippians 4:13.
8. Psalm 46:10.
9. See Luke 10:25–37.
10. Matthew 20:28.
11. Acts 10:38.
12. John 14:6.
13. 2 Nephi 25:26.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5; emphasis added.
16. See James 1:27.







By Elder Brian K. Taylor  
Of the Seventy

# Am I a Child of God?

*How can each of us experience the power of understanding our divine identity? It begins by seeking to know God, our Father.*

Recently I went to church with my sweet mother at our old rock chapel. Drawn to little voices coming from the same Primary room I attended decades ago, I walked in the back and observed caring leaders teach this year's theme: "I Am a Child of God."<sup>1</sup> I smiled as I remembered patient and loving teachers who, during our singing time back then, would often look at me—that rambunctious little boy at the end of the pew—as if to say, "Is he *really* a child of God? And who has sent him here?"<sup>2</sup>

I invite each of us to open our hearts to the Holy Ghost, who "beareth

witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."<sup>3</sup>

President Boyd K. Packer's words are plain and precious: "You are a child of God. He is the father of your spirit. Spiritually you are of noble birth, the offspring of the King of Heaven. Fix that truth in your mind and hold to it. However many generations in your mortal ancestry, no matter what race or people you represent, the pedigree of your spirit can be written on a single line. You are a child of God!"<sup>4</sup>

"When you . . . see our Father," Brigham Young described, "you will see a being with whom you have long been

acquainted, and he will receive you into his arms, and you will be ready to fall into his embrace and kiss him."<sup>5</sup>

## The Great War over Divine Identity

Moses learned of his divine heritage talking with the Lord face-to-face. Following that experience, "Satan came tempting" with subtle yet vicious intent to distort Moses's identity, "saying: Moses, *son of man*, worship me. And . . . Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a *son of God*."<sup>6</sup>

This great war over divine identity rages fiercely as Satan's proliferating arsenal aims to destroy our belief in and knowledge of our relationship with God. Thankfully, we have been blessed with clear vision and understanding of our true identity from the beginning: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,"<sup>7</sup> and His living prophets proclaim, "Each [human being] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny."<sup>8</sup>

Coming to know these truths with certainty<sup>9</sup> helps us overcome trials, troubles, and afflictions of every kind.<sup>10</sup> When asked, "How can we help those struggling with [a personal challenge]?" an Apostle of the Lord instructed, "Teach them their identity and their purpose."<sup>11</sup>

## "The Most Powerful Knowledge I Possess"

These powerful truths were life-changing for my friend Jen,<sup>12</sup> who as a teenager caused a serious car accident. Though her physical trauma was severe, she felt exquisite pain because the other driver lost her life. "Someone lost their mom, and it was my fault," she says. Jen, who just days before stood and recited, "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us,"<sup>13</sup> now questioned, "How could He love *me*?"



"The physical suffering passed," she says, "but I didn't think I would ever heal from the emotional and spiritual wounds."

In order to survive, Jen hid her feelings deeply, becoming distant and numb. After a year, when she was finally able to talk about the accident, an inspired counselor invited her to write the phrase "I am a child of God" and say it 10 times daily.

"Writing the words was easy," she recalls, "but I couldn't speak them. . . . That made it real, and I didn't really believe God wanted me as His child. I would curl up and cry."

After several months, Jen was finally able to complete the task every day. "I poured out my whole soul," she says, "pleading with God. . . . Then I began to believe the words." This belief allowed the Savior to begin mending her wounded soul. The Book of Mormon brought comfort and courage in His Atonement.<sup>14</sup>

"Christ felt my pains, my sorrows, my guilt," Jen concludes. "I felt God's pure love and had never experienced anything so powerful! Knowing I am a child of God is the most powerful knowledge I possess!"

#### Seeking to Know God, Our Father

Brothers and sisters, how can each of us experience the power of understanding our divine identity? It begins by seeking to know God, our Father.<sup>15</sup> President Russell M. Nelson testified, "Something powerful happens when a child of God seeks to know more about Him and His Beloved Son."<sup>16</sup>

Learning of and following the Savior helps us come to know the Father. "Being . . . the express image of his [Father],"<sup>17</sup> Jesus taught, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."<sup>18</sup> Christ's every



word and deed reveals the true nature of God and our relationship to Him.<sup>19</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught, "With blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought—His Father. 'Abba,' He cried, 'Papa.'"<sup>20</sup>

As Jesus earnestly sought His Father in Gethsemane, so young Joseph Smith, in 1820, prayerfully sought God in the Sacred Grove. After reading "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,"<sup>21</sup> Joseph retired to pray.

"I kneeled down," he later wrote, "and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. . . .

". . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head. . . .

". . . I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air.

One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—[Joseph,] *This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"<sup>22</sup>

As we follow the examples of the Savior and the Prophet Joseph in

earnestly seeking God, we will come to understand in a very real way, as Jen did, that our Father knows us by name, that we are His children.

To mothers, especially young mothers, who often feel overwhelmed and underwater while striving to raise "a sin-resistant generation,"<sup>23</sup> never underestimate your central role in God's plan. In stressful moments—perhaps when you are chasing little ones and a charred smell from the kitchen informs you that your lovingly prepared dinner is now a burnt offering—know that God sanctifies your most difficult days.<sup>24</sup> "Fear thou not; for I am with thee,"<sup>25</sup> He peacefully reassures. We honor you as you fulfill the hope of Sister Joy D. Jones, who stated, "Our children deserve to understand their divine identity."<sup>26</sup>

I invite each of us to seek God and His Beloved Son. "Nowhere," President Nelson directed, "are those truths taught more clearly and powerfully than in the Book of Mormon."<sup>27</sup> Open its pages and learn that God does "all things for [our] welfare and happiness";<sup>28</sup> that He



is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness”;<sup>29</sup> and that “all are alike unto [Him].”<sup>30</sup> When you feel hurt, lost, scared, upset, sad, hungry, or hopelessly abandoned in life’s extremities<sup>31</sup>—open the Book of Mormon, and you will come to know that “[God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so].”<sup>32</sup>

Coming to know our Father changes everything, especially our hearts, as His gentle Spirit confirms our true identity and great worth in His sight.<sup>33</sup> God walks with us along the covenant path as we seek Him through prayerful pleadings, scriptural searchings, and obedient strivings.

#### The Excellency of God’s Character—My Witness

I love the God of my fathers,<sup>34</sup> “the Lord God Almighty,”<sup>35</sup> who weeps with us in our sorrows, patiently chastens our unrighteousness, and rejoices when we seek to “give away all [our] sins to know [Him].”<sup>36</sup> I worship Him, who is ever “a father of the fatherless”<sup>37</sup> and a companion to the companionless. Gratefully, I testify that I have come to know God, my Father, and bear witness of the perfections, attributes, and “excellency of [His] character.”<sup>38</sup>

That every one of us might truly understand and cherish our “noble birthright”<sup>39</sup> as a child of God in coming to know Him, “the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He] hath sent”<sup>40</sup> is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2018 Outline for Sharing Time: *I Am a Child of God*, lds.org/manual/primary.
2. See “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
3. Romans 8:16.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “To Young Women and



- Men,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 54.
5. Brigham Young, “Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 1, 1856, 235.
6. Moses 1:12–13; emphasis added.
7. Genesis 1:26.
8. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
9. Joseph Smith stated, “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God” (from the King Follett sermon, Apr. 7, 1844; in *History of the Church*, 6:305).
10. See Alma 36:3, 27.
11. Russell M. Nelson, in Tad R. Callister, “Our Identity and Our Destiny” (Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 14, 2012), 1, speeches.byu.edu.
12. Name has been changed.
13. “Young Women Theme,” *Young Women Personal Progress* (2009), 3, PersonalProgress.Lds.org.
14. See 2 Nephi 2; 6–9; Mosiah 2–5; 14–16; Alma 7; 34; 39–42; Helaman 14; 3 Nephi 11; Moroni 7.
15. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 40).
16. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 61.
17. Hebrews 1:3.
18. John 5:19.
19. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70–73.
20. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Hands of the Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 16; *Liahona*, July 1999, 19.
21. James 1:5.
22. Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17.
23. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 97.
24. See “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85, verse 4.
25. Isaiah 41:10.
26. Joy D. Jones, in Marianne Holman Prescott, “2018 Primary Theme ‘I Am a Child of God’ Teaches Children Their Divine Identity,” Church News section of LDS.org, Jan. 5, 2018, news.lds.org.
27. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” 61.
28. Helaman 12:2; see also 2 Nephi 26:24.
29. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42.
30. 2 Nephi 26:33.
31. I love the moving story of the old pioneer man who, following his experience crossing the plains, testified: “We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? *Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities*” (in David O. McKay, “Pioneer Women,” *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, 8).
32. George Q. Cannon, “Remarks,” *Deseret Evening News*, Mar. 7, 1891, 4.
33. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
34. See Acts 5:30; 22:14; “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand,” *Hymns*, no. 78.
35. Moses 1:3; see Revelation 15:3; 21:22–23; 3 Nephi 4:32; Doctrine and Covenants 109:77; 121:4.
36. Alma 22:18.
37. Psalm 68:5; see also James 1:27.
38. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42.
39. “Carry On,” *Hymns*, no. 255.
40. John 17:3.



By Elder Larry J. Echo Hawk  
Of the Seventy

# Even as Christ Forgives You, So Also Do Ye

*We can all receive unspeakable peace and partnering with our Savior as we learn to freely forgive those who have trespassed against us.*

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

“And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

“And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

“He is not here, but is risen.”<sup>1</sup>

Tomorrow, the Easter Sabbath, we will remember in a special way what Jesus Christ has done for 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.”<sup>2</sup> Eventually, we will be resurrected as He was, to live forever.

Through the miracle of the sacred Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can also receive the gift of forgiveness of

our sins and misdeeds, if we accept the opportunity and responsibility of repentance. And by receiving necessary ordinances, keeping covenants, and obeying commandments, we can gain eternal life and exaltation.

Today, I want to focus on forgiveness, an essential and precious gift offered to us from our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

On a December night in 1982, my wife, Terry, and I were awakened by a phone call to our home in Pocatello, Idaho. As I answered the phone, I



heard only sobbing. Finally, my sister's struggling voice said, “Tommy is dead.”

A 20-year-old drunk driver, speeding at more than 85 miles (135 km) per hour, recklessly ran a stoplight in a suburb of Denver, Colorado. He crashed violently into the car driven by my youngest brother, Tommy, instantly killing him and his wife, Joan. They were returning home to a young daughter after a Christmas party.

My wife and I immediately flew to Denver and made our way to the mortuary. We gathered with my parents and siblings and grieved the loss of our beloved Tommy and Joan. We had lost them to a senseless criminal act. Our hearts were broken, and anger toward the young offender began to well up inside me.

Tommy had served as a lawyer in the United States Department of Justice and was on a course to be a strong advocate for protection of Native American lands and natural resources for years to come.

After some time had passed, a court sentencing hearing was held for the young man found responsible for vehicular manslaughter. In their ongoing grief and sorrow, my parents and oldest sister, Katy, attended the hearing. The drunk driver's parents were also there, and after the hearing concluded, they sat on a bench and wept. My parents and sister were sitting nearby as they sought to gain control of their own emotions. After a moment, my parents and sister stood up and walked to the driver's parents and offered them words of comfort and forgiveness. The men shook hands; the women held hands; there was deep sorrow and tears for all and a recognition that both families had suffered immensely. Mom, Dad, and Katy led the way with their quiet strength and courage and showed





our family what forgiveness looks like.

That outreach of forgiveness in those moments caused my own heart to soften and opened a pathway to healing. Over time I learned how to have a forgiving heart. Only with the help of the Prince of Peace was my painful burden lifted. My heart will always miss Tommy and Joan, but forgiveness now allows me to remember them with unfettered joy. And I know we will be together again as a family.

I am not suggesting that we condone unlawful conduct. We know full well that individuals are to be held accountable for their criminal acts and civil wrongdoings. However, we also know that, as sons and daughters of God, we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. We are to be forgiving even when it seems others may not warrant our forgiveness.

The Savior taught:

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”<sup>3</sup>

We can all receive unspeakable peace and partnering with our Savior as we learn to freely forgive those who have trespassed against us. This

partnering brings the Savior’s power into our lives in an unmistakable and never-to-be-forgotten way.

The Apostle Paul counseled:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, . . . bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another . . . : *even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord Himself declared:

“Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.”<sup>5</sup>

The teachings of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, are clear; the sinner must be willing to forgive others if he or she hopes to obtain forgiveness.<sup>6</sup>

Brothers and sisters, are there people in our lives who have hurt us? Do we harbor what seem like fully justified feelings of resentment and anger? Are we letting pride keep us from forgiving and letting go? I invite all of us to forgive completely and let healing occur from within. And even if forgiveness

doesn’t come today, know that as we desire it and work for it, it will come—just as it eventually did for me after my brother’s death.

Please also remember that an essential element of forgiveness includes forgiving ourselves.

“He who has repented of his sins,” the Lord said, “the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>7</sup>

I plead for all of us this day to remember and follow the example of Jesus Christ. On the cross at Golgotha, in His anguish, He uttered these words: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>8</sup>

By having a forgiving spirit and acting upon it, like my parents and oldest sister, we can realize the promise of the Savior: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>9</sup>

I witness this peace will come into our lives as we heed the teachings of Jesus Christ and follow His example by forgiving others. As we forgive, I promise the Savior will strengthen us, and His power and joy will flow into our lives.

The tomb is empty. Christ lives. I know Him. I love Him. I am grateful for His grace, which is the strengthening power that is sufficient to heal all things. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 24:1–6.
2. John 3:16.
3. Matthew 6:14–15.
4. Colossians 3:12–13; emphasis added.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10.
6. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 110.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
8. Luke 23:34.
9. John 14:27.



By Elder Gary E. Stevenson  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Heart of a Prophet

*We can rejoice that the Lord's prophet is in place and that the Lord's work is being done in the way that He has divinely prescribed.*

I have fervently prayed that the Holy Ghost will be with each of us today on this heavenly occasion. What we have collectively witnessed has been most impressive as the 17th prophet of this dispensation has been sustained in solemn assembly.

As I sought guidance to know the topic the Lord would have me address today, my mind was directed to a recent conversation with the newly called First Presidency. In this discussion, one of the counselors shared

words to this effect: "I deeply hope that the membership of the Church can comprehend the magnitude of what has taken place with the calling of our new prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, and the significance and sacredness of the solemn assembly that will take place at general conference." He further observed, "It has been 10 years, and many, especially the youth of the Church, do not remember or have not experienced this before."



This caused me to reflect on experiences I have had. The first prophet I remember is President David O. McKay. I was 14 years old when he passed away. I remember a sense of loss that accompanied his passing, the tears in my mother's eyes, and the sorrow felt by our whole family. I remember how the words "Please bless President David O. McKay" fell out of my lips so naturally in my prayers that if I wasn't mindful, even following his passing, I would find myself using those same words. I wondered if my heart and mind would transition to the same feeling and conviction for the prophets succeeding him. But almost like parents who love each of their children, I found a love for, connection with, and testimony of President Joseph Fielding Smith, who followed President McKay, and for each prophet thereafter: Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and today President Russell M. Nelson. I fully sustained each prophet with uplifted hand—and uplifted heart.

As each of our beloved prophets has passed on, it is only natural to feel a sense of sorrow and loss. But our sadness is tempered by the joy and hope that come as we experience one of the great blessings of the Restoration: the calling and sustaining of a living prophet on the earth.

To that end, I will speak to this divine process as observed over the past 90 days. I will describe it in four segments: first, the passing of our prophet and the dissolution of the First Presidency; second, the period of time awaiting the reorganization of the new First Presidency; third, the calling of the new prophet; and fourth, the sustaining of the new prophet and First Presidency in solemn assembly.





### The Passing of a Prophet

On January 2, 2018, our dear prophet Thomas S. Monson passed to the other side of the veil. He will forever have a place in our hearts. President Henry B. Eyring offered sentiments at President Monson's passing which succinctly describe our feelings: "The hallmark of his life, like the Savior's, will be his individual concern in reaching out to the poor, the sick—even all individuals—worldwide."<sup>1</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball explained:

"As one star sinks behind the horizon, another comes into the picture, and death spawns life.

"The work of the Lord is endless. Even when a powerful leader dies, not for a single instant is the Church without leadership, thanks to the kind Providence who gave his kingdom continuity and perpetuity. As it already has happened . . . before in this dispensation, a people reverently close a grave, dry their tears, and turn their faces to the future."<sup>2</sup>

### The Apostolic Interregnum

The period of time between the death of a prophet and the reorganization of the First Presidency is referred to as an "apostolic interregnum." During this period, the Quorum of the

Twelve, under the leadership of the quorum president, jointly holds the keys to administer the leadership of the Church. President Joseph F. Smith taught, "There is always a head in the Church, and if the Presidency of the Church are removed by death or other cause, then the next head of the Church is the Twelve Apostles, until a presidency is again organized."<sup>3</sup>

The most recent interregnum period began when President Monson passed away on January 2 and ended 12 days later on Sunday, January 14. On that Sabbath morning, the Quorum of the Twelve met in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple in a spirit of fasting and prayer, under the presiding direction of President Russell M. Nelson, the senior Apostle and President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

### Calling of a New Prophet

In this sacred and memorable meeting, following a well-established precedent in unity and unanimity, the Brethren were seated by seniority in a semicircle of 13 chairs and raised their hands first to sustain the organization of a First Presidency and then to sustain President Russell Marion Nelson as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This sustaining was followed by the Quorum of the Twelve

gathering in a circle and placing hands upon the head of President Nelson to ordain and set him apart, with the next most-senior Apostle acting as voice.

President Nelson then named his counselors, President Dallin Harris Oaks, President Henry Bennion Eyring, with President Oaks as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and President Melvin Russell Ballard as the Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following similar sustaining votes, each of these Brethren was set apart to his respective office by President Nelson. This was a deeply sacred experience, with an outpouring of the Spirit. I offer to you my absolute witness that the will of the Lord, for which we fervently prayed, was powerfully manifest in the activities and events of that day.

With the ordination of President Nelson and the reorganization of the First Presidency, the apostolic interregnum ended, and the newly constituted First Presidency began to operate without, remarkably, even one second of interruption in governing the Lord's kingdom on the earth.

### Solemn Assembly

This morning, this divine process is culminated in accordance with scriptural mandate outlined in the Doctrine

and Covenants: “For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith,”<sup>4</sup> and “three Presiding High Priests, . . . upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.”<sup>5</sup>

Elder David B. Haight described a previous occurrence of what we participated in today:

“We are witnesses to and participants in a most sacred occasion—a solemn assembly to act upon heavenly things. As in olden times, there has been much fasting and prayer offered by the Saints throughout the world that they may receive an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord, which is so much in evidence . . . on this occasion this morning.

“A solemn assembly, as the name implies, denotes a sacred, sober, and reverent occasion when the Saints assemble under the direction of the First Presidency.”<sup>6</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we can rejoice—even shout, “Hosanna!”—that the Lord’s mouthpiece, a prophet of God, is in place and that the Lord is pleased that His work is being done in the way that He has divinely prescribed.

#### President Russell M. Nelson

This divinely ordained process leads to another divinely called prophet. Just as President Monson was one of the grandest inhabitants to grace this earth, so is President Nelson. He has been profoundly prepared and specifically tutored by the Lord to lead us at this time. It is a great blessing to now have dear President Russell M. Nelson as our loving and devoted prophet—the 17th President of the Church in this final dispensation.

President Nelson is truly a remarkable man. I had the privilege of serving in the Quorum of the Twelve with him as my quorum president for just over two years. I have traveled with him and marvel at his energy, as one must move quickly to keep up with his pace! In total he has visited 133 countries in his lifetime.

His outreach is to all, young and old. He seems to know everyone and is particularly gifted at remembering names. All who know him feel that they are his favorite. And so it is with each of us—because of his genuine love and concern for everyone.

My primary association with President Nelson has been in ecclesiastical roles, yet I have also become familiar with the professional life that President Nelson led before he was called as a General Authority. As many of you know, President Nelson was a world-renowned heart surgeon and, early in

his medical career, a pioneer developer of the heart-lung machine. He was on the research team that supported the first open-heart operation on a human being, in 1951, using a heart-lung bypass. President Nelson performed a heart operation on President Spencer W. Kimball not long before President Kimball became the prophet.

Interestingly, as President Nelson’s call to the Twelve 34 years ago ended a *professional medical career* of strengthening and repairing hearts, it began a *ministry as an Apostle* devoted to strengthening and repairing hearts of countless tens of thousands around the world, each having been lifted and healed by his words and acts of wisdom, service, and love.

#### A Christlike Heart

When I envision a Christlike heart in daily practice, I see President Nelson. I have not met anyone who exemplifies





this trait at a higher level than he does. It has been a remarkable tutelage for me to be in the position to observe firsthand the manifestations of the Christlike heart of President Nelson.

Within weeks of my call to the Twelve in October 2015, I had the opportunity to get an up-close glimpse of the past professional life of President Nelson. I was invited to attend an event where he was honored as a pioneer of heart surgery. When I entered the venue, I was astonished to see the large number of professionals there to honor and recognize the work that President Nelson had done many years before as a medical doctor and surgeon.

That evening numerous professionals stood and expressed their respect and admiration for President Nelson's outstanding contribution to his medical specialty. As impressive as each of the presenters was in describing President Nelson's various accomplishments, I was even more spellbound by a conversation I struck up with a man seated next to me. He did not know who I was, but he knew President Nelson as Dr. Nelson, director of the thoracic surgery residency program at a medical school in 1955.

This man was President Nelson's former student. He shared many memories. Most interesting was his description of President Nelson's teaching style, which, he said, brought with it a large measure of notoriety. He explained that much of the teaching of heart surgery residents was conducted in the operating room. There, residents observed and performed surgery under faculty supervision, as a laboratory classroom. He shared that the operating room environment under certain faculty surgeons was chaotic, competitive, pressure filled, and even ego driven. This man described it as a

difficult environment, sometimes even demeaning. As a result, resident surgeons even felt their careers were often on the line.

He then explained the unique environment found in President Nelson's operating room. It was peaceful, calm, and dignified. Residents were treated with deep respect. However, following the demonstration of a procedure, Dr. Nelson expected the highest standard of performance from each of the residents. This man further described how the best patient outcomes and the best surgeons came out of Dr. Nelson's operating room.

This is no surprise to me at all. This is what I have observed firsthand and been truly blessed by in the Quorum of the Twelve. I feel like I have been, in a sense, one of his "residents in training."

President Nelson has an exceptional way of teaching others and offering correction in a positive, respectful, and uplifting manner. He is the embodiment of a Christlike heart and an example to us all. From him we learn that in any circumstance we find ourselves, our conduct and hearts can be in accordance with the



principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We now have the great blessing to sustain our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. Throughout his life, he has magnified his numerous roles as student, father, professor, husband, doctor, priesthood leader, grandfather, and Apostle. He fulfilled these roles then—and continues to do so—with the heart of a prophet.

Brothers and sisters, what we have witnessed and participated in today, a solemn assembly, leads to my witness that President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord's living mouthpiece for all humankind. I also add my testimony of God the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of His role as our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, in Marianne Holman Prescott, "Apostles Share Thoughts about President Thomas S. Monson on Social Media," Church News section of LDS.org, Jan. 12, 2018, news.lds.org.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 118.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 223.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 28:13.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 107:22.
6. David B. Haight, "Solemn Assemblies," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 14.



By Elder Lynn G. Robbins  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Until Seventy Times Seven

*Amid a life full of stumbling blocks and imperfection, we all are grateful for second chances.*

Mistakes are a fact of life. Learning to skillfully play the piano is essentially impossible without making thousands of mistakes—maybe even a million. To learn a foreign language, one must face the embarrassment of making thousands of mistakes—maybe even a million. Even the world’s greatest athletes never stop making mistakes.

“Success,” it has been said, “isn’t the absence of failure, but going from failure to failure without any loss of enthusiasm.”<sup>1</sup>

With his invention of the light bulb, Thomas Edison purportedly said, “I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.”<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Kettering called failures “finger posts on the road to achievement.”<sup>3</sup> Hopefully, each mistake we make becomes a lesson in wisdom, turning stumbling blocks into stepping-stones.

Nephi’s unwavering faith helped him go from failure to failure until he finally obtained the brass plates. It took Moses 10 attempts before he finally found success in fleeing Egypt with the Israelites.

We may wonder—if both Nephi and Moses were on the Lord’s errand,

why didn’t the Lord intervene and help them achieve success on their first try? Why did He allow them—and why does He allow us—to flounder and fail in our attempts to succeed? Among many important answers to that question, here are a few:

- First, the Lord knows that “these things shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good.”<sup>4</sup>

- Second, to allow us to “taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good.”<sup>5</sup>
- Third, to prove that “the battle is the Lord’s,”<sup>6</sup> and it is only by His grace that we can accomplish His work and become like Him.<sup>7</sup>
- Fourth, to help us develop and hone scores of Christlike attributes that cannot be refined except through opposition<sup>8</sup> and “in the furnace of affliction.”<sup>9</sup>

So, amid a life full of stumbling blocks and imperfection, we all are grateful for second chances.

In 1970, as a new freshman at BYU, I enrolled in a beginning course on the essentials of physics taught by Jae Ballif, an outstanding professor. After finishing each unit of the course, he would administer an exam. If a student received a C and wanted a better grade, Professor Ballif would allow the student to take a modified exam covering the same material. If the student received a B on the second attempt and was still unsatisfied, he or she could





take the test a third time and a fourth, and so on. By allowing me numerous second chances, he helped me excel and finally earn an A in his class.

He was an uncommonly wise professor who inspired his students to keep trying—to consider failure as a tutor, not as a tragedy, and to not fear failure but to learn from it.

Recently I telephoned this great man 47 years after taking his physics course. I asked him why he was willing to allow students unlimited attempts to improve their grade. His response: “I wanted to be on the same side as the students.”

While we are grateful for second chances following mistakes, or failures

of the mind, we stand all amazed at the Savior’s grace in giving us second chances in overcoming sin, or failures of the heart.

No one is more on our side than the Savior. He allows us to take and keep retaking His exams. To become like Him will require countless *second chances* in our day-to-day struggles with the natural man, such as controlling appetites, learning patience and forgiveness, overcoming slothfulness, and avoiding sins of omission, just to name a few. If to err is human nature, how many failures will it take us until our nature is no longer human but divine? Thousands? More likely a million.



Knowing that the strait and narrow path would be strewn with trials and that failures would be a daily occurrence for us, the Savior paid an infinite price to give us as many chances as it would take to successfully pass our mortal probation. The opposition which He allows can often seem insurmountable and almost impossible to bear, yet He doesn’t leave us without hope.

To keep our hope resilient as we face life’s trials, the Savior’s grace is ever ready and ever present. His grace is a “divine means of help or strength, . . . an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation *after* they have expended their own best efforts.”<sup>10</sup> His grace and His loving eye are upon us throughout our entire journey as He inspires, lightens burdens, strengthens, delivers, protects, heals, and otherwise “succor[s] his people,” even as they stumble along the strait and narrow path.<sup>11</sup>

Repentance is God’s ever-accessible gift that allows and enables us to go from failure to failure without any loss of enthusiasm. Repentance isn’t His backup plan in the event we might fail. Repentance *is* His plan, knowing that we will. This is the gospel of repentance, and as President Russell M. Nelson has observed, it will be “a lifetime curriculum.”<sup>12</sup>

In this lifetime curriculum of repentance, the sacrament is the Lord’s designated way of providing continual access to His forgiveness. If we partake with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He proffers us weekly pardon as we progress from failure to failure along the covenant path. For “notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them.”<sup>13</sup>

But just how many times will He forgive us? How long is His long-suffering?



On one occasion Peter asked the Savior, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”<sup>14</sup>

Presumably, Peter thought *seven* was a sufficiently high number to emphasize the folly of forgiving too many times and that benevolence should have its limits. In response, the Savior essentially told Peter to not even count—to not establish limits on forgiveness.

“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.”<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, the Savior was not establishing an upper limit of 490. That would be analogous to saying that partaking of the sacrament has a limit of 490, and then on the 491st time, a heavenly auditor intercedes and says, “I’m so sorry, but your repentance card just expired—from this point forward, you’re on your own.”

The Lord used the math of seventy times seven as a metaphor of His infinite Atonement, His boundless love, and His limitless grace. “Yea, and *as often* as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.”<sup>16</sup>

That doesn’t mean that the sacrament becomes a license to sin. That’s one reason this phrase was included in

the book of Moroni: “But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, *with real intent*, they were forgiven.”<sup>17</sup>

Real intent implies *with real effort* and real change. “Change” is the principal word the Guide to the Scriptures uses to define *repentance*: “A change of mind and heart that brings a fresh attitude toward God, oneself, and life in general.”<sup>18</sup> That kind of change results in spiritual *growth*. Our success, then, isn’t *going* from failure to failure, but *growing* from failure to failure without any loss of enthusiasm.

Concerning *change*, consider this simple insight: “Things that don’t change remain the same.” This obvious truth isn’t meant to insult your intelligence but is the profound wisdom of President Boyd K. Packer, who then added, “And when we are through changing—*we’re through*.”<sup>19</sup>

Because we don’t want to be *through* until we become as our Savior is,<sup>20</sup> we need to continue getting up each time we fall, with a desire to keep growing and progressing despite our weaknesses. In our weakness, He reassures us, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”<sup>21</sup>

Only with time-lapse photography or growth charts can we discern our

physical growth. Likewise, our spiritual growth is usually imperceptible except through the rearview lens of time. It would be wise to regularly take an introspective look through that lens to recognize our progress and inspire us to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope.”<sup>22</sup>

I am eternally grateful for the loving-kindness, patience, and long-suffering of Heavenly Parents and the Savior, who allow us countless second chances on our journey back to Their presence. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. This quote has been attributed to various authors, including Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill.
2. Thomas Edison, in Zorian Rotenberg, “To Succeed, You Must Fail, and Fail More,” Nov. 13, 2013, [insightsquared.com](http://insightsquared.com).
3. Charles F. Kettering, in Thomas Alvin Boyd, *Charles F. Kettering: A Biography* (1957), 40. This quotation has also often been attributed to C. S. Lewis.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7. Even the Savior “learned . . . obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). While these scriptures are referring to tribulation and suffering because of our environment or unfavorable conditions, the mistakes we make are also for our good if we learn from them.
5. Moses 6:55.
6. 1 Samuel 17:47; see also 1 Nephi 3:29.
7. See Jacob 4:7.
8. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
9. Isaiah 48:10; 1 Nephi 20:10.
10. Bible Dictionary, “Grace”; emphasis added.
11. Alma 7:12.
12. Russell M. Nelson, in Dallin H. Oaks and Neil L. Andersen, “Repentance” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2015), 11.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 101:9.
14. Matthew 18:21.
15. Matthew 18:22.
16. Mosiah 26:30; emphasis added.
17. Moroni 6:8; emphasis added.
18. Guide to the Scriptures, “Repent, Repentance,” [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).
19. Boyd K. Packer, Kingsland Georgia Stake conference, Aug. 1997.
20. See 3 Nephi 27:27.
21. 2 Corinthians 12:9; see also Ether 12:27.
22. 2 Nephi 31:20.





By Elder Neil L. Andersen  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Prophet of God

*A prophet does not stand between you and the Savior. Rather, he stands beside you and points the way to the Savior.*

I add my welcome to Elder Gerrit Gong and Elder Ulisses Soares to the unparalleled brotherhood of the Quorum of the Twelve.

In sustaining President Russell M. Nelson as the Lord's prophet and as President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we were part of a divinely decreed solemn assembly—solemn because the events of this past hour have been anticipated in the heavens since before the world was. The Lord Jesus Christ, who directs His work, has today through President Eyring presented His prophet, His anointed leader, to us, His covenant people, allowing us publicly to manifest our willingness to sustain him and follow his counsel.

To those millions of members who are not here with us in the Conference Center, I want you to know that the Spirit of the Lord in this building during the sustaining of President Nelson was exactly as you would have anticipated it—full of spiritual power. But our heaven-directed assembly is not in this Conference Center alone but across the world—in chapels in Asia, Africa, and North America; in homes in Central and South America and Europe; on covered patios in the Pacific and the islands of the sea. This assembly is in whatever part of the world you might be, even

if your connection is no more than the audio of your smartphone. Our raised hands were not counted by our bishops, but they were surely noted in heaven, as our covenant is with God, and our action is recorded in the book of life.

## The Lord Chooses His Prophet

The selection of a prophet is made by the Lord Himself. There is no campaigning, no debates, no posturing for position, no dissension, distrust, confusion, or commotion. I too confirm that the power of heaven was with us in the upper room of the temple as we prayerfully encircled President Nelson and felt the undeniable approval of the Lord upon him.

President Nelson's selection to serve as God's prophet was made long ago. The Lord's words to Jeremiah also apply to President Nelson: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."<sup>1</sup> Only three years ago, Elder Nelson, at age 90, was fourth in seniority, with two of the three senior Apostles being younger in age than he was. The Lord, who controls life and death, selects His prophet. President Nelson, at age 93, is in amazing health. We hope he will be with us for another decade or two, but for now we are trying to persuade him to stay off the ski slopes.

While we sustain the prophet as the Lord's anointed, let it be clear that we worship only God, our Heavenly Father, and His divine Son. It is through the merits, the mercy, and the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, that we can one day enter again into Their presence.<sup>2</sup>

## Why We Follow the Prophet

But Jesus also taught an important truth about the servants He sends to us. "He that receiveth you," He said,



Carcassonne, France



President Nelson with his 118th great-grandchild.

“receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”<sup>3</sup>

The most important role of the Lord’s prophet is to teach us of the Savior and lead us to Him.

There are many logical reasons to follow President Russell M. Nelson. Even those not of our faith would call him brilliant. He was a medical doctor at age 22, an esteemed cardiac surgeon, and a renowned pioneer in the development of open-heart surgery.

Most would acknowledge his wisdom and judgment: nine decades of learning about life and death, living unselfishly, loving and teaching God’s children in every corner of the globe, and maturing with the experiences of having 10 children, 57 grandchildren, and 118 great-grandchildren (this last number changes frequently; a great-grandson was born only this past Wednesday).

Those who know him well would speak of President Nelson facing the difficulties of life with faith and courage. When cancer took the life of his 37-year-old daughter, Emily, leaving a loving husband and five small children, I heard him say, “I was her father, a medical doctor, and an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I had to bow my head and acknowledge, ‘Not my will but thine be done.’”<sup>4</sup>

#### A Watchman on the Tower

Although we admire all of these noble qualities, why do we follow President Nelson? Why do we follow the prophet? Because the Lord Jesus Christ has called him and designated him as His watchman on the tower.

Carcassonne is a remarkable walled city in France that has stood since medieval times. Tall towers surge upward from its protected walls, built for watchmen who stood on those towers day and night, keeping their attention riveted in the distance for the enemy. When the watchman saw an enemy approaching, his warning voice protected the people of Carcassonne from the impending danger they could not see.

A prophet is a watchman on the tower, protecting us from spiritual dangers we may not see.

The Lord said to Ezekiel, “I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word [from] my mouth, and warn them from me.”<sup>5</sup>

We often speak of our need to follow the prophet, but consider this heavy burden the Lord places upon His prophet: “If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked . . . , [and] that wicked man . . . die in his iniquity; . . . his blood will I require at thine hand.”<sup>6</sup>

#### A Greater Personal Witness

We embrace President Nelson as we would have embraced Peter or Moses if we had lived in their day. God told Moses, “I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”<sup>7</sup> We listen to the Lord’s prophet with the faith that his words are “from [the Lord’s] own mouth.”<sup>8</sup>

Is this blind faith? No, it is not. We each have a spiritual witness of the truthfulness of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. By our own will and choice, we raised our hand this morning, declaring our desire to sustain the Lord’s prophet with our “confidence, faith, and prayer[s]”<sup>9</sup> and to follow his counsel. We have the privilege as Latter-day Saints to receive







a personal witness that President Nelson's call is from God. While my wife, Kathy, has known President Nelson personally for nearly three decades and has no question about his divine mantle, upon his setting apart, she began reading all his general conference talks of the past 34 years, praying for an even deeper assurance of his prophetic role. I promise you that this greater witness will come to you as you humbly and worthily seek it.

Why are we so willing to follow the voice of our prophet? For those diligently seeking eternal life, the prophet's voice brings spiritual safety in very turbulent times.

We live on a planet clamoring with a million voices. The internet, our smartphones, our bloated boxes of entertainment all plead for our attention and thrust their influence upon us, hoping we will buy their products and adopt their standards.

The seemingly endless array of information and opinion remind us of the scriptural warnings of being "tossed to and fro,"<sup>10</sup> "driven with the wind,"<sup>11</sup> and overcome by the "cunning craftiness" of those who "lie in wait to deceive."<sup>12</sup>

Anchoring our souls to the Lord Jesus Christ requires listening to those He sends. Following the prophet in a world of commotion is like being wrapped in a soothing, warm blanket on a freezing cold day.

We live in a world of reason, debate, argument, logic, and explanation. Questioning, "Why?" is positive in so many aspects of our lives, allowing the power of our intellect to guide a multitude of choices and decisions we face each day.

But the Lord's voice often comes without explanation.<sup>13</sup> Long before academics studied the impact of infidelity upon trusting spouses and children, the Lord declared, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."<sup>14</sup> Beyond relying on the intellect alone, we treasure the gift of the Holy Ghost.

#### Don't Be Surprised

The prophet's voice, while spoken kindly, will often be a voice asking us to change, to repent, and to return to the Lord. When correction is needed, let's not delay. And don't be alarmed when the prophet's warning voice counters popular opinions of the day. The

mocking fireballs of annoyed disbelievers are always hurled the moment the prophet begins to speak. As you are humble in following the counsel of the Lord's prophet, I promise you an added blessing of safety and peace.

Don't be surprised if at times your personal views are not initially in harmony with the teachings of the Lord's prophet. These are moments of learning, of humility, when we go to our knees in prayer. We walk forward in faith, trusting in God, knowing that with time we will receive more spiritual clarity from our Heavenly Father. One prophet described the incomparable gift of the Savior as "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father."<sup>15</sup> The surrender of our will to God's will is, in fact, not surrender at all but the beginning of a glorious victory.

Some will try to overly dissect the prophet's words, struggling to determine what is his prophetic voice and what is his personal opinion.

In 1982, two years before being called as a General Authority, Brother Russell M. Nelson said: "I never ask myself, 'When does the prophet speak as a prophet and when does he not?' My interest has been, 'How can I be more like him?'" And he added, "My [philosophy is to] stop putting question marks behind the prophet's statements and put exclamation points instead."<sup>16</sup> This is how a humble and spiritual man chose to order his life. Now, 36 years later, he is the Lord's prophet.

#### Increasing Your Faith in the Savior

In my personal life, I have found that as I prayerfully study the words of the prophet of God and carefully, with patience, spiritually align my will with his inspired teachings, my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ always increases.<sup>17</sup> If we choose to set his counsel aside and

determine that we know better, our faith suffers and our eternal perspective is clouded. I promise you that as you remain resolute in following the prophet, your faith in the Savior will increase.

The Savior said, “All the prophets . . . have testified of me.”<sup>18</sup>

A prophet does not stand between you and the Savior. Rather, he stands beside you and points the way to the Savior. A prophet’s greatest responsibility and most precious gift to us is his sure witness, his certain knowledge, that Jesus is the Christ. Like Peter of old, our prophet declares, “[He is] the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>19</sup>

In a future day, looking back on our mortality, we will rejoice that we walked the earth at the time of a living prophet. At that day, I pray that we will be able to say:

We listened to him.

We believed him.

We studied his words with patience and faith.

We prayed for him.

We stood by him.

We were humble enough to follow him.

We loved him.

I give you my solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and that President Russell M. Nelson is His anointed prophet upon the earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jeremiah 1:5.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:8.
3. Matthew 10:40.
4. Personal memory; also see Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 235.
5. Ezekiel 33:7.
6. Ezekiel 33:8.
7. Exodus 4:12.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 107:22.

10. Ephesians 4:14.

11. James 1:6.

12. Ephesians 4:14.

13. President Dallin H. Oaks once said:

“In a 1988 interview . . . I explained my attitude toward attempts to supply mortal reasons for divine revelation:

“If you read the scriptures with this question in mind, ‘Why did the Lord command this or why did he command that,’ you find that in less than one in a hundred commands was any reason given. It’s not the pattern of the Lord to give reasons. We [mortals] can put reasons to revelation. We can put reasons to commandments. When we do, we’re on our own. Some people put reasons to the [revelation] . . . , and they turned out to be spectacularly wrong. There is a lesson in that. . . . I decided a long time ago that I had faith in the command and I had no faith in the reasons that had been suggested for it.’ . . .

“ . . . The whole set of reasons seemed to me to be unnecessary risk taking. . . . Let’s don’t make the mistake that’s been made in the past, . . . trying to put reasons to revelation. The reasons turn out to be man-made to a great extent. The revelations are what we sustain as the will of the Lord and that’s where safety lies” (*Life’s Lessons Learned* [2011], 68–69).

14. Exodus 20:14.

15. Mosiah 15:7.

16. Russell M. Nelson, in Lane Johnson, “Russell M. Nelson: A Study in Obedience,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1982, 24; *Tambuli*, Jan. 1983, 26.

17. President Henry B. Eyring said: “Another fallacy is to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. The best time to have decided to help Noah build the ark was the first time he asked. Each time he asked after that, each failure to respond would have lessened sensitivity to the Spirit. And so each time his request would have seemed more foolish, until the rain came. And then it was too late” (“Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).

18. 3 Nephi 20:24.

19. Matthew 16:16; see also John 6:69.







Saturday Afternoon Session | March 31, 2018

**Presented by President Dallin H. Oaks**  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

**W**e note that the statistical report which has traditionally been presented during this session of April general conference will now be published on LDS.org immediately following this meeting and will be included in the conference issue of the Church magazines.

I will now present some changes in Church leadership and the General Officers and Area Seventies of the Church for sustaining vote, after which Brother Kevin R. Jergensen, managing director of the Church Auditing Department, will read the audit report.

Given their calls to serve as new members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, it is proposed that we release Elders Gerrit W. Gong and Ulisses Soares from serving as members of the Presidency of the Seventy.

In addition, we extend releases to Elders Craig C. Christensen, Lynn G. Robbins, and Juan A. Uceda from their service as members of the Presidency of the Seventy, to be effective August 1, 2018.

All who wish to express appreciation to these Brethren for their devoted service, please so manifest.

It is proposed that we release the following from their service as Area Seventies: Steven R. Bangerter, Matthew L. Carpenter, Mathias Held,

David P. Homer, Kyle S. McKay, R. Scott Runia, and Juan Pablo Villar.

Those who wish to join us in expressing appreciation to these Brethren for their willing service may do so with the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release, with

heartfelt gratitude, Sisters Bonnie L. Oscarson, Carol F. McConkie, and Neill F. Marriott as the Young Women General Presidency. We likewise extend releases to members of the Young Women general board, who have served so well.

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

It is proposed that we release Sister Bonnie H. Cordon from serving as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

Those who wish to show appreciation to Sister Cordon may do so by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we sustain the following to serve as members of the



Presidency of the Seventy, effective immediately: Elders Carl B. Cook and Robert C. Gay.

The following will also serve as members of the Presidency of the Seventy, effective on August 1, 2018: Elders Terence M. Vinson, José A. Teixeira, and Carlos A. Godoy.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new General Authority Seventies: Steven R. Bangerter, Matthew L. Carpenter, Jack N. Gerard, Mathias Held, David P. Homer, Kyle S. McKay, Juan Pablo Villar, and Takashi Wada.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies: Richard K. Ahadjie, Alberto A. Álvarez, Duane D. Bell, Glenn Burgess, Víctor R. Calderón, Ariel E. Chaparro, Daniel Córdova, John N. Craig, Michael Cziesla, William H. Davis, Richard J. DeVries, Kylar G. Dominguez, Sean Douglas, Michael A. Dunn, Kenneth J. Firmage, Edgar Flores, Silvio Flores, Saulo G. Franco, Carlos A. Genaro, Mark A. Gilmour, Sergio A. Gómez, Roberto Gonzalez, Virgilio Gonzalez, Spencer R. Griffin, Matthew S. Harding, David J. Harris, Kevin J. Hathaway, Richard Holzapfel, Eustache Ilunga, Okechukwu I. Imo, Peter M. Johnson, Michael D. Jones, Pungwe S. Kongolo, George Kenneth G. Lee, Aretimio C. Maligon, Edgar A. Mantilla, Lincoln P. Martins, Clement M. Matswagothata, Carl R. Maurer, Daniel S. Mehr II, Glen D. Mella, Isaac K. Morrison, Yutaka Nagatomo, Allistair B. Odgers, R. Jeffrey Parker, Victor P. Patrick, Denis E. Pineda, Henrique S. Simplicio, Jeffrey H. Singer, Michael L. Staheli, Djarot Subiantoro, Jeffrey K. Wetzel,

Michael S. Wilstead, Helmut Wondra, and David L. Wright.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Bonnie H. Cordon to serve as Young Women General President, with Michelle Lynn Craig as First Counselor and Rebecca Lynn Craven

as Second Counselor.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain Lisa Rene Harkness to serve as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

## Church Auditing Department Report, 2017

**Presented by Kevin R. Jergensen**

Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

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

**D**ear Brethren: As directed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes—composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric—authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. Church entities disburse funds in accordance with approved budgets, policies, and procedures.

Church Auditing, which consists of credentialed professionals and is independent of all other Church departments, has responsibility to perform audits for the purpose of providing reasonable assurance regarding contributions received, expenditures made, and safeguarding of Church assets.

Based upon audits performed, Church Auditing is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2017 have been recorded and administered in accordance with approved Church budgets, policies, and accounting practices. The Church follows the practices taught to its members of living within a budget, avoiding debt, and saving against a time of need.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department

Kevin R. Jergensen

Managing Director ■





By Elder David A. Bednar  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and General Auxiliary Presidencies as presently constituted.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

President Nelson, the voting has been noted. We invite those who may have opposed any of the proposals to contact their stake presidents.

With the sustaining that has just taken place, we now have 116 General Authorities. Nearly 40 percent of them were born outside the United States—in Germany, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, South Korea, Guatemala, Argentina, Italy, Zimbabwe, Uruguay, Peru, South Africa, American Samoa, England, Puerto Rico, Australia, Venezuela, Kenya, the Philippines, Portugal, Fiji, China, Japan, Chile, Colombia, and France.

Brothers and sisters, we thank you for your continued faith and prayers in behalf of the leaders of the Church.

We now invite the new General Authority Seventies, the new Young Women General Presidency, and Sister Harkness of the Primary General Presidency to take their seats on the rostrum. ■

## Meek and Lowly of Heart

*Meekness is a defining attribute of the Redeemer and is distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint.*

I rejoice in the sacred opportunity to sustain our Church leaders, and I wholeheartedly welcome Elder Gong and Elder Soares to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The ministries of these faithful men will bless individuals and families all over the world, and I am eager to serve with and learn from them.

I pray the Holy Ghost will teach and enlighten us as we learn together about a vital aspect of the Savior's divine nature<sup>1</sup> that each of us should strive to emulate.

I will present several examples that highlight this Christlike quality before

identifying the specific attribute later in my message. Please listen carefully to each example and consider with me possible answers to the questions I will pose.

### Example #1. The Rich Young Man and Amulek

In the New Testament, we learn about a rich young man who asked Jesus, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"<sup>2</sup> The Savior first admonished him to keep the commandments. The Master next gave the young man an additional requirement customized to his specific needs and circumstances.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."<sup>3</sup>

Compare the response of the rich young man with the experience of Amulek, as described in the Book of Mormon. Amulek was an industrious and prosperous man with many



kindreds and friends.<sup>4</sup> He described himself as a man who was called many times but would not hear, a man who knew the things of God but would not know.<sup>5</sup> A basically good man, Amulek was distracted by worldly concerns much like the rich young man described in the New Testament.

Even though he had previously hardened his heart, Amulek obeyed the voice of an angel, received the prophet Alma in his home, and provided nourishment to him. He was spiritually awakened during Alma's visit and was called to preach the gospel. Amulek then forsook "all his gold, and silver, and his precious things . . . for the word of God, [and was] rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred."<sup>6</sup>

What do you think explains the difference between the responses of the rich young man and Amulek?

#### Example #2. Pahoran

During a perilous period of war described in the Book of Mormon, an exchange of epistles occurred between Moroni, the captain of the Nephite armies, and Pahoran, the chief judge and governor of the land. Moroni, whose army was suffering because of inadequate support from the government, wrote to Pahoran "by the way of condemnation"<sup>7</sup> and accused him and his fellow leaders of thoughtlessness, slothfulness, neglect, and even being traitors.<sup>8</sup>

Pahoran easily might have resented Moroni and his inaccurate allegations, but he did not. He responded compassionately and described a rebellion against the government about which Moroni was not aware. And then Pahoran declared:



"Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul. . . .

". . . In your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart."<sup>9</sup>

What do you think explains Pahoran's measured reply to Moroni's accusations?

#### Example #3. President Russell M. Nelson and President Henry B. Eyring

In general conference six months ago, President Russell M. Nelson described his response to President Thomas S. Monson's invitation to study, ponder, and apply the truths contained in the Book of Mormon. He said: "I have tried to follow his counsel. Among other things, I've made lists of what the Book of Mormon *is*, what it *affirms*, what it *refutes*, what it *fulfills*, what it *clarifies*, and what it *reveals*. Looking at the Book of Mormon through these lenses has been an insightful and inspiring exercise! I recommend it to each of you."<sup>10</sup>

President Henry B. Eyring likewise emphasized the importance in his life of President Monson's request. He observed:

"I have read the Book of Mormon every day for more than 50 years. So perhaps I could have reasonably

thought that President Monson's words were for someone else. Yet, like many of you, I felt the prophet's encouragement and his promise invite me to make a greater effort. . . .

"The happy result for me, and for many of you, has been what the prophet promised."<sup>11</sup>

What do you think explains the immediate and heartfelt responses to President Monson's invitation by these two leaders of the Lord's Church?

I am not suggesting that the spiritually strong responses of Amulek, Pahoran, President Nelson, and President Eyring are explained by only one Christlike quality. Certainly, many interrelated attributes and experiences led to the spiritual maturity reflected in the lives of these four noble servants. But the Savior and His prophets have highlighted an essential quality that all of us need to more fully understand and strive to incorporate into our lives.

#### Meekness

Please notice the characteristic the Lord used to describe Himself in the following scripture: "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."<sup>12</sup>

Instructively, the Savior chose to emphasize meekness from among all





the attributes and virtues He potentially could have selected.

A similar pattern is evident in a revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1829. The Lord declared, “Learn of me, and listen to my words; *walk in the meekness of my Spirit*, and you shall have peace in me.”<sup>13</sup>

Meekness is a defining attribute of the Redeemer and is distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint. This quality helps us to understand more completely the respective reactions of Amulek, Pahoran, President Nelson, and President Eyring.

For example, President Nelson and President Eyring righteously and rapidly responded to President Monson’s encouragement to read and study the Book of Mormon. Though both men were serving in important and visible Church positions and had studied the scriptures extensively for decades, they demonstrated in their responses no hesitation or sense of self-importance.

Amulek willingly submitted to God’s will, accepted a call to preach the gospel, and left behind his comfortable circumstances and familiar relationships. And Pahoran was blessed with perspective and strong self-restraint to act rather than react as he explained to Moroni the challenges arising from a rebellion against the government.

The Christlike quality of meekness often is misunderstood in our

contemporary world. Meekness is strong, not weak; active, not passive; courageous, not timid; restrained, not excessive; modest, not self-aggrandizing; and gracious, not brash. A meek person is not easily provoked, pretentious, or overbearing and readily acknowledges the accomplishments of others.

Whereas *humility* generally denotes dependence upon God and the constant need for His guidance and support, a distinguishing characteristic of *meekness* is a particular spiritual receptivity to learning both from the Holy Ghost and from people who may seem less capable, experienced, or educated, who may not hold important positions, or who otherwise may not appear to have much to contribute. Recall how Naaman, captain of the king’s army in Syria, overcame his pride and meekly accepted the advice of his servants to obey Elisha the prophet and wash in the river Jordan seven times.<sup>14</sup> Meekness is the principal protection from the prideful blindness that often arises from prominence, position, power, wealth, and adulation.

#### Meekness—a Christlike Attribute and a Spiritual Gift

Meekness is an attribute developed through desire, the righteous exercise of moral agency, and striving always to retain a remission of our sins.<sup>15</sup> It also is a spiritual gift for which we appropriately can seek.<sup>16</sup> We should remember,

however, the purposes for which such a blessing is given, even to benefit and serve the children of God.<sup>17</sup>

As we come unto and follow the Savior, we increasingly and incrementally are enabled to become more like Him. We are empowered by the Spirit with disciplined self-restraint and a settled and calm demeanor. Thus, meek is what we become as disciples of the Master and not just something we do.

“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”<sup>18</sup> Yet he “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”<sup>19</sup> His knowledge and competence could have caused him to be prideful. Instead, the attribute and spiritual gift of meekness with which he was blessed attenuated arrogance in his life and magnified Moses as an instrument to accomplish God’s purposes.

#### The Master as an Example of Meekness

The most majestic and meaningful examples of meekness are found in the life of the Savior Himself.

The Great Redeemer, who “descended below all things”<sup>20</sup> and suffered, bled, and died “to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness,”<sup>21</sup> tenderly *washed* the dusty feet of His disciples.<sup>22</sup> Such meekness is a hallmark characteristic of the Lord as a servant and leader.

Jesus provides the ultimate example of righteous responsiveness and willing submission as He suffered intense agony in Gethsemane.

“And when he was at the place, he said unto [His disciples], Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

“And he . . . kneeled down, and prayed,

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”<sup>23</sup>



confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.”<sup>30</sup>

The Savior declared, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”<sup>31</sup> Meekness is an essential aspect of the divine nature and can be received and developed in our lives because of and through the Savior’s Atonement.

I testify that Jesus Christ is our resurrected and living Redeemer. And I promise that He will guide, protect, and strengthen us as we walk in the meekness of His Spirit. I declare my sure witness of these truths and promises in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 2 Peter 1:4.
2. Matthew 19:16.
3. Matthew 19:21–22.
4. See Alma 10:4.
5. See Alma 10:5–6.
6. Alma 15:16.
7. Alma 60:2.
8. See Alma 60:5–33.
9. Alma 61:2, 9.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 61.
11. Henry B. Eyring, “Fear Not to Do Good,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 100.
12. Matthew 11:29; emphasis added.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 19:23; emphasis added.
14. See 2 Kings 5:1–17.
15. See Mosiah 4:12, 26; Moroni 8:25–26.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:8–9, 26.
18. Acts 7:22.
19. Numbers 12:3.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6.
21. 1 John 1:9; emphasis added.
22. See John 13:4–5.
23. Luke 22:40–42.
24. See John 18:10.
25. See Luke 22:51.
26. See Matthew 27:2, 11–26.
27. Matthew 26:53.
28. Moroni 10:34.
29. Matthew 27:14.
30. Moroni 7:42–44.
31. Matthew 5:5.

The Savior’s meekness in this eternally essential and excruciating experience demonstrates for each of us the importance of putting the wisdom of God above our own wisdom.

The consistency of the Lord’s willing submission and strong self-restraint is both awe-inspiring and instructive for us all. As an armed company of temple guardsmen and Roman soldiers arrived at Gethsemane to seize and arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant.<sup>24</sup> The Savior then touched the servant’s ear and healed him.<sup>25</sup> Please note that He reached out and blessed His potential captor using the same heavenly power that could have prevented Him from being captured and crucified.

Consider also how the Master was accused and condemned before Pilate to be crucified.<sup>26</sup> Jesus had declared during His betrayal, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions

of angels?”<sup>27</sup> Yet the “Eternal Judge of both quick and dead”<sup>28</sup> paradoxically was judged before a temporary political appointee. “And [Jesus] answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”<sup>29</sup> The Savior’s meekness is evidenced in His disciplined response, strong restraint, and unwillingness to exert His infinite power for personal benefit.

#### Promise and Testimony

Mormon identifies meekness as the foundation from which all spiritual capacities and gifts arise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

“And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

“If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and





By Elder Taylor G. Godoy  
Of the Seventy

# One More Day

*We all have a “today” to live, and the key to making our day successful is to be willing to sacrifice.*

A few years ago, my friends had a beautiful baby named Brigham. After his birth, Brigham was diagnosed with a rare condition called Hunter syndrome, which sadly meant that Brigham would have a short life. One day while Brigham and his family were visiting the temple grounds, Brigham pronounced a particular phrase; twice he said, “One more day.” The very next day, Brigham passed away.

I have visited Brigham’s grave a few times, and every time I do, I contemplate the phrase “one more day.” I wonder what it would mean, what effect it would have in my life to know that I had only one more day to live. How would I treat my wife, my children, and others? How patient and polite would I be? How would I take care of my body? How fervently would I pray and search the scriptures? I think that, in one way or another, we all at some point will have a “one more day” realization—a realization that we must use wisely the time we have.

In the Old Testament we read the story of Hezekiah, king of Judah. The prophet Isaiah announced to Hezekiah that Hezekiah’s life was about to end. When he heard the prophet’s words, Hezekiah began to pray, plead, and

weep sorely. On that occasion, God added 15 years to Hezekiah’s life. (See Isaiah 38:1–5.)

If we were told we had a short time to live, we too might plead for more days of life in the name of things we should have done or done differently.

Regardless of the time the Lord, in His wisdom, determines to grant each of us, of one thing we can be sure: we all have a “today” to live, and the key to making our day successful is to be willing to sacrifice.

The Lord said, “Behold, now it is called *today* until the coming of the Son of Man, *and verily it is a day*

*of sacrifice*” (D&C 64:23; emphasis added).

The word *sacrifice* comes from the Latin words *sacer*, which means “sacred,” and *facere*, which means “to make”—in other words, to make things sacred, to bring honor to them.

“Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven” (“Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27).

In what ways will sacrifice make our days meaningful and blessed?

First, personal sacrifice strengthens us and gives value to the things we sacrifice for.

Some years ago on fast Sunday, an elderly sister came to the pulpit to share her testimony. She lived in the city called Iquitos, which is in the Peruvian Amazon. She told us that from the time of her baptism, she had always had the goal of receiving the ordinances of the temple in Lima, Peru. She faithfully paid a full tithe and saved her meager income for years.

Her joy upon going to the temple and receiving the sacred ordinances therein was expressed in these words: “Today I can say that I finally feel ready to go through the veil. I am the



happiest woman in the world; I have saved money, you have no idea for how long, to visit the temple, and after seven days on the river and 18 hours by bus, I was finally in the house of the Lord. When leaving that holy place, I said to myself, after all the sacrifice that has been required for me to come to the temple, I will not let anything make me take lightly every covenant I made; it would be a waste. This is a very serious commitment!"

I learned from this sweet sister that personal sacrifice is an invaluable force that drives our decisions and our determinations. Personal sacrifice drives our actions, our commitments, and our covenants and gives sacred things meaning.

Second, sacrifices we make for others, and that others make for us, result in blessings for all.

When I was a student in dental school, the financial outlook of our local economy was not very encouraging. Inflation dramatically decreased the value of currency from one day to the next.

I remember the year when I was to enroll in surgery practices; I needed to have all the necessary surgical equipment before enrolling that semester. My parents saved the needed funds. But one night something dramatic happened. We went to buy the equipment, only to discover that the amount of money we had to buy all the equipment now was sufficient to buy only a pair of surgical tweezers—and nothing else. We returned home with empty hands and with heavy hearts at the thought of my losing a semester of college. Suddenly, however, my mother said, "Taylor, come with me; let's go out."

We went downtown where there were many places that buy and sell



jewelry. When we arrived at one store, my mother took out of her purse a small blue velvet bag containing a beautiful gold bracelet with an inscription that read, "To my dear daughter from your father." It was a bracelet that my grandfather had given her on one of her birthdays. Then, before my eyes, she sold it.

When she received the money, she told me, "If there is one thing I am sure of, it is that you are going to be a dentist. Go and buy all the equipment you need." Now, can you imagine what kind of student I became from that moment on? I wanted to be the best and finish my studies soon because I knew the high cost of the sacrifice she was making.

I learned that the sacrifices our loved ones make for us refresh us like cool water in the middle of the desert. Such sacrifice brings hope and motivation.

Third, any sacrifice we make is small compared to the sacrifice of the Son of God.

What is the value of even a beloved gold bracelet compared to the sacrifice of the very Son of God? How can we honor that infinite sacrifice? Each day we can remember that we have one more day to live and be faithful. Amulek taught, "Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not

your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you" (Alma 34:31). In other words, if we will offer to the Lord the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, immediately the blessings of the great plan of happiness are manifest in our lives.

The plan of redemption is possible thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As He Himself described, the sacrifice "caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18).

And it is because of this sacrifice, after following the process of sincere repentance, that we can feel the weight of our mistakes and sins lifted. In fact, guilt, shame, pain, sorrow, and looking down at ourselves are replaced with a clear conscience, happiness, joy, and hope.

At the same time, as we honor and are grateful for His sacrifice, we can receive in a great measure the intense desire to be better children of God, to stay away from sin, and to keep covenants like never before.



Then, like Enos after receiving the forgiveness of his sins, we will feel the desire ourselves to sacrifice and to seek the well-being of our brothers and sisters (see Enos 1:9). And we will be more willing every “one more day” to follow the invitation that President Howard W. Hunter extended to us when he said: “Mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust. . . . Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest your loyalty in word and deed. Keep a promise. Forgo a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Apologize. Try to understand. Examine your demands on others. Think first of someone else. Be kind. Be gentle. Laugh a little more. Express your gratitude. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a child. . . . Speak your love and then speak it again” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* [2015], 32; adapted from “What We Think Christmas Is,” *McCall’s*, Dec. 1959, 82–83).

May we fill our days with that impulse and the strength that personal sacrifice and the sacrifice that we make for or receive from others give us. And in a special way, may we enjoy the peace and rejoicing that the sacrifice of the Only Begotten offers us; yes, that peace that is mentioned when we read that Adam fell that men might be, and men are—you are—that you might have joy (see 2 Nephi 2:25). That joy is real joy that only the sacrifice and the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ can provide.

It is my prayer that we follow Him, that we believe Him, that we love Him, and that we feel the love demonstrated by His sacrifice every time we have the opportunity to live one more day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Bonnie L. Oscarson**

Recently Released Young Women General President

## Young Women in the Work

*Every young woman in the Church should feel valued, have opportunities to serve, and feel that she has something of worth to contribute to this work.*

A year ago, in the general priesthood session of conference, Bishop Gérald Caussé spoke to the men of the Church describing how Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders are inseparable partners in accomplishing the work of salvation.<sup>1</sup> That message has been a great blessing in helping the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood see the part they play in building the kingdom of God on this earth. Their joint service strengthens the Church and brings about deeper conversion and commitment in the hearts of our young men as they see the value of their contribution and how magnificent this work is.

Today I would like for my remarks to be a bookend to that message as I talk about the young women of the Church, who are equally needed and essential in accomplishing the work of the Lord in their families and in His Church.

Like Bishop Caussé, I lived in a small branch of the Church during a good part of my teen years, and I was often asked to fulfill assignments and callings that would normally have been done by adults. For example, those of

us in the youth program often took the lead in helping organize and run our activities and special events. We wrote plays, formed a singing group to entertain at branch activities, and were full participants in every meeting. I was called to be the branch music leader and led the singing in sacrament meeting each week. It was a great experience as a 16-year-old to stand in front of everyone in the branch



each Sunday and lead them in singing the hymns. I felt needed and knew I had something to contribute. People depended on me to be there, and I loved feeling useful. That experience helped build my testimony of Jesus Christ, and just as it did for Bishop Caussé, it anchored my life in gospel service.

Each member should know how much he or she is needed. Each person has something important to contribute and has unique talents and abilities that help move this important work along. Our young men have Aaronic Priesthood duties described in the Doctrine and Covenants that are rather visible. It may be less obvious to the young women of the Church, their parents, and their leaders that, from the time they are baptized, young women have covenant responsibilities “to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [they] may be in, even until death.”<sup>2</sup> Young women have opportunities to fulfill these responsibilities in their wards and branches and when they serve in class presidencies, on youth councils, and in other callings. Every young woman in the Church should feel valued, have opportunities to serve, and feel that she has something of worth to contribute to this work.

In *Handbook 2*, we learn that the work of salvation within our wards includes “member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel.”<sup>3</sup> This work is directed by our faithful bishops, who hold priesthood keys for their ward. For many years now, our presidency has been asking



the question “Which of these areas mentioned should our young women *not* be involved in?” The answer is that they have something to contribute in *all* areas of this work.

For example, I recently met several young women in the Las Vegas area who have been called to serve as ward temple and family history consultants. They were glowing with enthusiasm about being able to teach and help members of their ward find their ancestors. They had valuable skills on the computer, had learned how to use FamilySearch, and were excited to share that knowledge with others. It was clear that they had testimonies and an understanding of the importance of seeking out the names of our deceased ancestors so that essential saving ordinances can be performed for them in the temple.

Several months ago, I had the opportunity to test an idea with two 14-year-old young women. I obtained copies of two actual ward council agendas and gave Emma and Maggie each a copy. I asked them to read over the agendas and see if there were any action items from the ward councils in which they might be able to be of service. Emma saw that a new family was moving into the ward, and she said she could help them move in and unpack. She thought she could befriend the

children in the family and show them around their new school. She saw there was a ward dinner coming up and felt there were many different ways she could offer her services.

Maggie saw that there were several elderly people in the ward who needed visits and fellowshiping. She said she would love to visit with and be of help to these wonderful older members. She also felt she could help teach members of the ward how to set up and use social media accounts. There really wasn’t one thing on those agendas with which those two young women *could not* help!

Do those who sit on ward councils, or hold any calling in the ward, see the young women as valuable resources to help fill the many needs within our wards? There is usually a long list of situations that require someone to serve, and we often think only of the adults in the ward to meet those needs. Just as our Aaronic Priesthood holders have been invited to labor with their fathers and other men of the Melchizedek Priesthood, our young women can be called upon to provide service and minister to the needs of ward members with their mothers or other exemplary sisters. They are capable, eager, and willing to do so much more than merely attend church on Sundays!





As we consider the roles that our young women will be expected to assume in the near future, we might ask ourselves what kind of experiences we could provide for them now that will help with their preparation to be missionaries, gospel scholars, leaders in the Church auxiliaries, temple workers, wives, mothers, mentors, examples, and friends. They can actually begin now to fill many of those roles. Youth are often asked to help teach lessons on Sunday in their classes. Opportunities are now available for our young women to perform service in the temple previously completed by ordinance workers or volunteers when they attend with their youth groups to perform baptisms for the dead. Our Primary-age girls are now invited to attend Temple and Priesthood Preparation meetings, which will help them understand that they too are important participants in priesthood-directed work. They are learning that men, women, youth, and children are all recipients of priesthood blessings and all can take an active role in moving forward the Lord's work.

Bishops, we know your duties are often heavy, but just as one of your highest priorities is to preside over the Aaronic Priesthood quorums,

*Handbook 2* explains that “the bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Young Women organization. They watch over and strengthen individual young women, working closely with parents and Young Women leaders in this effort.” It also states that “the bishop and his counselors regularly participate in Young Women meetings, service, and activities.”<sup>4</sup> We are grateful for bishops who take the time to visit Young Women classes and who provide opportunities for young women to be more than mere spectators of the work. Thank you for making sure your young women are valued participants in meeting the needs of ward members! These opportunities to serve in meaningful ways bless them much more than activities in which they are just entertained.

To you, the young women of the Church, your teenage years can be busy and often challenging. We have noticed that many more of you are struggling with issues of self-worth, anxiety, high levels of stress, and perhaps even depression. Turning your thoughts outward, instead of dwelling on your own problems, may not resolve all of these issues, but service can often lighten your burdens and

make your challenges seem less hard. One of the best ways to increase feelings of self-worth is to show, through our concern and service to others, that we have much of worth to contribute.<sup>5</sup> I encourage you young women to raise your hands to volunteer and to put those hands to work when you see needs around you. As you fulfill your covenant responsibilities and participate in building the kingdom of God, blessings will flow into your life and you'll discover the deep and lasting joy of discipleship.

Brothers and sisters, our young women are amazing. They have talents, unlimited enthusiasm, and energy, and they are compassionate and caring. They *want* to be of service. They need to know they are valued and essential in the work of salvation. Just as young men prepare in the Aaronic Priesthood for greater service as they advance into the Melchizedek Priesthood, our young women are preparing to become members of the greatest women's organization on the earth—the Relief Society. Together, these beautiful, strong, faithful young women and young men are preparing to be wives and husbands, and mothers and fathers who will raise families worthy of the celestial kingdom of God.

I testify that the work of our Heavenly Father is to bring about the immortality and eternal life of His children.<sup>6</sup> Our precious young women have an important role to play in helping to accomplish this great work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Gérald Caussé, “Prepare the Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 75–78.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), page 22.
4. *Handbook 2*, 10.3.1.
5. See Matthew 10:39.
6. See Moses 1:39.



By Elder Taniela B. Wakolo  
Of the Seventy

# Saving Ordinances Will Bring Us Marvelous Light

*Participating in ordinances and honoring the associated covenants will bring you marvelous light and protection in this ever-darkening world.*

**B**rothers and sisters, I rejoice with you in the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ.

A friend once asked Elder Neil L. Andersen, then of the Seventy, how it felt to speak in front of 21,000 people at the Conference Center. Elder Andersen replied, “It is not the 21,000 people who make you nervous; it is the 15 Brethren seated behind you.” I chuckled then, but I feel it now. How I love and sustain these 15 men as prophets, seers, and revelators.

The Lord told Abraham that through his seed and through the priesthood, all the families of the earth would be blessed “with the blessings of the Gospel, . . . even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11; see also verses 2–10).

These promised blessings of the gospel and the priesthood were restored to the earth, and then, in 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith administered the endowment to a limited number of men and women. Mercy Fielding Thompson was one of them. The Prophet said to her, “This [endowment]

will bring you out of darkness into marvelous light.”<sup>1</sup>

Today I want to focus on saving ordinances, which will bring you and me marvelous light.

## Ordinances and Covenants

In *True to the Faith* we read: “An ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the

priesthood. [The] ordinances [that] are essential to our exaltation . . . are called saving ordinances. They include baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing.”<sup>2</sup>

Elder David A. Bednar taught, “The ordinances of salvation and exaltation administered in the Lord’s restored Church . . . constitute authorized channels through which the blessings and powers of heaven can flow into our individual lives.”<sup>3</sup>

Like a coin with two sides, all the saving ordinances are accompanied by covenants with God. God promised us blessings if we faithfully honor those covenants.

The prophet Amulek declared, “This . . . is the time . . . to prepare to meet God” (Alma 34:32). How do we prepare? By worthily receiving ordinances. We must also, in President Russell M. Nelson’s words, “keep on the covenant path.” President Nelson continued, “Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual





blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.”<sup>4</sup>

John and Bonnie Newman, like many of you, are recipients of the spiritual blessings President Nelson promised. One Sunday, after attending church with their three young children, Bonnie said to John, who was not a member of the Church, “I cannot do this on my own. You need to decide whether you come to my church with us or you choose a church that we can go to together, but the children need to know that their dad loves God too.” The following Sunday and every Sunday after, John not only attended; he also served, playing the piano for many wards, branches, and Primaries over the years. I had the privilege of meeting with John in April 2015, and in that meeting, we discussed that the best way he could manifest his love for Bonnie was to take her to the temple, but that could not happen unless he was baptized.

After attending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 39 years, John was baptized in 2015. A year later, John and Bonnie were sealed in the Memphis Tennessee Temple, 20 years after she had received her own endowment. Their 47-year-old son, Robert, said of his dad, “Dad has really, really blossomed since he received the priesthood.” Bonnie added, “John has always been a happy and cheerful person, but receiving the ordinances and honoring his covenants has enhanced his gentleness.”

#### The Atonement of Christ and His Example

Many years ago, President Boyd K. Packer warned, “Good conduct without the ordinances of the gospel will neither redeem nor exalt mankind.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, we not only need the ordinances and covenants to return to our Father,

but we also need His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement.

King Benjamin taught that only in and through the name of Christ can salvation come unto the children of men (see Mosiah 3:17; see also Articles of Faith 1:3).

Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ redeemed us from the consequences of the Fall of Adam and made possible our repentance and eventual exaltation. Through His life, He set the example for us to receive saving ordinances, in which “the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:20).

After the Savior received the ordinance of baptism to “fulfil all righteousness” (see 2 Nephi 31:5–6), Satan tempted Him. Likewise, our temptations do not end after baptism or sealing, but receiving the sacred ordinances and honoring the associated covenants fill us with marvelous light and give us strength to resist and overcome temptations.

#### Warning

Isaiah prophesied that in the latter days, “the earth also is defiled . . . because they have . . . changed the ordinance” (Isaiah 24:5; see also D&C 1:15).

A related warning, revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, was that some “draw near to [the Lord] with their lips, . . . [and] they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

Paul also warned that many would have “a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5). I repeat, from such turn away.

The many distractions and temptations of life are like “ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). It is the true shepherd who will prepare, protect, and warn the sheep and the flock when these wolves are approaching (see John 10:11–12). As undershepherds who seek to emulate the perfect life of the Good Shepherd, aren’t we shepherds of our own soul as well as of others? With the counsel of prophets, seers, and revelators, whom we just sustained, and with the power and gift of the Holy Ghost, we can see the wolves coming if we are watchful and prepared. In contrast, when we are casual shepherds of our own soul and others’ souls, casualties are likely. Casualness leads to casualties. I invite each of us to be a faithful shepherd.





### Experience and Testimony

The sacrament is an ordinance that helps us stay on the path, and worthily partaking is evidence that we are keeping the covenants associated with all the other ordinances. A few years ago, while my wife, Anita, and I were serving in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission, I went out to teach with two young missionaries. During the lesson, the good brother we were teaching said, “I have been to your church; why do you have to eat bread and drink water every Sunday? In our church, we do it twice a year, on Easter and Christmas, and that is very meaningful.”

We shared with him that we are

commanded to “meet together oft to partake of bread and wine” (Moroni 6:6; see also D&C 20:75). We read out loud Matthew 26 and 3 Nephi 18. He responded that he still did not see the necessity.

We then shared the following comparison: “Imagine you are involved in a very serious car accident. You have been injured and are unconscious. Someone runs by, seeing that you are unconscious, and dials the emergency number, 911. You are attended to and regain consciousness.”

We asked this brother, “When you are able to recognize your surroundings, what questions will you have?”

He said, “I will want to know how I got there and who found me. I will want to thank him every day because he saved my life.”

We shared with this good brother how the Savior saved our lives and how we need to thank Him every day, every day, every day!

We then asked, “Knowing that He gave His life for you and us, how often do you want to eat the bread and drink the water as emblems of His body and blood?”

He said, “I get it, I get it. But one more thing. Your church is not lively like ours.”

To that we responded, “What would you do if the Savior Jesus Christ walked through your door?”

He said, “Immediately, I would go down to my knees.”

We asked, “Isn’t that what you feel when you walk into Latter-day Saint chapels—reverence for the Savior?”

He said, “I get it, I get it, I get it!”

He showed up at church that Easter Sunday and kept returning.

I invite each of us to ask ourselves, “What ordinances, including the sacrament, do I need to receive, and what covenants do I need to make, keep, and honor?” I promise that participating in ordinances and honoring the associated covenants will bring you marvelous light and protection in this ever-darkening world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 414.
2. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 109; see also *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.1.2.
3. David A. Bednar, “Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 60.
4. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
5. Boyd K. Packer, “The Only True Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 82.





**By Devin G. Durrant**

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

# Teaching in the Home—a Joyful and Sacred Responsibility

*I plead for heaven's help as we strive to be Christlike teachers in our homes.*

**M**y dear wife, Julie, and I have raised six precious children, and we recently became empty nesters. How I miss having our children in our home on a full-time basis. I miss learning from them and teaching them.

Today I direct my remarks to all parents and all who desire to be parents. Many of you are raising children now. For others, that time might come soon. And for still others, parenthood may be a future blessing. I pray we all recognize the joyful and sacred responsibility it is to teach a child.<sup>1</sup>

As parents, we introduce our children to Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We help our children say their first prayer. We offer guidance and support as they enter the covenant path<sup>2</sup> through baptism. We teach them to obey God's commandments. We educate them about His plan for His children, and we help them recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. We tell them stories of ancient prophets and encourage them to follow living ones. We pray for their triumphs and

ache with them during their trials. We testify to our children of temple blessings, and we strive to prepare them well to serve full-time missions. We offer loving counsel as our children

become parents themselves. But—even then—we never stop being their parents. We never stop being their teachers. We are never released from these eternal callings.

Today let's contemplate a few of the wonderful opportunities we have to teach our children in our homes.

## Family Home Evening Teaching

Let's begin with family home evening, which was a high priority in the faith-filled home where I was raised. I don't remember specific lessons taught at family home evening, but I do remember that we never missed a week.<sup>3</sup> I knew what was important to my parents.<sup>4</sup>

I recall one of my favorite family home evening activities. Dad would invite one of his children to take "The Test." He would give the child a series of instructions like, "First, go into the kitchen and open and close the fridge. Then run into my bedroom and grab



a pair of socks from my dresser. Then come back to me, jump up and down three times, and say, 'Dad, I did it!'

I loved it when it was my turn. I wanted to get every step just right, and I cherished the moment when I could say, "Dad, I did it!" This activity helped build my confidence and made it easier for a restless boy to pay attention when Mom or Dad taught a gospel principle.

President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled: "If you have any doubt about the virtue of family home evening, try it. Gather your children about you, teach them, bear testimony to them, read the scriptures together and have a good time together."<sup>5</sup>

There will always be opposition to holding family home evening.<sup>6</sup> Regardless, I invite you to find a way around the obstacles and make family home evening a priority—and make fun a key ingredient.

#### Family Prayer Teaching

Family prayer is another prime opportunity to teach.

I love how President N. Eldon Tanner's father taught him during family prayer. President Tanner said this:

"I remember one evening when we were kneeling in family prayer, my father said to the Lord, 'Eldon did something today he shouldn't have done; he's sorry, and if you will forgive him, he won't do it anymore.'

"That made me determined not to do it anymore—much more than a trouncing would have done."<sup>7</sup>

As a boy, I would sometimes get irritated with our seemingly excessive family prayers, thinking to myself, "Didn't we just pray a few minutes ago?" Now, as a parent, I know we can't ever pray too much as a family.<sup>8</sup>

I've always been impressed with how Heavenly Father introduces Jesus



Christ as His Beloved Son.<sup>9</sup> I enjoy praying for my children by name as they listen to me express to Heavenly Father how beloved they are to me. It seems there is no better time to communicate love to our children than when praying with them or blessing them. When families gather in humble prayer, powerful and lasting lessons are taught.

#### On-Call Teaching

Parental teaching is like being an on-call physician. We always need to be ready to teach our children because we never know when the opportunity will present itself.

We are like the Savior, whose teaching often "did not happen in a synagogue but in informal, everyday settings—while eating a meal with His disciples, drawing water from a well, or walking past a fig tree."<sup>10</sup>

Years ago my mother shared that her two best gospel conversations with my older brother, Matt, were once while she was folding laundry and another time while driving him

to the dentist. One of the many things I admired about my mother was her readiness to teach her children.

Her parental teaching never ended. While I was serving as a bishop, my mom, then 78 years old, told me I needed a haircut. She knew I needed to be an example, and she didn't hesitate to tell me so. I love you, Mom!

As a father, I am motivated to personally study and ponder the scriptures in order to be able to respond when my children or grandchildren present an on-call teaching opportunity.<sup>11</sup> "Some of the best teaching moments start as a question or concern in the heart of a [family] member."<sup>12</sup> Are we listening during those moments?<sup>13</sup>

I love the Apostle Peter's invitation: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man [and I add, child] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."<sup>14</sup>

When I was a teenager, my dad and I enjoyed challenging each other to see who had the strongest grip. We would squeeze the other's hand as tightly as possible in an effort to make the



other grimace in pain. It doesn't seem like much fun now, but somehow it was at the time. After one such battle, Dad looked me in the eyes and said, "You have strong hands, Son. I hope your hands always have the strength to never touch a young lady inappropriately." He then invited me to stay morally clean and help others do the same.

Elder Douglas L. Callister shared this about his father: "While traveling home from work one day Father spontaneously said, 'I paid my tithing today. I wrote "thank you" on the tithing check. I am so grateful to the Lord for blessing our family.'"

Elder Callister then paid this tribute to his father-teacher: "He taught both acts and attitudes of obedience."<sup>15</sup>

I think it wise to ask ourselves occasionally, "What will I teach, or what am I teaching, my children by my acts and attitudes of obedience?"

#### Family Scripture Study Teaching

Family scripture study is an ideal forum for teaching doctrine in the home.

President Russell M. Nelson said, "Not only are parents to cling to the word of the Lord, but they have a divine mandate to teach it to their children."<sup>16</sup>

As Julie and I raised our children, we tried to be consistent and creative. One year we decided to read the Book of Mormon in Spanish as a family. Was that why the Lord called each of our children who served a full-time mission to a Spanish-speaking mission? *Es posible*.

I was deeply touched when Brother Brian K. Ashton shared with me that he and his father read every page of the Book of Mormon together during his senior year of high school. Brother Ashton loves the scriptures. They are

written in his mind and on his heart. His father planted that seed when Brother Ashton was a teenager, and that seed<sup>17</sup> has grown into a deep-rooted tree of truth. Brother Ashton has done the same with his older children.<sup>18</sup> His eight-year-old son recently asked him, "Dad, when do I get to read the Book of Mormon with you?"

#### Example Teaching

Lastly, our most impactful parental teaching is our example. We are counseled to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>19</sup>

During a recent trip, Julie and I attended church and saw this verse in action. A young man, soon to leave for his mission, spoke in sacrament meeting.

He said, "You all think my dad is such a good man at church, but . . ." He paused, and I anxiously wondered what he might say next. He continued and said, "He's a better man at home."



I thanked this young man afterward for the inspiring tribute he had paid his father. I then found out that his father was the bishop of the ward. Even though this bishop was serving his ward faithfully, his son felt that his best work was done at home.<sup>20</sup>

Elder D. Todd Christofferson counsels: "We have many avenues for teaching the . . . rising generation, and we should devote our best thinking and effort to taking full advantage of them. Above all, we must continue to encourage and help parents be better and more consistent teachers . . . especially by example."<sup>21</sup>

That's how the Savior teaches.<sup>22</sup>

Last year, while on vacation with our two youngest children, Julie suggested we do proxy baptisms in both the St. George and San Diego Temples. I murmured—to myself—thinking, "We attend the temple at home, and now we're on vacation. Why not do something more vacation-like?" After the baptisms, Julie wanted to take

pictures outside the temple. I silently murmured—again. You can guess what happened next: we took pictures.

Julie wants our children to have memories of how we helped our ancestors, and so do I. We didn't need a formal lesson on the importance of temples. We were living it—thanks to a mother who loves the temple and wants her children to share that love.

As parents cherish each other and offer righteous examples, children are eternally blessed.

## Conclusion

For all of you who are striving to do your best to teach in your homes, may you find peace and joy in your efforts. And if you feel you have room for improvement or need greater preparation, please humbly respond as the Spirit prompts you and bind yourself to act.<sup>23</sup>

Elder L. Tom Perry said, "The health of any society, the happiness of its people, their prosperity, and their peace all find common roots in the teaching of children in the home."<sup>24</sup>

Yes, my home nest is now empty, but I'm still on call, ready and eager to find additional precious opportunities to teach my grown children, their children, and someday, I hope, their children.

I plead for heaven's help as we strive to be Christlike teachers in our homes. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; 93:40.

Elder L. Tom Perry taught: "The influence of the adversary is so widespread and he is attacking, attempting to erode and destroy the very foundation of our society, even the family. Parents must resolve that teaching in the home is a most sacred and important responsibility" ("Mothers Teaching Children in the Home," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 30).

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have taught: "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. 'Children are an heritage of the Lord' (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 145).

2. See Russell M. Nelson, "As We Go Forward Together," *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.

3. Elder David A. Bednar said: "Today if you could ask our adult sons what they remember about family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening, I believe I know how they would answer. They likely would not identify a particular prayer or a specific instance of scripture study or an especially meaningful family home evening lesson as the defining moment in their spiritual development. What they would say they remember is that as a family we were consistent" ("More Diligent and Concerned at Home," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 19).

4. See "Home Can Be a Heaven on Earth," *Hymns*, no. 298.

5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 171.

6. See 2 Nephi 2:11.

7. N. Eldon Tanner, "Never Be Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," *Ensign*, Feb. 1980, 4.

8. See 3 Nephi 18:21.

9. See Matthew 3:16–17; 3 Nephi 11:6–8; Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.

10. "Take Advantage of Spontaneous Teaching Moments," *Teaching in the Savior's Way* (2016), 16. *Teaching in the Savior's Way* includes a variety of tips and tools for teaching in the home.

11. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:21; 84:85.

12. *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, 16.

13. See "Listen," *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 185–86.

14. 1 Peter 3:15.

15. Douglas L. Callister, "Most Influential Teacher—Emeritus Seventy Pays Tribute to Father," Aug. 29, 2016, news.lds.org.

16. Russell M. Nelson, "Set in Order Thy House," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 70; *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 81.

17. See Alma 32:28–43.

18. Sister Melinda Ashton pinch-hits when her husband, Brother Ashton, is out of town.

19. 1 Timothy 4:12; see also Alma 17:11.

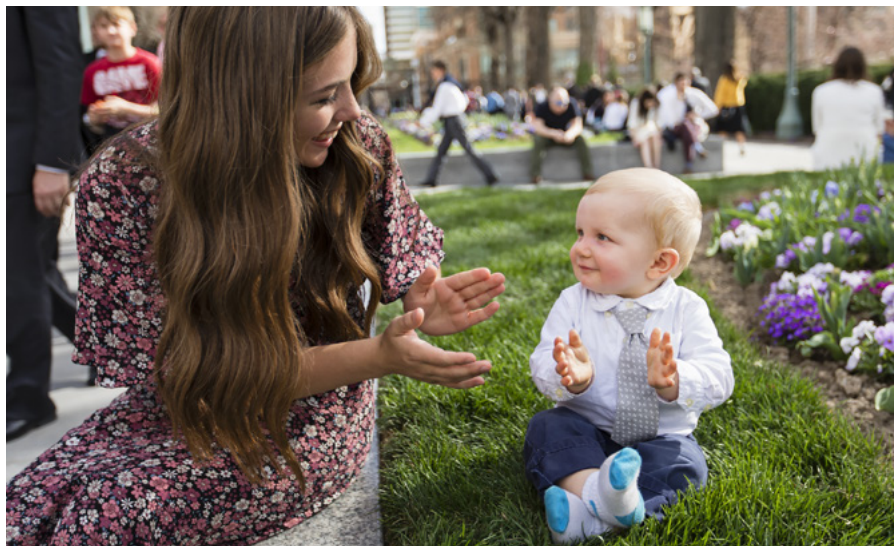
20. Bishop Jeffrey L. Stewart serves in the Southgate Second Ward in St. George, Utah. Samuel, his son, is now serving in the Colombia Medellín Mission.

21. D. Todd Christofferson, "Strengthening the Faith and Long-Term Conversion of the Rising Generation," general conference leadership meeting, Sept. 2017.

22. See 3 Nephi 27:21, 27.

23. See Doctrine and Covenants 43:8–9.

24. L. Tom Perry, "Mothers Teaching Children in the Home," 30.







By Elder Dale G. Renlund  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing

*When we gather our family histories and go to the temple on behalf of our ancestors, God fulfills promised blessings simultaneously on both sides of the veil.*

Family relationships can be some of the most rewarding yet challenging experiences we encounter. Many of us have faced a fracture of some sort within our families. Such a fracture developed between two heroes of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in these latter days. Parley and Orson Pratt were brothers, early converts, and ordained Apostles. Each faced a trial of faith but came through with an unshakable testimony. Both sacrificed and contributed greatly for the cause of truth.

During the Nauvoo era, their relationship became strained, culminating in a heated, public confrontation in 1846. A deep and prolonged rift developed. Parley initially wrote to Orson to resolve the rift, but Orson did not reply. Parley gave up, feeling that correspondence was over forever, unless initiated by Orson.<sup>1</sup>

Several years later, in March 1853, Orson learned about a project to publish a book on the descendants of William Pratt, the brothers' earliest

American ancestor. Orson began to weep "like a little child" as he glimpsed this treasure trove of family history. His heart melted, and he determined to repair the breach with his brother.

Orson wrote to Parley, "Now my dear brother, there are none among all the descendants of our Ancestor, Lieut[enant] William Pratt, who have so deep an interest in searching out his

descendants as ourselves." Orson was one of the first to understand that Latter-day Saints have an obligation to research and compile family histories so that we can perform vicarious ordinances for our ancestors. His letter continued: "We know that the God of our fathers has had a hand in all this. . . . I will beg pardon for having been so backward in writing to you. . . . I hope you will forgive me."<sup>2</sup> Despite their unshakable testimonies, their love for their ancestors was the catalyst to heal a rift, mend a hurt, and seek and extend forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

When God directs us to do one thing, He often has many purposes in mind. Family history and temple work is not only for the dead but blesses the living as well. For Orson and Parley, it turned their hearts to each other. Family history and temple work provided the power to heal that which needed healing.

As Church members, we do have a divinely appointed responsibility to seek out our ancestors and compile family histories. This is far more than an encouraged hobby, because the ordinances of salvation are necessary for all of God's children.<sup>4</sup> We are to identify our own ancestors who died without receiving the ordinances of salvation.



We can perform the ordinances vicariously in temples, and our ancestors may choose to accept the ordinances.<sup>5</sup> We are also encouraged to help ward and stake members with their family names. It is breathtakingly amazing that, through family history and temple work, we can help to redeem the dead.

But as we participate in family history and temple work today, we also lay claim to “healing” blessings promised by prophets and apostles.<sup>6</sup> These blessings are also breathtakingly amazing because of their scope, specificity, and consequence in mortality. This long list includes these blessings:

- Increased understanding of the Savior and His atoning sacrifice;
- Increased influence of the Holy Ghost<sup>7</sup> to feel strength and direction for our own lives;
- Increased faith, so that conversion to the Savior becomes deep and abiding;
- Increased ability and motivation to learn and repent<sup>8</sup> because of an understanding of who we are, where we come from, and a clearer vision of where we are going;
- Increased refining, sanctifying, and moderating influences in our hearts;
- Increased joy through an increased ability to feel the love of the Lord;
- Increased family blessings, no matter our current, past, or future family situation or how imperfect our family tree may be;
- Increased love and appreciation for ancestors and living relatives, so we no longer feel alone;
- Increased power to discern that which needs healing and thus, with the Lord’s help, serve others;
- Increased protection from temptations and the intensifying influence of the adversary; and



- Increased assistance to mend troubled, broken, or anxious hearts and make the wounded whole.<sup>9</sup>

If you have prayed for any of these blessings, participate in family history and temple work. As you do so, your prayers will be answered. When ordinances are performed on behalf of the deceased, God’s children on earth are healed. No wonder President Russell M. Nelson, in his first message as President of the Church, declared, “Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path.”<sup>10</sup>

An earlier prophet also foresaw blessings for both the living and the dead.<sup>11</sup> A heavenly messenger showed Ezekiel a vision of a temple with water

gushing out of it. Ezekiel was told:

“These waters issue out . . . and go down into the desert, and go into the [dead] sea . . . , [and] the waters shall be healed.

“And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: . . . for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.”<sup>12</sup>

Two characteristics of the water are noteworthy. First, though the small stream had no tributaries, it grew into a mighty river, becoming wider and deeper the farther it flowed. Something similar happens with the blessings that flow from the temple as individuals are sealed as families. Meaningful growth occurs going backward and forward through the generations as sealing ordinances weld families together.





Second, the river renewed everything that it touched. The blessings of the temple likewise have a stunning capacity to heal. Temple blessings can heal hearts and lives and families.

Let me illustrate. In 1999 a young man named Todd collapsed from a ruptured blood vessel in his brain. Although Todd and his family were members of the Church, their activity had been sporadic, and none had experienced the blessings of the temple. On the last night of Todd's life, his mother, Betty, sat at his bedside stroking his hand and said, "Todd, if you really do have to go, I promise I'll see to it that your temple work gets done." The next morning, Todd was declared brain dead. Surgeons transplanted Todd's heart into my patient, a remarkable individual named Rod.

A few months after the transplant, Rod learned the identity of his heart donor's family and began to correspond with them. About two years later, Todd's mother, Betty, invited Rod to be present when she went to the temple for the first time. Rod and Betty

first met in person in the celestial room of the St. George Utah Temple.

Sometime thereafter, Todd's father—Betty's husband—died. A couple of years later, Betty invited Rod to vicariously represent her deceased son in receiving his temple ordinances. Rod gratefully did so, and the proxy work culminated in a sealing room in the St. George Utah Temple. Betty was sealed to her deceased husband, kneeling across the altar from her grandson who served as proxy. Then, with tears streaming down her cheeks, she beckoned for Rod to join them at the altar. Rod knelt beside them, acting as proxy for her son, Todd, whose heart was still beating inside Rod's chest. Rod's heart donor, Todd, was then sealed to his parents for all eternity. Todd's mother had kept the promise she made to her dying son years before.

But the story does not end there. Fifteen years after his heart transplant, Rod became engaged to be married and asked me to perform the sealing in the Provo Utah Temple. On the wedding day, I met with Rod and his

marvelous bride, Kim, in a room adjacent to the sealing room, where their families and closest friends were waiting. After briefly visiting with Rod and Kim, I asked if they had any questions.

Rod said, "Yes. My donor family is here and would love to meet you."

I was caught off guard and asked, "You mean they're here? Right now?"

Rod replied, "Yes."

I stepped around the corner and called the family out of the sealing room. Betty, her daughter, and her son-in-law joined us. Rod greeted Betty with a hug, thanked her for coming, and then introduced me to her. Rod said, "Betty, this is Elder Renlund. He was the doctor who took care of your son's heart for so many years." She crossed the room and embraced me. And for the next several minutes, there were hugs and tears of joy all around.

After we regained our composure, we moved into the sealing room, where Rod and Kim were sealed for time and all eternity. Rod, Kim, Betty, and I can testify that heaven was very close, that there were others with us that day who had previously passed through the veil of mortality.

God, in His infinite capacity, seals and heals individuals and families despite tragedy, loss, and hardship. We sometimes compare the feelings we experience in temples as having caught a glimpse of heaven.<sup>13</sup> That day in the Provo Utah Temple, this statement by C. S. Lewis resonated with me: "[Mortals] say of some temporal suffering, 'No future bliss can make up for it,' not knowing that Heaven, once attained, will work backwards and turn even that agony into a glory. . . . The Blessed will say, 'We have never lived anywhere except in Heaven.'"<sup>14</sup>

God will strengthen, help, and uphold us;<sup>15</sup> and He will sanctify to us

our deepest distress.<sup>16</sup> When we gather our family histories and go to the temple on behalf of our ancestors, God fulfills many of these promised blessings simultaneously on both sides of the veil. Similarly, we are blessed when we help others in our wards and stakes do the same. Members who do not live close to a temple also receive these blessings by participating in family history work, collecting the names of their ancestors for temple ordinances to be performed.

President Russell M. Nelson, however, cautioned: “We can be inspired all day long about temple and family history experiences others have had. But we must do something to actually experience the joy ourselves.” He continued, “I invite you to prayerfully consider what kind of sacrifice—preferably a sacrifice of time—you can make [to] do more temple and family history work.”<sup>17</sup> As you accept President Nelson’s invitation, you will discover, gather, and connect your family. Additionally, blessings will flow to you and your family like the river spoken of by Ezekiel. You will find healing for that which needs healing.



Orson and Parley Pratt experienced the healing and sealing effects of family history and temple work early in this dispensation. Betty, her family, and Rod experienced it. You can too. Through His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ offers these blessings to all, both the dead and the living. Because of these blessings, we will find that we, metaphorically, “have never lived anywhere except . . . Heaven.”<sup>18</sup> I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Parley P. Pratt to Orson Pratt, May 25, 1853, Orson Pratt Family Collection, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; in Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (2011), 319.
2. Orson Pratt to Parley P. Pratt, Mar. 10, 1853, Parley P. Pratt Collection, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; in Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 319.
3. Notably, not only did Orson Pratt help publish the book on the descendants of William Pratt, but some years later, in 1870, he and his family performed over 2,600 proxy baptisms in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City for the deceased individuals in the book (see Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* [1985], 247).
4. See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:312–13.
5. See “Names Submitted for Temple Ordinances,” First Presidency letter, Feb. 29, 2012. Ancestors whose names are submitted for proxy temple ordinances should be related to the submitter. Without exception, Church members must not submit names from any unauthorized group, such as celebrities and Jewish Holocaust victims.
6. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Family History: ‘In Wisdom and Order,’” *Ensign*, June 1989, 6–8; “In Wisdom and Order,” *Tambuli*, Dec. 1989, 18–23; D. Todd Christofferson, “The Redemption of the Dead and the Testimony of Jesus,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 9–12; *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 10–13; Boyd K. Packer, “Your Family History: Getting Started,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Aug. 2003, 12–17; Thomas S. Monson, “Constant Truths for Changing Times,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 19–22; Henry B. Eyring, “Hearts Bound Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 77–80; M. Russell Ballard, “Faith, Family, Facts, and Fruits,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 25–27; Russell M. Nelson, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 7–10; Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 91–94; David A. Bednar, “The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 24–27; Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 93–95; Quentin L. Cook, “Roots and Branches,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 44–48; Thomas S. Monson, “Hastening the Work,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2014, 4–5; Henry B. Eyring, “The Promise of Hearts Turning,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, July 2014, 4–5; David A. Bednar, “Missionary, Family History, and Temple Work,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2014, 30–35; *Liahona*, Oct. 2014, 14–19; Neil L. Andersen, “‘My Days’ of Temples and Technology,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2015, 28–35; *Liahona*, Feb. 2015, 26–33; Neil L. Andersen, “Sharing the Temple Challenge,” Family Discovery Day, Feb. 2015, LDS.org; Quentin L. Cook, “The Joy of Family History Work,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2016, 28–33; *Liahona*, Feb. 2016, 22–27; Gary E. Stevenson, “Where Are the Keys and Authority of the Priesthood?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 29–32; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “In Praise of Those Who Save,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 77–80; Quentin L. Cook, “See Yourself in the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 97–101; Dale G. Renlund, Ruth L. Renlund, and Ashley R. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2017, 26–31; *Liahona*, Feb. 2017, 34–39; Dallin H. Oaks and Kristen M. Oaks, “Connected to Eternal Families,” Family Discovery Day, Mar. 2018, LDS.org.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:15.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.
9. See Boyd K. Packer, “Balm of Gilead,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 16–18; Jeremiah 8:22; 51:8.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.
11. See Ezekiel 40–47; Bible Dictionary, “Ezekiel.”
12. Ezekiel 47:8–9.
13. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Glimpses of Heaven,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 36–37.
14. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (2001), 69.
15. See Isaiah 41:10.
16. See “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
17. Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Open the Heavens through Temple and Family History Work,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2017, 39; *Liahona*, Oct. 2017, 19.
18. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 69.





**By Douglas D. Holmes**  
First Counselor in the Young Men General Presidency

# What Every Aaronic Priesthood Holder Needs to Understand

*Your Aaronic Priesthood ordination is central to helping God's children receive Christ's atoning power.*

**B**rethren, it is a privilege to be with you in this historic conference. When I was a new mission president, I was excited to receive our first group of new missionaries. A few of our more experienced missionaries were preparing for a brief meeting with them. I noticed that they had arranged children's chairs in a semicircle.

"What's up with the little chairs?" I asked.

The missionaries, somewhat sheepishly, said, "For the new missionaries."

I believe the way we see others significantly impacts their perception of who they are and what they can become.<sup>1</sup> Our new missionaries sat on adult chairs that day.

Sometimes, I fear, we figuratively give our young men of the Aaronic Priesthood children's chairs to sit on rather than helping them see that God has given them a sacred trust and a vital work to do.

President Thomas S. Monson counseled us that young men need to understand "what it means . . . to be

bearers of the priesthood of God. They need to be guided to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of their ordained calling."<sup>2</sup>

Today I pray that the Holy Ghost will guide us to a greater understanding of the power and sacredness of the Aaronic Priesthood and inspire us to focus more diligently on our

priesthood duties. My message is for all Aaronic Priesthood holders, including those who also hold the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Elder Dale G. Renlund taught that the purpose of the priesthood is to provide God's children access to the atoning power of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> To receive Christ's atoning power in our lives, we must believe in Him, repent of our sins, make and keep sacred covenants through ordinances, and receive the Holy Ghost.<sup>4</sup> These are not principles we engage in just once; rather, they work together, reinforcing and building on each other in a continuing process of upward progression to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him."<sup>5</sup>

So, what is the role of the Aaronic Priesthood in this? How does it help us gain access to Christ's atoning power? I believe the answer lies in the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood—the keys of the ministering of angels and of the preparatory gospel.<sup>6</sup>

## The Ministering of Angels

Let's begin with one aspect of the ministering of angels. Before God's





children can have faith in Jesus Christ, they need to know of Him and be taught His gospel. As the Apostle Paul said:

“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

“And how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . .

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning of time, God has “sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest . . . the coming of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Angels are heavenly beings bearing God’s message.<sup>9</sup> In both Hebrew and Greek, the root word of *angel* is “messenger.”<sup>10</sup>

In much the same way that angels are authorized messengers sent by God to declare His word and thereby build faith, we who hold the Aaronic Priesthood have been ordained to “teach, and invite all to come unto Christ.”<sup>11</sup> To preach the gospel is a priesthood duty. And the power

associated with this duty is not just for prophets or even just for missionaries. It is for you!<sup>12</sup>

So how do we get this power? How does a 12-year-old deacon—or any of us—bring faith in Christ to the hearts of God’s children? We start by treasuring up His word so its power is within us.<sup>13</sup> He has promised that if we do, we will have “the power of God unto the convincing of men.”<sup>14</sup> It may be an opportunity to teach in a quorum meeting or visit the home of a member. It may be something less formal, like a conversation with a friend or family member. In any of these settings, if we have prepared, we can teach the gospel the way angels do: by the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>15</sup>

I recently heard Jacob, an Aaronic Priesthood holder in Papua New Guinea, testify of the power of the Book of Mormon and how it has helped him resist evil and follow the Spirit. His words increased my faith and the faith of others. My faith has

also grown as I have heard Aaronic Priesthood holders teach and testify in their quorum meetings.

Young men, you are authorized messengers. Through your words and actions, you can bring faith in Christ to the hearts of God’s children.<sup>16</sup> As President Russell M. Nelson said, “To them you will be as a ministering angel.”<sup>17</sup>

### The Preparatory Gospel

Increased faith in Christ always leads to a desire to change or repent.<sup>18</sup> So it is logical that the key of the ministering of angels would be accompanied by the key of the preparatory gospel, “the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins.”<sup>19</sup>

As you study your Aaronic Priesthood duties, you will see a clear charge to invite others to repent and improve.<sup>20</sup> That does not mean we stand on a street corner shouting, “Repent ye!” More often, it means that *we* repent, we forgive, and as we





*Priests who baptized the Mbuelongo family in Sydney, Australia, came to understand what it means to be “commissioned of Jesus Christ.”*

minister to others, we offer the hope and peace that repentance brings—because we have experienced it ourselves.

I have been with Aaronic Priesthood holders as they visited fellow quorum members. I have witnessed their care soften hearts and help their brothers feel God’s love. I heard one young man bear testimony to his peers of the power of repentance. As he did, hearts were softened, commitments were made, and the healing power of Christ was felt.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: “It is one thing to repent. It is another to have our sins remitted or forgiven. The power to bring this about is found in the Aaronic Priesthood.”<sup>21</sup> The Aaronic Priesthood ordinances of baptism and the sacrament witness and complete our repentance for a remission of sins.<sup>22</sup> President Dallin H. Oaks explained it this way: “We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament. . . . When we renew our baptismal covenants in this way, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism.”<sup>23</sup>

Brethren, it is a sacred privilege to administer ordinances that bring a

remission of sins to repentant hearts through the Savior’s atoning power.<sup>24</sup>

I was recently told of a priest who struggles to express himself who was blessing the sacrament for the first time. As he did, a powerful spirit came over him and the congregation. Later in the meeting, he bore a simple but clear testimony of the power of God he felt during that ordinance.

In Sydney, Australia, four members of a priests quorum baptized members of the Mbuelongo family. The mother of one of these priests related to me how this experience powerfully impacted her son. These priests came to understand what it means to be “commissioned of Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

As you know, priests can now officiate in performing proxy baptisms in the temple. My 17-year-old son recently baptized me for some of our ancestors. We both felt deep gratitude for the Aaronic Priesthood and the privilege of acting for the salvation of God’s children.

Young men, as you diligently engage in your priesthood duties, you participate with God in His work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>26</sup> Experiences like these increase your desire and prepare you to teach repentance and baptize converts as missionaries. They also

prepare you for lifelong service in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

#### **John the Baptist, Our Example**

Aaronic Priesthood holders, we have the privilege and duty to be fellow servants with John the Baptist. John was sent as an authorized messenger to bear witness of Christ and invite all to repent and be baptized—that is, he exercised the Aaronic Priesthood keys we have discussed. John then declared, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the Aaronic Priesthood, with the keys of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel, prepares the way for God’s children to receive, through the Melchizedek Priesthood, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the greatest gift we can receive in this life.<sup>28</sup>

What a profound responsibility God has given to Aaronic Priesthood holders!

#### **An Invitation and Promise**

Parents and priesthood leaders, can you sense the importance of President Monson’s counsel to help young men understand “what it means . . . to be bearers of the priesthood of God”?<sup>29</sup> Understanding and magnifying the Aaronic Priesthood will prepare them to be faithful Melchizedek Priesthood holders, power-filled missionaries, and righteous husbands and fathers. Through their service, they will understand and feel the reality of priesthood power, the power to act in the name of Christ for the salvation of God’s children.

Young men, God has a work for you to do.<sup>30</sup> Your Aaronic Priesthood ordination is central to helping His

children receive Christ's atoning power. I promise that as you put these sacred duties at the center of your life, you will feel the power of God as never before. You will understand your identity as a son of God, called with a holy calling to do His work. And, like John the Baptist, you will help prepare the way for the coming of His Son. Of these truths I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. This is what happened to Moses. After his remarkable encounter with God, he began to see himself differently—as a son of God. This perspective helped him resist Satan, who called him “son of man” (see Moses 1:1–20). See also Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 68–71; Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 93–94.
2. Thomas S. Monson, general conference leadership meeting, Mar. 2011.
3. See Dale G. Renlund, “The Priesthood and the Savior’s Atoning Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 64–67.
4. See 2 Nephi 31–32; 3 Nephi 11:30–41; 27:13–21; Ether 4:18–19; Moses 6:52–68; 8:24.
5. Moroni 10:32; see also *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 6.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1; 84:26–27; 107:20.
7. Romans 10:14–15, 17. Joseph Smith taught this same truth: “Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 385).
8. Moroni 7:22; see Alma 12:28–30; 13:21–24; 32:22–23; 39:17–19; Helaman 5:11; Moroni 7:21–25, 29–32; Doctrine and Covenants 20:35; 29:41–42; Moses 5:58; see also Matthew 28:19; Romans 10:13–17.
9. See George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist (1987), 54.
10. See James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (1984), Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary section, 66, Greek dictionary section, 7.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59.
12. See Henry B. Eyring, “That He May Become Strong Also,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 75–78; Alma 17:3; Helaman 5:18; 6:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 28:3.
13. See 1 John 2:14; Alma 17:2; 26:13; 32:42. *Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders* is a valuable tool to help accomplish this.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
15. See 2 Nephi 32:3; Doctrine and Covenants 42:14; 50:17–22.
16. See Moroni 7:25.
17. Russell M. Nelson, “Honoring the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 40; see also Alma 27:4.
18. See Alma 34:17; Helaman 14:13.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 84:27.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:46, 51–59, 73–79. *Fulfilling My Duty to God: For Aaronic Priesthood Holders* is a valuable tool to help us understand our duties.
21. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Aaronic Priesthood—a Gift from God,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 46.
22. Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained: “Baptism of water is the final or crowning step in the process of repentance. The renunciation of sin, coupled with our covenant of obedience, completes our repentance; indeed, repentance remains unfinished without that covenant” (“Building Faith in Christ,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2012, 54–55; *Liahona*, Sept. 2012, 14–15). See also D. Todd Christofferson, “The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 38–41; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:24 (in the Bible appendix).  
The ordinance of the sacrament gives us “an opportunity each week to renew sacred covenants that allow us to be partakers of the Savior’s atoning grace with the same spiritually cleansing effect of baptism and confirmation” (“Understanding Our Covenants with God,” *Ensign*, July 2012, 23; *Liahona*, July 2012, 21). See also Dallin H. Oaks, “Always Have His Spirit,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 59–61.
23. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 1999, 44.
24. Elder David A. Bednar explained: “The ordinances of salvation and exaltation administered in the Lord’s restored Church are far more than rituals or symbolic performances. Rather, they constitute authorized channels through which the blessings and powers of heaven can flow into our individual lives” (“Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 60).
25. Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
26. Moses 1:39.
27. Matthew 3:11.
28. Many Church leaders have identified the Holy Ghost as mortality’s greatest gift.  
President Dallin H. Oaks said, “To have the continuous companionship of the Holy Ghost is the most precious possession we can have in mortality” (“The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 38; *Liahona*, Jan. 1999, 44).  
Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “Speaking from the perspective of eternity, eternal life is the greatest of all the gifts of God. But narrowing the perspective to this life only, the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift a mortal can enjoy” (“What Is Meant by ‘The Holy Spirit?’” *Instructor*, Feb. 1965, 57).  
President Wilford Woodruff testified: “If you have the Holy Ghost with you—and every one ought to have—I can say unto you that there is no greater gift, there is no greater blessing, there is no greater testimony given to any man on earth. You may have the administration of angels; you may see many miracles; you may see many wonders in the earth; but I claim that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon man” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 49).  
And Elder David A. Bednar added: “The commandments from God we obey and the inspired counsel from Church leaders we follow principally focus upon obtaining the companionship of the Spirit. Fundamentally, all gospel teachings and activities are centered on coming unto Christ by receiving the Holy Ghost in our lives” (“Receive the Holy Ghost,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 97).
29. Thomas S. Monson, general conference leadership meeting, Mar. 2011.
30. See Moses 1:6.







By President Russell M. Nelson

# Introductory Remarks

*We announce a significant restructuring of our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to accomplish the work of the Lord more effectively.*

Thank you, Brother Holmes, for your important message.

Dear brethren, we deeply miss President Thomas S. Monson and Elder Robert D. Hales. Yet we “all press on in the work of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

I am very grateful for each man who bears the holy priesthood. You are the hope of our Redeemer, who desires “that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.”<sup>2</sup> He wants *all* of His ordained sons to represent Him, to speak for Him, to act for Him, and to bless the lives of God’s children throughout the world, to the end “that faith also might increase in [all] the earth.”<sup>3</sup>

Some of you serve where the Church has been established for generations. Others serve where the Church is relatively new. For some, your wards are large. For others, your branches are small and distances are great. Regardless of your individual circumstances, each of you is a member of a priesthood quorum with a divine mandate to learn and to teach, to love and to serve others.

Tonight we announce a significant restructuring of our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to accomplish the work of the Lord more effectively.

*In each ward, the high priests and the elders will now be combined into one elders quorum.* This adjustment will greatly enhance the capacity and the ability of men who bear the priesthood to serve others. Prospective elders will be welcomed in and fellowshiped by that quorum. In each stake, the stake presidency will continue to preside over the stake high priests quorum. But the composition of that quorum will be based on *current* priesthood callings, as will be explained later.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson and Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now teach us more about these important adjustments.

These modifications have been under study for many months. We have felt a pressing need to improve the way we care for our members and report our contacts with them. To do that better, we need to strengthen our priesthood quorums to give greater direction to the ministering of love and support that the Lord intends for His Saints.

These adjustments are inspired of the Lord. As we implement them, we will be even more effective than we have ever been previously.

We are engaged in the work of Almighty God. Jesus is the Christ! We are His humble servants! God bless you, brethren, as we learn of and do our duty, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:20.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 1:21.





By Elder D. Todd Christofferson  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Elders Quorum

*Having one Melchizedek Priesthood quorum in a ward unifies priesthood holders to accomplish all aspects of the work of salvation.*

Not long after the Church was organized in this last dispensation, the Lord stated in a revelation, “And by the prayer of your faith ye shall receive my law, that ye may know how to govern my church and have all things right before me.”<sup>1</sup> This principle has been followed in the Church—and that promise has been honored by the Lord—ever since. Patterns for priesthood organization and service have been revealed from time to time, beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith when priesthood offices and quorums were established in our day. Significant refinements were revealed and implemented during the tenures of Presidents Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Spencer W. Kimball, among others, with respect to the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventy, high priests, and other offices and quorums in both the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods.<sup>2</sup> Now, in a historic statement just moments ago, President Russell M. Nelson announced a further crucial adjustment.

If I may repeat some of his statement: “Tonight we announce a significant restructuring of our Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to accomplish the work of the Lord more effectively. *In each ward, the high priests and the*

*elders will now be combined into one elders quorum . . . [and] the composition of [the stake high priests] quorum will be based on current priesthood callings.”*

President Nelson added:

“These modifications have been under study for many months. We have felt a pressing need to improve the way we care for our members. . . . To do that better, we need to strengthen our priesthood quorums to give greater direction to the ministering of love and

support that the Lord intends for His Saints.

“These adjustments are inspired of the Lord. As we implement them, we will be even more effective than we have ever been previously.”<sup>3</sup>

At the First Presidency’s direction, Elder Ronald A. Rasband and I will add some detail that we trust will respond to questions you may have.

## Elders and High Priests Quorums

First, to reiterate, what are the adjustments for ward high priests groups and elders quorums? In wards, members of elders quorums and high priests groups will now be combined into one Melchizedek Priesthood quorum with one quorum presidency. This quorum, increased in numbers and unity, will be designated the “elders quorum.” High priests groups are discontinued. The elders quorum includes all elders and prospective elders in the ward as well as high priests who *are not* currently serving in the bishopric, in the stake presidency, on the high







council, or as functioning patriarchs. The high priests quorum in the stake will be composed of those high priests who *are* serving in the stake presidency, in bishoprics, on the high council, and as functioning patriarchs.

#### The Elders Quorum Presidency

How is the presidency of the elders quorum to be organized? The stake presidency will release current high priests group leaderships and elders quorum presidencies and will call a new elders quorum president and counselors in each ward. The new elders quorum presidency may include elders and high priests, of varying ages and experience, serving together in one quorum presidency. An elder or a high priest may serve as the quorum president or as a counselor in the presidency. This is not a “takeover” of elders quorums by high priests. We expect elders and high priests to work together in any combination in the quorum presidency and in quorum

service. These quorum adjustments should be implemented as soon as conveniently possible.

#### Priesthood Offices in the Elders Quorum

Does this adjustment in quorum structure change the priesthood office held by quorum members? No, this action does not rescind any priesthood office to which any quorum member may have been ordained in the past. As you know, a man may be ordained to different priesthood offices over his lifetime, and he does not lose or forfeit any prior ordination when he receives a new one. While in some instances a priesthood bearer may serve in more than one office at a time, as when a high priest also serves as a patriarch or as a bishop, he typically does not function in all his priesthood offices at the same time. Bishops and Seventies, for instance, do not actively serve in those offices once they are released or made emeritus. Thus, whatever other priesthood office or offices a man may

hold, while he is a member of the elders quorum, he serves as an elder.

Years ago, President Boyd K. Packer observed that “the priesthood is greater than any of its offices. . . . The priesthood is not divisible. An elder holds as much priesthood as an Apostle. (See D&C 20:38.) When a man [has the priesthood conferred upon him], he receives all of it. However, there are offices within the priesthood—divisions of authority and responsibility. . . . Sometimes one office is spoken of as being ‘higher than’ or ‘lower than’ another office. Rather than ‘higher’ or ‘lower,’ offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood represent different areas of service.”<sup>4</sup> Brethren, I devoutly hope that we will no longer speak in terms of being “advanced” to another office in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Elders will continue to be ordained high priests when they are called to a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric—or at other times as determined by the stake president through

prayerful consideration and inspiration. When their terms of service in a stake presidency, high council, or bishopric are completed, high priests will rejoin the elders quorum in their ward.

#### **Direction for the Elders Quorum President**

Who directs the work of the elders quorum president? The stake president presides over the Melchizedek Priesthood in his stake. Therefore, the elders quorum president is directly responsible to the stake president, who provides training and guidance from the stake presidency and through the high council. The bishop, as the presiding high priest in the ward, also meets regularly with the elders quorum president. The bishop counsels with him and gives appropriate direction regarding how best to serve and bless ward members, working in harmony with all ward organizations.<sup>5</sup>

#### **The Purpose of These Changes**

What are the purposes of the adjustments to Melchizedek Priesthood quorums? Having one Melchizedek Priesthood quorum in a ward unifies priesthood holders to accomplish all aspects of the work of salvation, including the temple and family history work previously coordinated by the high priests groups. It allows quorum members of all ages and backgrounds to benefit from the perspective and experience of one another and of those in different stages of life. It also provides additional opportunities for experienced priesthood holders to mentor others, including prospective elders, new members, young adults, and those returning to Church activity. I cannot adequately express how excited I am to contemplate the increasingly vital role that elders quorums will play

in the future. The wisdom, experience, capacity, and strength that will be found in these quorums portend a new day and a new standard of priesthood service across the Church.

Twenty years ago in general conference, I related a story first told by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy that I believe bears repeating here.

In 1918 Brother George Goates was a farmer who raised sugar beets in Lehi, Utah. Winter came early that year and froze much of his beet crop in the ground. For George and his young son Francis, the harvest was slow and difficult. Meanwhile, an influenza epidemic was raging. The dreaded disease claimed the lives of George's son Charles and three of Charles's small children—two little girls and a boy. In the course of only six days, a grieving George Goates made three separate trips to Ogden, Utah, to bring the bodies home for burial. At the end of this terrible interlude, George and Francis hitched up their wagon and headed back to the beet field.

"[On the way] they passed wagon after wagon-load of beets being hauled to the factory and driven by neighborhood farmers. As they passed by, each driver would wave a greeting: 'Hi ya, Uncle George,' 'Sure sorry, George,' 'Tough break, George,' 'You've got a lot of friends, George.'

"On the last wagon was . . . freckled-faced Jasper Rolfe. He waved a cheery greeting and called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George.'

"[Brother Goates] turned to Francis and said: 'I wish it was all of ours.'

"When they arrived at the farm gate, Francis jumped down off the big red beet wagon and opened the gate as [his father] drove onto the field. [George] pulled up, stopped the team, . . . and scanned the field. . . . There

wasn't a sugar beet on the whole field. Then it dawned upon him what Jasper Rolfe meant when he called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George!'

"[George] got down off the wagon, picked up a handful of the rich, brown soil he loved so much, and then . . . a beet top, and he looked for a moment at these symbols of his labor, as if he couldn't believe his eyes.

"Then [he] sat down on a pile of beet tops—this man who brought four of his loved ones home for burial in the course of only six days; made caskets, dug graves, and even helped with the burial clothing—this amazing man who never faltered, nor flinched, nor wavered throughout this agonizing ordeal—sat down on a pile of beet tops and sobbed like a little child.

"Then he arose, wiped his eyes, . . . looked up at the sky, and said: 'Thanks, Father, for the elders of our ward.'"<sup>6</sup>

Yes, thanks be to God for the men of the priesthood and for the service they





will yet render in lifting individuals and families and in establishing Zion.

The First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presidency of the Seventy have considered these adjustments over an extended period of time. With much prayer, careful study of the scriptural foundations of priesthood quorums, and confirmation that this is the Lord's will, we are moving forward with unanimity in what is in reality one more step in the unfolding of the Restoration. The Lord's direction is manifest, and I rejoice in it, as I bear witness of Him, His priesthood, and your ordinations in that priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 41:3.
2. See, for example, William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement," in *My Fellow Servants: Essays on the History of the Priesthood* (2010), 227–64; "To the Seventies," in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1965), 352–54; Hartley, "The Seventies in the 1880s: Revelations and Reorganizing," in *My Fellow Servants*, 265–300; Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (2005), 254–58; Susan Easton Black, "Early Quorums of the Seventies," in David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr, eds., *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration* (2011), 139–60; Richard O. Cowan, "The Seventies' Role in the Worldwide Church Administration," in *A Firm Foundation*, 573–93.
3. Russell M. Nelson, "Introductory Remarks," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 54.
4. Boyd K. Packer, "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government," *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 8, 9; *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 17, 19.
5. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 7.3.1.
6. D. Todd Christofferson, "The Priesthood Quorum," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 40–41; *Liahona*, Jan. 1999, 47; see also Vaughn J. Featherstone, "Now Abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity," *Ensign*, July 1973, 36–37.



By Elder Ronald A. Rasband  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Behold! A Royal Army

*What a joy it will be for all Melchizedek Priesthood holders to have the blessing of teaching, learning, and serving shoulder to shoulder.*

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, it is with great humility that I stand before you on this historic occasion, under assignment by our dear prophet and President, Russell M. Nelson. How I love and sustain this wonderful man of God and our new First Presidency. I add my witness to that of Elder D. Todd Christofferson and my other Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that the changes announced this evening are the will of the Lord.

As stated by President Nelson, this is a matter that has been prayerfully discussed and considered by the senior Brethren of the Church for a long time. The desire was to seek the Lord's will and strengthen the quorums of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Inspiration was received, and this evening our prophet made known the will of the Lord. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets!"<sup>1</sup> How blessed we are to have a living prophet today!

Throughout our life, Sister Rasband and I have traveled the world on various Church and professional assignments. I have seen nearly every type of unit configuration in the Church: a small branch in Russia where the

number of Melchizedek Priesthood holders could be counted on one hand, a new and growing ward in Africa where both high priests and elders met as a single body because the overall number of Melchizedek Priesthood holders was low, and well-established wards where the number of elders required the dividing of their quorum into two quorums!

Everywhere we have gone, we have witnessed the hand of the Lord going before His servants, preparing the people and the way ahead so that all His children might be blessed according to





their every need. Hasn't He promised that He "will go before [our] face" and "be on [our] right hand and on [our] left" and that His "Spirit shall be in [our] hearts, and [His] angels round about [us]"?<sup>2</sup>

Thinking about all of you, I am reminded of the hymn "Behold! A Royal Army."

*Behold! A royal army,  
With banner, sword, and shield,  
Is marching forth to conquer  
On life's great battlefield.  
Its ranks are filled with soldiers,  
United, bold, and strong,  
Who follow their Commander  
And sing their joyful song.*<sup>3</sup>

Elder Christofferson has answered several questions that are certain to arise from the announcement that high priests groups and elders quorums, at the ward level, are being combined into one unified, mighty army of brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

These adjustments will help elders quorums and Relief Societies harmonize their work. They will also simplify the quorum's coordination with the

bishopric and ward council. And they allow the bishop to delegate more responsibilities to the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents so that the bishop and his counselors can focus on their primary duties—particularly presiding over the young women and the young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood.

Changes in organizations and functions of the Church are not uncommon. In 1883 the Lord said to President John Taylor: "[Concerning] the management and organization of my Church and Priesthood . . . I will reveal unto you, from time to time, through the channels that I have appointed, everything that shall be necessary for the future development and perfection of my Church, for the adjustment and rolling forth of my kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

Now, a few words to you brethren who are high priests—know that we love you! Our Father in Heaven loves you! You are a great part of the royal army of the priesthood, and we cannot move this work forward without your goodness, service, experience, and righteousness. Alma taught that men are called to be high priests because of

their exceeding faith and good works to teach and to minister to others.<sup>5</sup> That experience is needed now perhaps more than ever.

In many wards, we may have high priests who are now going to have the opportunity to be presided over by an elder as their quorum president. We have a precedent of elders presiding over high priests: elders are currently serving as branch presidents in some regions of the world where high priests reside in the branch, and there are branches in which only an elders quorum is organized and high priests are present.

What a joy it will be for *all* Melchizedek Priesthood holders to have the blessing of teaching, learning, and serving shoulder to shoulder with all the members in their ward. Wherever you are and whatever your circumstances may be, we invite you prayerfully, faithfully, and joyfully to accept new opportunities to lead or to be led and to serve unitedly as a body of priesthood brethren.

I will now address additional matters which may need clarification as we move forward to implement the will of





the Lord regarding the organization of His quorums of the holy priesthood.

What are the adjustments for a stake high priests quorum? Stake high priests quorums will continue to function. Stake presidencies will continue to serve as the presidency of the stake high priests quorum. However, as noted by Elder Christofferson, members of the stake high priests quorum will now consist of high priests *currently* serving in the stake presidency, as members of a ward bishopric, as members of the stake high council, and the functioning patriarch. Ward and stake clerks and executive secretaries are not members of the stake high priests quorum. When someone who is actively serving as a high priest, patriarch, Seventy, or Apostle is visiting a ward and desires to attend priesthood meeting, he will meet with the elders quorum.

As brethren in these callings are released in due course, they will return to their home units as members of the elders quorum.

What is the *role* of the stake high priests quorum? The stake presidency meets with members of the high priests quorum to counsel together, to testify, and to provide training. Stake meetings as outlined in our handbooks will continue with two adjustments:

One, wards and stakes will no longer hold priesthood executive committee meetings. If a special ward

issue arises, such as a delicate family matter or an unusual welfare challenge, it could be addressed in an expanded bishopric meeting. Other less-sensitive matters can be addressed in the ward council. What has been known as the stake priesthood executive committee meeting will now be called the “high council meeting.”

Two, the annual meeting of all ordained high priests in the stake will no longer be held. However, the stake presidency will continue to hold an annual meeting of the stake high priests quorum as has been announced today.

Can a ward have more than one elders quorum? The answer is yes. In the spirit of Doctrine and Covenants section 107, verse 89, when a ward has an unusually large number of active Melchizedek Priesthood bearers, leaders may organize more than one elders quorum. In such cases, each quorum should have a reasonable balance in terms of age, experience, and priesthood office and strength.

I testify that as we move forward with this inspired quorum restructuring in our wards and stakes, we will see a multitude of blessings. Let me cite just a few examples.

Under the direction of the bishop, more priesthood resources may assist with the work of salvation. This would include the gathering of Israel through temple and family history work,

working with families and individuals in need, and helping the missionaries to bring souls to Jesus Christ.

As previous presiding leaders return to share their experience with the quorum of elders, a stronger quorum membership will result.

There will be a greater diversity of gifts and capacities within the quorum.

There will be more flexibility and availability to meet current and urgent needs within the ward and quorum and in fulfilling our various ministering assignments.

There will be an increase in mentoring and unity as a new elder and an experienced high priest share experiences, side by side, in quorum meetings and assignments.

Bishops and branch presidents will hopefully be liberated to magnify their callings to shepherd their flocks and to minister to those in need.

We understand that each ward and stake is different. While understanding these differences, we are hopeful that you will follow through with these changes promptly following this general conference. We have been given direction by a prophet of God! What a tremendous blessing and responsibility. Let us fulfill it with all righteousness and diligence!

I remind you: priesthood authority comes by way of setting apart and ordination, but real priesthood power, the power to act in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, can come only through righteous living.

The Lord declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Restoration:

“Behold, and lo, I will take care of your flocks, and will raise up elders and send unto them.

“Behold, I will hasten my work in its time.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, this is a time when the Lord is hastening His work.

Let us each use this opportunity to reflect and improve our lives to better align with His will so that we may deserve the many blessings He has promised to the true and faithful.

Brethren, thank you for all that you are doing to be a part of this magnificent work. May we go forward in this great and honored cause.

*Oh, when the war is ended,  
When strife and conflicts cease,  
When all are safely gathered  
Within the vale of peace,  
Before the King eternal,  
That vast and mighty throng  
Shall praise his name forever,  
And this shall be their song:*

*Victory, victory,  
Thru him that redeemed us!  
Victory, victory,  
Thru Jesus Christ, our Lord!  
Victory, victory, victory,  
Thru Jesus Christ, our Lord!*<sup>7</sup>

Today we all stand as witnesses of the Lord revealing His will through His prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. I testify that he is God's prophet here on earth. I bear my witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great Redeemer and Savior. This is His work, and this is His will, to which I bear solemn testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Amos 3:7.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
3. "Behold! A Royal Army," *Hymns*, no. 251.
4. In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1965), 2:354.
5. See Alma 13.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:72–73.
7. "Behold! A Royal Army," *Hymns*, no. 251.



By President Henry B. Eyring  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

## Inspired Ministering

*We receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others.  
That is why we have the priesthood responsibility to serve for the Savior.*

My beloved brethren, I am grateful for the privilege of speaking to you in this historic general conference. We have sustained President Russell M. Nelson as the 17th President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As I have had the blessing of working with him each day, I have felt a confirmation of the Spirit that President Nelson is called of God to lead the Lord's true Church.

It is also my witness that the Lord has called Elder Gerrit W. Gong and

Elder Ulisses Soares to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I love and sustain them. They will, by their ministry, bless lives across the world and across generations.

This conference is historic for yet another reason. President Nelson has announced an inspired step forward in the Lord's organized plan for His Church. That plan includes a new structure for priesthood quorums in wards and stakes so that we may better fulfill our priesthood responsibilities.







Those responsibilities all have to do with our priesthood care of our Father's children.

The Lord's plan for His Saints to provide loving care has taken many forms over the years. In the early days of Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith needed an organized way to care for the flood of largely impoverished converts coming into the city. Four of my great-grandparents were among them—the Eyrings, Bennions, Romneys, and Smiths. The Prophet organized the care of those Saints by geography. In Illinois those divisions of the city were called “wards.”

As the Saints moved across the plains, their care for each other was organized in “companies.” One of my paternal great-grandfathers was returning from his mission in what is now Oklahoma when he met a company on the trail. He was so weak with disease that he and his companion were on their backs in a little wagon.

The leader of the company sent two young women to help whoever might be in that forlorn wagon. One of them, a young sister who had been converted in Switzerland, took a look at one of

the missionaries and felt compassion. He was saved by that company of Saints. He recovered enough to walk the rest of the way to the Salt Lake Valley with his young rescuer by his side. They fell in love and married. He became my great-grandfather Henry Eyring, and she my great-grandmother Maria Bommeli Eyring.

Years later, when people remarked at the great difficulty of moving across a continent, she said, “Oh no, it wasn't hard. While we walked, we talked the whole way about what a miracle it was that we had both found the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It was the happiest time I can remember.”

Since then, the Lord has used a variety of ways to help His Saints care for each other. Now He has blessed us with strengthened and unified quorums at the ward and stake levels—quorums that work in coordination with all ward organizations.

Municipal wards, companies, and strengthened quorums have all required at least two things to be successful in the Lord's intent to have His Saints care for each other in the way He cares for them. They succeed when

the Saints feel the love of Christ for each other above their self-interest. The scriptures call it “charity . . . the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). And they succeed when the Holy Ghost guides the caregiver to know what the Lord knows is best for the person whom He is trying to help.

Time after time in recent weeks, members of the Church have acted in my presence as if somehow they had anticipated what the Lord was going to do, as has been announced here today. Let me give you just two examples. One, a simple sacrament meeting talk by a 14-year-old teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood who understands what priesthood holders can accomplish in their service for the Lord. Second, a Melchizedek Priesthood holder who, with the love of Christ, was inspired to serve a family.

First, let me give you the words of the young man speaking to a ward sacrament meeting. I was there. Try to remember what you were like when you were 14 years old and listen to hear him say more than so young a man could reasonably know:

“I have really liked being a member of the teachers quorum in our ward since I turned 14 last year. A teacher still has all the responsibilities of a deacon plus some new ones.

“Since some of us are teachers, others will be someday, and everyone in the Church is blessed by the priesthood, so it's important for all of us to know more about the duties of a teacher.

“First of all, Doctrine and Covenants 20:53 says, ‘The teacher's duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them.’

“Next, Doctrine and Covenants 20:54–55 says:

“‘And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each

other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

“And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty.”

The young man continued:

“The Lord is telling us it’s our responsibility to not only care for the Church but to also care for the people within the Church the way that Christ would because this is His Church. If we are trying to keep the commandments, be kind to each other, be honest, be good friends, and enjoy being together, then we will be able to have the Spirit with us and know what Heavenly Father wants us to do. If we don’t, then we can’t fulfill our calling.”

He went on to say:

“When a teacher chooses to set the right example by being a good home teacher, greeting the members at church, preparing the sacrament, helping at home, and being a peacemaker, he’s choosing to honor his priesthood and fulfill his calling.

“Being a good teacher doesn’t only mean being responsible when we are at church or at Church activities. The Apostle Paul taught, ‘Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity’ (1 Timothy 4:12).”

Then the young man said:

“No matter where we are or what we are doing, we can be a good example of righteousness at all times and in all places.

“My dad and I home teach the Browns.<sup>1</sup> Every time we go over there, I have a great time visiting and getting to know them. One thing I really like about the Browns is whenever we go over there, they are all willing to listen and they always have good stories to share.

“When we know people in the ward well because of home teaching, it

makes it easier to do the next duty of a teacher, and that’s greeting the members at church. Helping people feel welcome and included at church helps all the members of the ward feel loved and prepared to take the sacrament.

“After greeting members who have come to church, teachers help each Sunday by preparing the sacrament. I really enjoy passing and preparing the sacrament in this ward because everyone is so reverent. I always feel the Spirit when I prepare and pass the sacrament. It’s a real blessing to me that I’m able to do it every Sunday.

“Some service like passing the sacrament is something people see and they thank us for doing it, but other service like preparing the sacrament is usually done without anyone noticing. It *isn’t* important if people *see* us serving; what’s important is that the Lord knows we have served Him.

“As teachers, we should always try to strengthen the Church, our friends, and our family by fulfilling our priesthood responsibilities. It’s not always easy, but the Lord gives no commandments to us ‘save he shall prepare a way for [us to] accomplish the thing which he commandeth’ (1 Nephi 3:7).”

As that young man concluded, I continued to be amazed at his maturity and wisdom. He summarized by saying, “I know we will become better if we choose to follow [Jesus Christ].”

Another story of priesthood service was told a month ago in a ward sacrament meeting. Again, I was there. In this case, the seasoned Melchizedek Priesthood holder didn’t know as he spoke that he was describing exactly what the Lord desires to happen with strengthened priesthood quorums. Here is the gist of his account:

He and a home teaching companion were assigned to serve seven families.



Almost all of them did *not* want visits. When the home teachers went to their apartments, they refused to answer the door. When they telephoned, they did not get an answer. When they left a message, the call was not returned. This senior companion finally resorted to a letter-writing ministry. He even began to use bright yellow envelopes in the hope of getting a response.

One of the seven families was a less-active single sister who had emigrated from Europe. She had two young children.

After many attempts to contact her, he received a text message. She abruptly informed him that she was too busy to meet with home teachers. She had two jobs and was in the military as well. Her primary job was that of a police officer, and her career goal was to become a detective and then return to her native country and continue her work there.

The home teacher never was able to visit with her in her home. He periodically texted her. Every month he sent a handwritten letter, supplemented with holiday cards for each child.

He received no response. But she knew who her home teachers were, how to contact them, and that they would persist in their priesthood service.





Then one day he received an urgent text from her. She desperately needed help. She did not know who the bishop was, but she did know her home teachers.

In a few days, she had to leave the state for a monthlong military training exercise. She could not take her children with her. Her mother, who was going to care for her children, had just flown to Europe to care for her husband, who had a medical emergency.

This less-active single sister had enough money to buy a ticket to Europe for her youngest child but not for her 12-year-old son, Eric.<sup>2</sup> She asked her home teacher if he could find a good LDS family to take Eric into their home for the next 30 days!

The home teacher texted back that he would do his best. He then contacted his priesthood leaders. The bishop, who was the presiding high priest, gave him approval to approach members of the ward council, including the Relief Society president.

The Relief Society president quickly found four good LDS families, with children about Eric's age, who would take him into their homes for a week at a time. Over the next month, these

families fed Eric, found room for him in their already crowded apartments or small homes, took him on their previously planned summer family activities, brought him to church, included him in their family home evenings, and on and on.

The families with boys Eric's age included him in their deacons quorum meetings and activities. During this 30-day period, Eric was in church every Sunday for the first time in his life.

After his mother came home from her training, Eric continued to attend church, usually with one of these four volunteer LDS families or others who had befriended him, including his mother's visiting teachers. In time, he was ordained a deacon and began passing the sacrament regularly.

Now let us look into Eric's future. We will not be surprised if he becomes a leader in the Church in his mother's home country when his family returns there—all because of Saints who worked together in unity, under the direction of a bishop, to serve out of charity in their hearts and with the power of the Holy Ghost.

We know that charity is essential for us to be saved in the kingdom of God. Moroni wrote, "Except ye have charity

ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God" (Moroni 10:21; see also Ether 12:34).

We also know that charity is a gift bestowed upon us after all we can do. We must "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:48).

It seems to me that we receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others. That is why we have the priesthood responsibility to serve for the Savior. When we are engaged in service to others, we think less about ourselves, and the Holy Ghost can more readily come to us and help us in our lifelong quest to have the gift of charity bestowed upon us.

I bear you my witness that the Lord has already begun a great step forward in His plan for us to become even more inspired and charitable in our priesthood ministering service. I am grateful for His love, which He so generously gives us. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Name has been changed.
2. Name has been changed.



By President Dallin H. Oaks  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

# The Powers of the Priesthood

*The magnifying of the holy priesthood you hold is vital to the work of the Lord in your families and in your Church callings.*

My beloved brethren, we have heard a revelatory announcement from President Russell M. Nelson. We have heard important elaborations by Elders Christofferson and Rasband and by President Eyring. What will yet be said, including more from President Nelson, will elaborate what you, the Lord's leaders and priesthood holders, will now do in your responsibilities. To help with that, I will review some fundamental principles governing the priesthood you hold.

## I. The Priesthood

The Melchizedek Priesthood is the divine authority God has delegated to accomplish His work “to bring to pass the . . . eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). In 1829, it was conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by the Savior's Apostles Peter, James, and John (see D&C 27:12). It is sacred and powerful beyond our powers to describe.

The *keys* of the priesthood are the powers to direct the exercise of priesthood authority. Thus, when the Apostles conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver,

they also gave them the keys to direct its exercise (see D&C 27:12–13). But not all priesthood keys were conferred at that time. The entire keys and knowledge necessary for this “dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:18) are given “line upon line” (verse 21). Additional keys were given in the Kirtland Temple seven years later (see D&C 110:11–16). These keys were given to direct priesthood authority in

the additional assignments being given at that time, such as baptism for the dead.

The Melchizedek Priesthood is not a status or a label. It is a divine power held in trust to use for the benefit of God's work for His children. We should always remember that men who hold the priesthood are *not* “the priesthood.” It is not appropriate to refer to “the priesthood and the women.” We should refer to “the *holders* of the priesthood and the women.”

## II. A Ministry of Service

Now let us consider what the Lord Jesus Christ expects from those who hold His priesthood—how we are to bring souls unto Him.

President Joseph F. Smith taught: “It has truly been said that the Church is perfectly organized. The only trouble is that these organizations are not fully alive to the obligations that rest upon them. When they become thoroughly awakened to the requirements made of them, they will fulfil their duties more faithfully, and the work of the Lord will







be all the stronger and more powerful and influential in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

President Smith also cautioned:

“The God-given titles of honor . . . associated with the several offices in and orders of the Holy Priesthood, are not to be used nor considered as are the titles originated by man; they are not for adornment nor are they expressive of mastership, but rather of appointment to humble service in the work of the one Master whom we profess to serve. . . .

“ . . . We are laboring for the salvation of souls, and we should feel that this is the greatest duty devolving upon us. Therefore, we should feel willing to sacrifice everything, if need be, for the love of God, the salvation of men, and the triumph of the kingdom of God upon the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

### III. The Offices of the Priesthood

In the Lord’s Church, the offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood have different functions. The Doctrine and Covenants refers to high priests as “standing presidents or servants over different stakes scattered abroad” (D&C 124:134). It refers to elders as “standing ministers to [the Lord’s] church” (D&C 124:137). Here are other teachings on these separate functions.

A high priest officiates and administers in spiritual things (see D&C 107:10,

12). Also, as President Joseph F. Smith taught, “Inasmuch as he has been ordained a high priest, [he] should feel that he is obliged . . . to set an example before the old and young worthy of emulation, and to place himself in a position to be a teacher of righteousness, not only by precept but more particularly by example—giving to the younger ones the benefit of the experience of age, and thus becoming individually a power in the midst of the community in which he dwells.”<sup>3</sup>

On the duties of an elder, Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve taught: “An elder is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . He is commissioned to stand in the place and stead of his Master . . . in ministering to his fellowmen. He is the Lord’s agent.”<sup>4</sup>

Elder McConkie criticized the idea that one is “only an elder.” “Every elder in the Church holds as much priesthood as the President of the Church . . .,” he said. “What is an elder? He is a shepherd, a shepherd serving in the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd.”<sup>5</sup>

In this important function to minister in the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd, there is no distinction between the offices of high priest and elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the great section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord declares,

“High priests after the order of the Melchizedek Priesthood have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder [or offices in the Aaronic Priesthood]” (D&C 107:10; see also verse 12).

The most important principle for all priesthood holders is the principle taught by the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob. After he and his brother Joseph were consecrated priests and teachers of the people, he declared, “And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence” (Jacob 1:19).

Brethren, our responsibilities as holders of the priesthood are serious matters. Other organizations can be satisfied with worldly standards of performance in delivering their messages and performing their other functions. But we who hold the priesthood of God have the divine power that even governs entrance into the celestial kingdom of God. We have the purpose and the responsibility the Lord defined in the revealed preface to the Doctrine and Covenants. We are to proclaim to the world:

“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).

To fulfill this divine charge, we must be faithful in “magnifying” our

priesthood callings and responsibilities (see D&C 84:33). President Harold B. Lee explained what it means to magnify the priesthood: “When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord’s errand. That is what it means to magnify the priesthood.”<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, brethren, if the Lord Himself were to ask you to help one of His sons or daughters—which He has done through His servants—would you do it? And if you did, would you act as His agent, “on the Lord’s errand,” relying on His promised help?

President Lee had another teaching about magnifying the priesthood: “When you hold a magnifying glass over something it makes that thing look bigger than you could see it with the naked eye; that’s a magnifying glass. Now, . . . if anybody magnifies their priesthood—that is, makes it bigger than they first thought it was and more important than anyone else thought it was—that is the way you magnify your priesthood.”<sup>7</sup>

Here is an example of a priesthood holder magnifying his priesthood responsibility. I heard this from Elder Jeffrey D. Erekson, my companion in a stake conference in Idaho. As a young married elder, desperately poor and feeling unable to finish his last year of college, Jeffrey decided to drop out and accept an attractive job offer. A few days later his elders quorum president came to his home. “Do you understand the significance of the priesthood keys I hold?” the elders quorum president asked. When Jeffrey said he did, the president told him that since hearing of his intention to drop out of college, the Lord had tormented him during sleepless nights to give Jeffrey this message: “As your elders quorum president, I counsel you not to drop out of college. That is a message to you from the Lord.” Jeffrey stayed in school. Years later I met him when he was a successful businessman and heard him tell an audience of priesthood holders, “That [counsel] has made all the difference in my life.”

A priesthood holder magnified his priesthood and calling, and that made

“all the difference” in the life of another child of God.

#### IV. Priesthood in the Family

Up to now, I have been speaking of the functions of the priesthood in the Church. Now I will speak of priesthood in the family. I begin with keys. The principle that priesthood authority can be exercised only under the direction of the one who holds the keys for that function is fundamental in the Church but does not apply to the exercise of priesthood authority in the family.<sup>8</sup> A father who holds the priesthood presides in his family by the authority of the priesthood he holds. He has no need to have the direction or approval of priesthood keys in order to counsel the members of his family, hold family meetings, give priesthood blessings to his wife and children, or give healing blessings to family members or others.

If fathers would magnify their priesthood in their own family, it would further the mission of the Church as much as anything else they might do. Fathers who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood should keep the commandments so they will have the power of the priesthood to give blessings to their family members. Fathers should also cultivate loving family relationships so that family members will want to ask their fathers for blessings. And parents should encourage more priesthood blessings in the family.

Fathers, function as “equal partners” of your wives, as the family proclamation teaches.<sup>9</sup> And, fathers, when you are privileged to exercise the power and influence of your priesthood authority, do so “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). That high standard for the exercise of







By President Russell M. Nelson

priesthood authority is most important in the family. President Harold B. Lee gave this promise just after he became President of the Church: “Never is the power of the priesthood, which you hold, more wonderful than when there is a crisis in your home, a serious illness, or some great decision that has to be made. . . . Vested in the power of the priesthood, which is the power of Almighty God, is the power to perform miracles if the Lord wills it so, but in order for us to use that priesthood, we must be worthy to exercise it. A failure to understand this principle is a failure to receive the blessings of holding that great priesthood.”<sup>10</sup>

My beloved brethren, the magnifying of the holy priesthood you hold is vital to the work of the Lord in your families and in your Church callings.

I testify of Him whose priesthood it is. Through His atoning suffering and sacrifice and resurrection, all men and women have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity for eternal life. Each of us should be faithful and diligent in doing our part in this great work of God our Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 343.
2. *Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 340, 343.
3. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 182.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, “Only an Elder,” *Ensign*, June 1975, 66; emphasis in original not preserved.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, “Only an Elder,” 66; emphasis in original not preserved.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 93.
7. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 499.
8. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 24–27.
9. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
10. *Teachings: Harold B. Lee*, 97.

## Ministering with the Power and Authority of God

*We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness.*

My beloved brethren, thank you for your devotion to the Lord and His holy work. It is truly a joy to be with you. As a new First Presidency, we thank you for your prayers and for your sustaining efforts. We are grateful for your lives and for your service to the Lord. Your devotion to duty and your selfless service are just as important in your callings as ours are in our callings. Through a lifetime of service in this Church, I have learned that it really doesn’t matter *where* one serves. What the Lord cares about is *how* one serves.

I express deep gratitude for President Thomas S. Monson, who was an example to me for more than 50 years. And for his counselors, President Henry B. Eyring and President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, I express profound admiration. I commend them for their service to the Lord and His prophets. Both of these devoted servants have received new assignments. They continue to serve with vigor and commitment. I honor and love them both.

It is a remarkable blessing to serve in the Lord’s true and living Church with His authority and power. The restoration of the priesthood of God, including the keys of the priesthood, opens to worthy Latter-day Saints the greatest of all spiritual blessings. We see those blessings flowing to women, men, and children throughout the world.

We see faithful women who understand the power inherent in their callings and in their endowment and other temple ordinances. These women know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen their husbands, their children, and others they love. These are spiritually strong women who lead, teach, and minister fearlessly in their callings with the power and authority of God!<sup>1</sup> How thankful I am for them!

Likewise, we see faithful men who live up to their privileges as bearers of the priesthood. They lead and serve by sacrifice in the Lord’s way with love, kindness, and patience. They bless,



guide, protect, and strengthen others by the power of the priesthood they hold. They bring miracles to those they serve while they keep their own marriages and families safe. They shun evil and are mighty elders in Israel.<sup>2</sup> I am most thankful for them!

Now, may I voice a concern? It is this: Too many of our brothers and sisters do not fully understand the concept of priesthood power and authority. They act as though they would rather satisfy their own selfish desires and appetites than use the power of God to bless His children.

I fear that too many of our brothers and sisters do not grasp the privileges that could be theirs.<sup>3</sup> Some of our brethren, for example, act like they do not understand what the priesthood is and what it enables them to do. Let me give you some specific examples.

Not long ago, I attended a sacrament meeting in which a new baby was to be given a name and a father's blessing. The young father held his precious infant in his arms, gave her a name, and then offered a beautiful *prayer*. But he did *not* give that child a blessing. That sweet baby girl got a name but no blessing! That dear elder

did not know the difference between a prayer and a priesthood blessing. With his priesthood authority and power, he could have blessed his infant, but he did not. I thought, "What a missed opportunity!"

Let me cite some other examples. We know of brethren who set sisters apart as Primary, Young Women, or Relief Society leaders and teachers but fail to bless them—to bless them with the power to fulfill their callings. They give only admonitions and instructions. We see a worthy father who fails to give his wife and his children priesthood blessings when that is exactly what they need. Priesthood power has been restored to this earth, and yet far too many brothers and sisters go through terrible trials in life without ever receiving a true priesthood blessing. What a tragedy! That's a tragedy that we can eliminate.

Brethren, we hold the holy priesthood of God! We have His authority to bless His people. Just think of the remarkable assurance the Lord gave us when He said, "Whomsoever you bless I will bless."<sup>4</sup> It is our privilege to act in the name of Jesus Christ to bless God's children according to His will

for them. Stake presidents and bishops, please ensure that every member of the quorums within your stewardship understands how to give a priesthood blessing—including the personal worthiness and spiritual preparation required to call fully upon the power of God.<sup>5</sup>

To all brethren holding the priesthood, I invite you to inspire members to keep their covenants, fast and pray, study the scriptures, worship in the temple, and serve with faith as men and women of God. We can help all to see with the eye of faith that obedience and righteousness will draw them closer to Jesus Christ, allow them to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and experience joy in life!

A hallmark of the Lord's true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to individual children of God and their families.<sup>6</sup> Because it is His Church, we as His servants will minister to the one, just as He did.<sup>7</sup> We will minister in His name, with His power and authority, and with His loving-kindness.

An experience I had more than 60 years ago in Boston taught me just how powerful the privilege of ministering





one-on-one can be. I was then a resident surgeon at the Massachusetts General Hospital—on duty every day, every other night, and every other weekend. I had limited time for my wife, our four children, and Church activity. Nonetheless, our branch president assigned me to visit the home of Wilbur and Leonora Cox with the hope that Brother Cox might come back into activity in the Church. He and Leonora had been sealed in the temple.<sup>8</sup> Yet Wilbur had not participated for many years.

My companion and I went to their home. As we entered, Sister Cox welcomed us warmly,<sup>9</sup> but Brother Cox abruptly walked into another room and closed the door.

I went to the closed door and knocked. After a moment, I heard a muffled “Come in.” I opened the door to find Brother Cox sitting beside an array of amateur radio equipment. In that small room, he lit up a cigar. Clearly, my visit was not all that welcome.

I gazed about the room with wonderment and said, “Brother Cox, I have always wanted to learn more about amateur radio work. Would you be willing to teach me about it? I’m sorry I can’t stay any longer tonight, but could I come back another time?”

He hesitated for a moment and then said yes. That was the beginning of what became a wonderful friendship. I returned and he taught me. I began to love and respect him. Through our subsequent visits, the greatness of this man emerged. We became very good friends, as did our dear eternal companions. Then, with the passage of time, our family moved away. Local leaders continued to nurture the Cox family.<sup>10</sup>

About eight years after that first visit, the Boston Stake was created.<sup>11</sup> Can you guess who its first stake president was? Yes! Brother Cox! During subsequent years, he also served as a mission president and a temple president.

Years later, I, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was assigned to

create a new stake in Sanpete County, Utah. During the usual interviews, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter again my dear friend Brother Cox! I felt impressed to call him as the new stake patriarch. After I ordained him, we embraced each other and wept. People in the room were wondering why these two grown men were crying. But we knew. And Sister Cox knew. Ours were tears of joy! We silently remembered the incredible journey of love and repentance that began more than 30 years ago, one night in their home.

The account doesn’t end there. Brother and Sister Cox’s family grew to include 3 children, 20 grandchildren, and 54 great-grandchildren. Add to that their impact on hundreds of missionaries, on thousands more in the temple, and on hundreds more who received patriarchal blessings at the hands of Wilbur Cox. His and Leonora’s influence will continue to ripple through many generations throughout the world.

Experiences such as this with Wilbur and Leonora Cox occur every week—hopefully, every day—within this Church. Dedicated servants of the Lord Jesus Christ carry out His work, with His power and authority.

Brethren, there are doors we can open, priesthood blessings we can give, hearts we can heal, burdens we can lift, testimonies we can strengthen, lives we can save, and joy we can bring into the homes of the Latter-day Saints—all because we hold the priesthood of God. We are the men who have been “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of [our] exceeding faith,” to do this work.<sup>12</sup>

Tonight I invite you literally to rise up with me in our great eternal




















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(in alphabetical order)



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Jose L. Alonso



Wilford W. Andersen



Ian S. Arden



Mervyn B. Arnold



Steven R. Bangert



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David S. Baxter



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Claudio D. Zivic



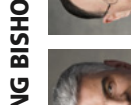
Dean M. Davies



Gerald Causee



W. Christopher Vardell



Michael Causee



W. Christopher Vardell



W. Christopher Vardell

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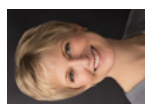


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By Elder Larry Y. Wilson  
Of the Seventy

brotherhood. When I name your priesthood office, please stand and remain standing. Deacons, please arise! Teachers, arise! Priests! Bishops! Elders! High priests! Patriarchs! Seventies! Apostles!

Now, brethren, will you please remain standing and join with our chorus in singing all three verses of “Rise Up, O Men of God.”<sup>13</sup> While you sing, think of your duty as God’s mighty army to help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord. This is our charge. This is our privilege. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Price of Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 66–69; see also Alma 13:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 84:17–20, 35–38.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22; 107:18–19; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:30–31 (in the Bible appendix).
4. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
5. The connection between the power of the priesthood and personal righteousness is developed more fully in Russell M. Nelson, “The Price of Priesthood Power,” 66–69; see also Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–37, 41–44.
6. The essential role of an organized, directed effort to minister to individuals and families is evident wherever and whenever the Church of Jesus Christ has been established. See, for example, Luke 10:1–20; Acts 6:1–6; Ephesians 4:11–14; Mosiah 18:9, 18–19, 27–29; Doctrine and Covenants 20:42, 51, 57.
7. See 3 Nephi 17:9–10, 20–21.
8. Manti Utah Temple, June 15, 1937.
9. Leonora’s fasting and praying every Monday for years surely had a powerful influence for good.
10. In 1954, branch president Ira Terry called Wilbur to be the branch Sunday School superintendent. Wilbur accepted the calling and dropped forever all habits contrary to the Word of Wisdom. He devoted the rest of his life in service to the Savior’s work.
11. In 1962.
12. Alma 13:3.
13. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 324.

## Take the Holy Spirit as Your Guide

*What an incomparable gift comes to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. That gift is the Holy Spirit.*

On this Easter Sunday, our thoughts turn to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the empty tomb that gives every believer hope in Christ’s triumph over otherwise certain defeat. I believe, with the Apostle Paul, that just as God “raised up Christ from the dead [so] shall [He] also quicken [our] mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in [us].”<sup>1</sup>

To *quicken* means to make alive. Just as Christ brings our bodies back to life after physical death through the power of His Resurrection, so can He also quicken us, or make us alive, from spiritual death.<sup>2</sup> In the book of Moses, we read of Adam undergoing this kind of quickening: “[Adam] 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.”<sup>3</sup>

What an incomparable gift comes to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. That gift is the Holy Spirit giving us what the New Testament calls “life in Christ.”<sup>4</sup> But do we sometimes take for granted such a gift?

Brothers and sisters, it is an extraordinary privilege to “have . . . the Holy

Spirit for [our] guide,”<sup>5</sup> as demonstrated by the following experience.

During the Korean War, Ensign Frank Blair served on a troop transport ship stationed in Japan.<sup>6</sup> The ship wasn’t large enough to have a formal chaplain, so the captain asked Brother Blair to be the ship’s informal chaplain, having observed that the young man was a person of faith and principle, highly respected by the whole crew.

Ensign Blair wrote: “Our ship was caught in a huge typhoon. The waves were about 45 feet [14 m] high. I was on watch . . . during which time one of our three engines stopped working and a crack in the centerline of the ship was reported. We had two remaining engines, one of which was only functioning at half power. We were in serious trouble.”

Ensign Blair finished his watch and was getting into bed when the captain knocked on his door. He asked, “Would you please pray for this ship?” Of course, Ensign Blair agreed to do so.

At that point, Ensign Blair could have simply prayed, “Heavenly Father, please bless our ship and keep us safe,” and then gone to bed. Instead, he prayed to





Sometimes we can't hear heaven's signal because we are not worthy. Repentance and obedience are the way to achieve clear communication again. The Old Testament word for *repent* means "to turn" or "turn around."<sup>7</sup> When you feel far from God, you need only make the decision to turn from sin and face the Savior, where you will find Him waiting for you, His arms outstretched. He is eager to guide you, and you are just one prayer away from receiving that guidance again.<sup>8</sup>

Second, Ensign Blair did not just ask the Lord to *solve* his problem. He asked what *he could do* to be part of the solution. Likewise we might ask, "Lord, what do I need to do *to be part of the solution?*" Instead of just listing our problems in prayer and asking the Lord to solve them, we ought to be seeking more proactive ways of receiving the Lord's help and committing to act according to the Spirit's guidance.

There is a third important lesson in Ensign Blair's story. Could he have prayed with such calm assurance if he had not received guidance from the Spirit on previous occasions? The arrival of a typhoon is no time to dust off the gift of the Holy Ghost and figure out how to use it. This young man was clearly following a pattern he had used many times before, including as a full-time missionary. We need the Holy Spirit as our guide in calm waters so His voice will be unmistakable to us in the fiercest storm.

Some may think we shouldn't expect daily guidance from the Spirit because "it is not meet that [God] should command in all things," lest we become slothful servants.<sup>9</sup> This scripture, however, was given to some early missionaries who asked Joseph Smith to obtain revelation they should have

know if there was something *he could do* to help ensure the safety of the ship. In response to Brother Blair's prayer, the Holy Ghost prompted him to go to the bridge, speak with the captain, and learn more. He found that the captain was trying to determine how fast to run the ship's remaining engines. Ensign Blair returned to his cabin to pray again.

He prayed, "*What can I do* to help address the problem with the engines?"

In response, the Holy Ghost whispered that he needed to walk around the ship and observe to gather more information. He again returned to the captain and asked for permission to walk around the deck. Then, with a lifeline tied around his waist, he went out into the storm.

Standing on the stern, he observed the giant propellers as they came out of the water when the ship crested a wave. Only one was working fully, and it was spinning very fast. After these observations, Ensign Blair once again prayed. The clear answer he received was that the remaining good engine was under too much strain and needed to be slowed down. So he returned to the captain and made that recommendation. The captain was surprised, telling him that the ship's engineer had just suggested the opposite—that they increase the speed of the good engine in order to outrun the storm. Nevertheless, the captain chose to

follow Ensign Blair's suggestion and slowed the engine down. By dawn the ship was safely in calm waters.

Only two hours later, the good engine stopped working altogether. With half power in the remaining engine, the ship was able to limp into port.

The captain said to Ensign Blair, "If we had not slowed that engine when we did, we would have lost it in the middle of the storm."

Without that engine, there would have been no way to steer. The ship would have overturned and been sunk. The captain thanked the young LDS officer and said he believed that following Ensign Blair's spiritual impressions had saved the ship and its crew.

Now, this story is quite dramatic. While we may be unlikely to face such dire circumstances, this story contains important guidelines about how we *can* receive the Spirit's guidance more frequently.

First, when it comes to revelation, we must properly tune our receiver to heaven's frequency. Ensign Blair was living a clean and faithful life. Had he not been obedient, he would *not* have had the spiritual confidence necessary to pray as he did for the safety of his ship and to receive such specific guidance. We must each be making the effort to align our lives with God's commandments in order to be directed by Him.

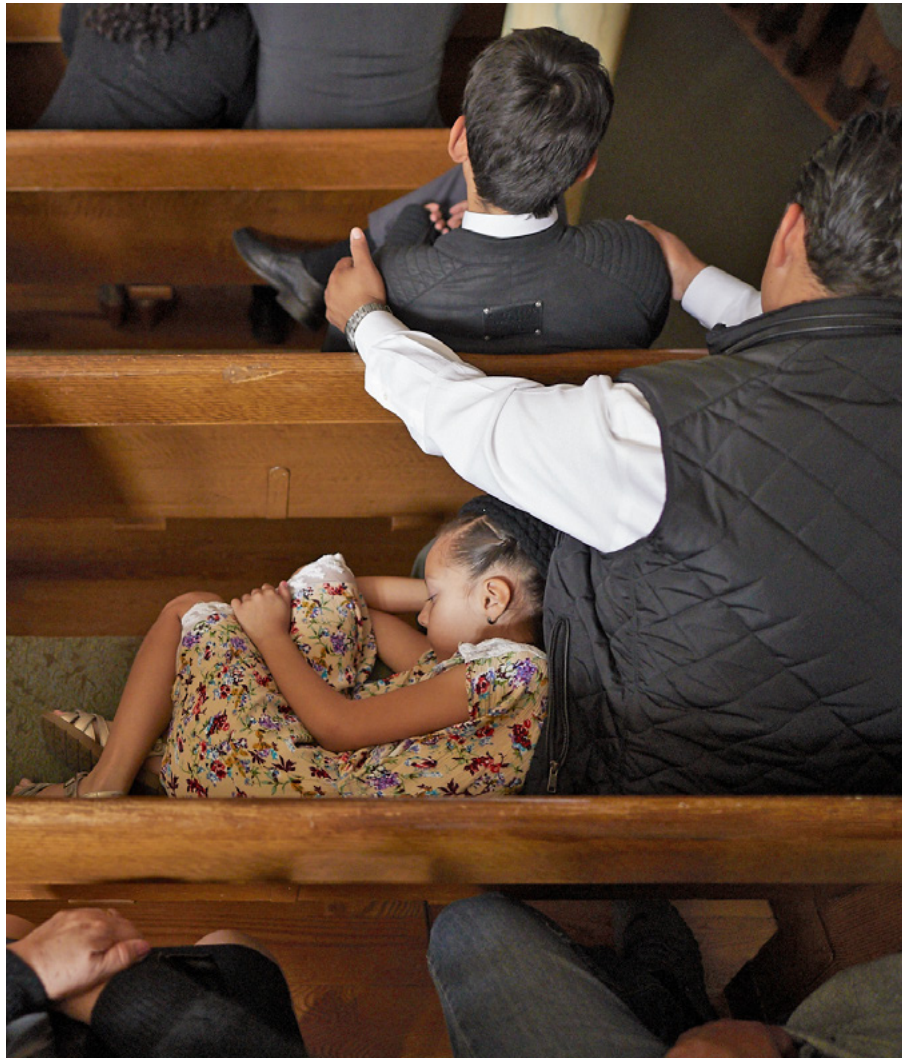
received for themselves. In a preceding verse, the Lord told them to come to the mission field *“as they shall counsel between themselves and me.”*<sup>10</sup>

These missionaries wanted a specific revelation about their travel plans. They hadn’t yet learned to seek their own direction in personal matters. The Lord called this attitude what it is: slothful. Early Church members may have been so happy to have a true prophet that they were in danger of failing to learn how to receive revelation themselves. Being spiritually self-reliant is hearing the Lord’s voice through His Spirit for one’s own life.

Alma advised his son to “counsel with the Lord *in all thy doings.*”<sup>11</sup> To live in this way—what we often call “living by the Spirit”—is a high privilege. It brings a sense of calm and certainty as well as fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, and peace.<sup>12</sup>

Ensign Blair’s ability to receive revelation saved him and his shipmates from a raging storm. Other kinds of storms are raging today. The Book of Mormon’s parable of the tree of life<sup>13</sup> provides a powerful image of how to achieve spiritual safety in such a world. This dream tells of sudden mists of darkness arising to bring spiritual destruction to members of the Church walking on the path back to God.<sup>14</sup>

In contemplating this image, I see in my mind’s eye throngs of people traveling that path, some with their hands firmly gripping the iron rod, but many others simply following the feet of the people in front of them. This latter approach takes little thought or effort. You can just do and think what others are doing and thinking. This works fine in sunny weather. But the storms of deception and the mists of falsehood arise without warning. In these situations, being familiar with the voice of



the Holy Ghost is a matter of spiritual life and death.

Nephi’s powerful promise is that “whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and . . . *hold fast unto it* . . . would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.”<sup>15</sup>

Following the feet of the people ahead of you on the path is not enough. We cannot just do and think what others are doing and thinking; we must live a guided life. We must each have our own hand on the iron rod. Then we may go to the Lord with humble confidence, knowing that He “shall lead [us] by the hand, and give [us] answer to [our] prayers.”<sup>16</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Romans 8:11; see also John 14:16.
2. See 2 Nephi 2:21; Alma 42:9.
3. Moses 6:65.
4. Romans 8:2; see also 2 Nephi 25:25.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
6. Experience shared with the permission of Frank Blair. Brother Blair, now 89 years old, was present in the Conference Center for this address.
7. The Hebrew word translated “repent” in, for example, Ezekiel 14:6 is *shoob* (transliterated). It means “to turn back” or “return.” (See James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [1890], no. 7725.)
8. See Jacob 6:5; Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33; 19:36; 29:10; 3 Nephi 9:14.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:26.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 58:25; emphasis added.
11. Alma 37:37; emphasis added.
12. See Galatians 5:22.
13. See 1 Nephi 8:12; 15.
14. See 1 Nephi 8:23–24; 12:17.
15. 1 Nephi 15:24; emphasis added.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.





By Reyna I. Aburto

Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

## With One Accord

*In order to reach our sublime destiny, we need each other, and we need to be unified.*

One of the most remarkable creatures on earth is the monarch butterfly. On a trip to Mexico to spend Christmas with my husband's family, we visited a butterfly sanctuary, where millions of monarch butterflies spend the winter. It was fascinating to see such an impressive sight and for us to reflect on the example of unity and obedience to divine laws that God's creations demonstrate.<sup>1</sup>

Monarch butterflies are master navigators. They use the sun's position to find the direction they need to go. Every spring, they travel thousands of miles from Mexico to Canada, and every fall, they return to the same sacred fir forests in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> They do this year after year, one tiny wing flap at a time. During their journey, they cluster together at night on trees to protect themselves from the cold and from predators.<sup>3</sup>



*Like monarch butterflies returning to their home in Mexico, we are on a journey back to our heavenly home.*

A group of butterflies is called a kaleidoscope.<sup>4</sup> Isn't that a beautiful image? Each butterfly in a kaleidoscope is unique and different, yet these seemingly fragile creatures have been designed by a loving Creator with the ability to survive, travel, multiply, and disseminate life as they go from one flower to the next, spreading pollen. And although each butterfly is different, they work together to make the world a more beautiful and fruitful place.

Like the monarch butterflies, we are on a journey back to our heavenly home, where we will reunite with our Heavenly Parents.<sup>5</sup> Like the butterflies, we have been given divine attributes that allow us to navigate through life, in order to "[fill] the measure of [our] creation."<sup>6</sup> Like them, if we knit our hearts together,<sup>7</sup> the Lord will protect us "as a hen [gathers] her chickens under her wings"<sup>8</sup> and will make us into a beautiful kaleidoscope.

Girls and boys, young women and young men, sisters and brothers, we are on this journey together. In order to reach our sublime destiny, we need each other, and we need to be unified. The Lord has commanded us, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>9</sup>

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of unity with His Father. They are one in purpose, in love, and in works, with "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father."<sup>10</sup>

How can we follow the Lord's perfect example of unity with His Father and be more unified with Them and with each other?

An inspiring pattern is found in Acts 1:14. We read, "[The men] all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication, with the women."<sup>11</sup>

I think it is significant that the phrase "with one accord" appears several times in the book of Acts, where

we read about what Jesus Christ's followers did immediately after He ascended to heaven as a resurrected being, as well as the blessings they received because of their efforts. It is also significant that we find a similar pattern among the faithful of the American continent at the time the Lord visited and ministered to them. "With one accord" means in agreement, in unity, and all together.

Some of the things that the faithful Saints did in unity in both places were that they testified of Jesus Christ, studied the word of God, and ministered to each other with love.<sup>12</sup>

The Lord's followers were one in purpose, in love, and in works. They knew who they were, they knew what they had to do, and they did it with love for God and for each other. They were part of a magnificent kaleidoscope moving forward with one accord.

Some of the blessings they received were that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, miracles took place among them, the Church grew, there was no contention among the people, and the Lord blessed them in all things.<sup>13</sup>

We can suppose that the reason why they were so united is because they knew the Lord personally. They had been close to Him, and they had been witnesses of His divine mission, of the miracles that He performed, and of His Resurrection. They saw and touched the marks in His hands and feet. They knew with certainty that He was the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of the world. They knew that "He is the source of all healing, peace, and eternal progress."<sup>14</sup>

Even though we may not have seen our Savior with our physical eyes, we can know that He lives. As we draw closer to Him, as we seek to receive a personal witness through the Holy



Ghost of His divine mission, we will have a better understanding of our purpose; the love of God will dwell in our hearts;<sup>15</sup> we will have the determination to be one in the kaleidoscopes of our families, wards, and communities; and we will minister to each other "in newer, better ways."<sup>16</sup>

Miracles happen when the children of God work together guided by the Spirit to reach out to others in need.

We hear so many stories of neighborly love shown among people when catastrophe strikes. For example, when the city of Houston suffered a massive flood last year, people forgot about their own needs and went to the rescue. An elders quorum president sent a call for help to the community, and a fleet of 77 boats was quickly organized. Rescuers went around the affected neighborhoods and transported whole families to one of our meetinghouses, where they received refuge and much needed help. Members and nonmembers worked together with one purpose.

In Santiago, Chile, a Relief Society president had the desire to help immigrants in her community who had come from Haiti. By counseling together with her priesthood leaders,

she and other leaders came up with the idea to offer Spanish classes to those immigrants, helping them integrate better into their new home. Every Saturday morning, missionaries gather together with their eager students. The feeling of unity in that building is an inspiring example of people from diverse backgrounds serving with one accord.

In Mexico, hundreds of members traveled for hours to help the survivors of two major earthquakes. They came with tools, machinery, and love for their neighbor. As volunteers gathered together in one of our meetinghouses waiting for instructions, the mayor of the city of Ixhuatán broke down in tears as he saw such a manifestation of "the pure love of Christ."<sup>17</sup>

The Lord is now giving us the opportunity to counsel together each month in our priesthood quorums and Relief Societies, so we can all be more active participants in our ward or branch kaleidoscope—a place where we all fit in and where we are all needed.

Every one of our paths is different, yet we walk them together. Our path is not about what we have done or where we have been; it is about where we are going and what we are





becoming, in unity. When we counsel together guided by the Holy Ghost, we can see where we are and where we need to be. The Holy Ghost gives us a vision that our natural eyes cannot see, because “revelation is scattered among us,”<sup>18</sup> and when we put that revelation together, we can see more.

As we work in unity, our purpose should be to look for and do the Lord’s will; our incentive should be the love we feel for God and for our neighbor;<sup>19</sup> and our greatest desire should be to “labor diligently,”<sup>20</sup> so we can prepare the way for the glorious return of our Savior. The only way we will be able to do so is “with one accord.”

Like the monarch butterflies, let us continue on our journey together in purpose, each of us with our own attributes and contributions, working to make this a more beautiful and fruitful world—one small step at a time and in harmony with God’s commandments.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has promised us that when we are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of us.<sup>21</sup> I testify that He lives and that He was resurrected on a beautiful spring morning like today. He is the Monarch above all monarchs, “the King of kings, and [the] Lord of lords.”<sup>22</sup>

May we be one in the Father and in His Begotten Son, as we are guided by the Holy Ghost, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Abraham 3:26; 4:7, 9–12, 15, 18, 21, 24–25.
2. An interesting fact about monarch butterflies is that it takes up to three generations to make the trip northward to Canada. However, a “super generation” makes the whole trip southward to Mexico, spends the winter there, and makes the first lap back north. (See “Flight of the Butterflies” [video, 2012]; “Flight: A Few Million Little Creatures That Could,” WBUR News, Sept. 28, 2012, [wbur.org](http://wbur.org).)
3. See “Why Do Monarchs Form Overnight Roosts during Fall Migration?” [learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/sl/17/text.html](http://learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/sl/17/text.html).
4. See “What Is a Group of Butterflies Called?” [amazingbutterflies.com/frequentlyaskedquestions.htm](http://amazingbutterflies.com/frequentlyaskedquestions.htm); see also “kaleidoscope,” [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com). *Kaleidoscope* comes from the Greek *kalos* (“beautiful”) and *eidos* (“form”).
5. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:25.
7. See Mosiah 18:21.
8. 3 Nephi 10:4.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
10. Mosiah 15:7.
11. Acts 1:14; emphasis added.
12. Some of the things that the Saints did in Jerusalem: chose a new Apostle and “seven men of honest report” and supported them (see Acts 1:26; 6:3–5); gathered together on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1); testified of Jesus Christ (see Acts 2:22–36; 3:13–26; 4:10, 33; 5:42); called people to repentance and baptized them (see Acts 2:38–41); continued in fellowship and breaking of bread, and in prayer (see Acts 2:42); were together and had everything in common (see Acts 2:44–46; 4:34–35); attended the temple (see Acts 2:46); ate “their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46); praised God and found favor with all people (see Acts 2:47); were obedient to the faith (see Acts 6:7); gave themselves continually to prayer and “the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Some of the things that the Saints did on the American continent: preached the gospel of Christ (see 3 Nephi 28:23); formed a church of Christ (see 4 Nephi 1:1); baptized people (see 4 Nephi 1:1); everyone dealt justly one with another (see 4 Nephi 1:2); had all things in common among them (see 4 Nephi 1:3); rebuilt cities (see 4 Nephi 1:7–9); were married (see 4 Nephi 1:11); walked after the commandments that they received from the Lord (see 4 Nephi 1:12); continued in fasting and prayer (see 4 Nephi 1:12); met together often to pray and hear the word of the Lord (see 4 Nephi 1:12).
13. Some of the blessings that the Saints received in Jerusalem: they were filled with the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:4; 4:31); they received the gift of tongues and prophecy and spoke “the wonderful works of God” (see Acts 2:4–18); many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles (see Acts 2:43); miracles happened (see Acts 3:1–10; 5:18–19; 6:8, 15); more people joined the Church (see Acts 2:47; 5:14). Some of the blessings that the Saints received on the American continent: people were converted unto the Lord (see 3 Nephi 28:23; 4 Nephi 1:2); a generation was blessed (see 3 Nephi 28:23); there were no contentions and disputations among them (see 4 Nephi 1:2, 13, 15, 18); there were no rich and poor (see 4 Nephi 1:3); “they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3); there was peace in the land (see 4 Nephi 1:4); mighty miracles happened (see 4 Nephi 1:5, 13); the Lord did prosper them exceedingly (see 4 Nephi 1:7, 18); they did wax strong, did multiply exceedingly fast, and became exceedingly fair and delightsome (see 4 Nephi 1:10); they were blessed according to the multitude of promises made to them by the Lord (see 4 Nephi 1:11); “there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (4 Nephi 1:15); “there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:16); “there were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God” (4 Nephi 1:17); the Lord blessed them in all their doings (see 4 Nephi 1:18).
14. Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 85.
15. See 4 Nephi 1:15.
16. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Emissaries to the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 62.
17. Moroni 7:47.
18. Neil L. Andersen, in “Auxiliary Panels Use New Training Library,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2011, 76.
19. See Matthew 22:37–40.
20. Jacob 5:61.
21. See Matthew 18:20.
22. 1 Timothy 6:15.



By Elder Massimo De Feo  
Of the Seventy

# Pure Love: The True Sign of Every True Disciple of Jesus Christ

*The gospel of Jesus Christ is centered on the love of the Father and the Savior for us and our love for Them and for one another.*

**W**e love and miss President Thomas S. Monson, and we love and sustain President Russell M. Nelson. President Nelson has a special place in my heart.

When I was a young father, our little son, who was five, came home from school one day and asked his mother, “What kind of work does Daddy do?” He then explained that his new classmates started debating about their fathers’ jobs. One said that his father was the chief of the city police, while another proudly declared that his father was the chief of a big company.

So when asked about his father, my son simply said, “My father works in an office on a computer.” Then, noticing that his answer did not impress his new little friends much, he added, “And by the way, my father is the chief of the universe.”

I guess that was the end of the conversation.

I told my wife, “It’s time to teach him some more details of the plan of salvation and who is really in charge.”

But as we taught our children the plan of salvation, their love for Heavenly Father and for the Savior grew as they learned that it is a plan of love. The gospel of Jesus Christ is

centered on the love of the Father and the Savior for us and our love for Them and for one another.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “The first great *commandment* of all eternity is to love God with all of *our* heart, might, mind, and strength—that’s the first great commandment. But the first great *truth* of all eternity is that God loves *us* with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength. That love is the foundation stone of eternity, and it should be the foundation stone of our daily life.”<sup>1</sup>

Being the foundation stone of our daily life, pure love is a requirement for every true disciple of Jesus Christ.

The prophet Mormon taught, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Love indeed is the true sign of every true disciple of Jesus Christ.







True disciples love to serve. They know that serving is an expression of true love and a covenant they made at baptism.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of their callings in the Church or their role in the community, they feel an increasing desire to love and serve the Lord and one another.

True disciples love to forgive. They know that the Atonement of the Savior covers all sins and mistakes of each one of us. They know that the price He paid is an “all-inclusive price.” Spiritual taxes, fees, commissions, and charges related to sins, mistakes, or wrongdoings are all covered. True disciples are quick to forgive and quick to ask for forgiveness.

My dear brothers and sisters, if you are struggling to find the strength to forgive, don’t think of what others have done to you, but think of what the Savior has done for you, and you will find peace in the redemptive blessings of His Atonement.

True disciples love to submit themselves to the Lord with peace in their heart. They are humble and submissive because they love Him. They have faith to fully accept His will, not only in what He does but also in how and when. True disciples know that the real blessings are not always what they want but

rather what the Lord wants for them.

True disciples love the Lord more than the world and are steadfast and immovable in their faith. They stay strong and firm in a changing and confusing world. True disciples love to listen to the voice of the Spirit and of the prophets and are not confused by the voices of the world. True disciples love to “stand in holy places”<sup>4</sup> and love to make holy the places where they stand. Wherever they go, they bring the love of the Lord and peace to the hearts of others. True disciples love to obey the Lord’s commandments, and they obey because they love the Lord. As they love and keep their covenants, their hearts are renewed and their very nature changes.

Pure love is the true sign of every true disciple of Jesus Christ.

I learned about pure love from my mother. She was not a member of the Church.

One day many years ago, I visited my mother, who was struggling with cancer. I knew that she was going to die, but I was concerned that she was suffering. I didn’t say anything, but knowing me well, she said, “I see that you are concerned.”

Then to my surprise, she asked me with a feeble voice, “Can you teach

me how to pray? I want to pray for you. I know you start by saying, ‘Dear Heavenly Father,’ but then what should I say?”

As I knelt next to her bed and she prayed for me, I felt a love never felt before. It was simple, true, pure love. Although she didn’t know about the plan of salvation, she had in her heart her personal plan of love, the plan of love of a mother for her son. She was in pain, struggling to even find the strength to pray. I could barely hear her voice, but I surely felt her love.

I remember thinking, “How can someone who is in such great pain pray for someone else? She is the one in need.”

Then the answer came clearly to my mind: pure love. She loved me so much that she forgot about herself. In her most critical hour, she loved me more than herself.

Now, dear brothers and sisters, isn’t this what the Savior did? Of course, in an eternal and much broader perspective. But in the midst of His greatest pain, in the garden that night, He was the one who needed help, suffering in a way that we cannot even imagine or comprehend. But in the end, He forgot about Himself and prayed for us until He paid the full price. How was He able to do it? Because of His pure love for the Father, who sent Him, and for us. He loved the Father and us more than Himself.

He paid for something that He had not done. He paid for sins that He had not committed. Why? Pure love. Having paid the full price, He was in the position to offer us the blessings of what He paid for if we would repent. Why did He offer this? Again, and always, pure love.

Pure love is the true sign of every true disciple of Jesus Christ.



By Elder Claudio D. Zivic  
Of the Seventy

President Thomas S. Monson said: “May we begin now, this very day, to express love to all of God’s children, whether they be our family members, our friends, mere acquaintances, or total strangers. As we arise each morning, let us determine to respond with love and kindness to whatever might come our way.”<sup>5</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of love. The greatest commandment is about love. For me, it’s all about love. The love of the Father, who sacrificed His Son for us. The love of the Savior, who sacrificed all for us. The love of a mother or a father who would give anything for his or her children. The love of those who serve silently and are not known to most of us but are well known to the Lord. The love of those who forgive all and always. The love of the ones who give more than they receive.

I love my Heavenly Father. I love my Savior. I love the gospel. I love this Church. I love my family. I love this wonderful life. For me, it’s all about love.

May this day of remembrance of the Resurrection of the Savior be a day of spiritual renewal for each one of us. May this day be the beginning of a life full of love, “the foundation stone of our daily life.”

May our hearts be filled with the pure love of Christ, the true sign of every true disciple of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 127.
2. Moroni 7:48.
3. See Mosiah 18:10.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 94.

# He That Shall Endure unto the End, the Same Shall Be Saved

*Let us be faithful to what we have believed and know.*

Dear brothers and sisters, I appreciate very much the opportunity to express to you some of my feelings.

Several years ago, my wife and I were present at the inaugural ceremony of the interactive children’s exhibit in the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. At the end of the ceremony, President Thomas S. Monson walked toward us,

and as he shook our hands, he said, “Endure, and you shall triumph”—a profound teaching and one whose truth, of course, we can all affirm.

Jesus Christ assured us that “he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”<sup>1</sup>

To endure means “to remain firm in a commitment to be true to the commandments of God despite temptation,





opposition, and adversity.”<sup>2</sup>

Even those who have had powerful spiritual experiences and have given faithful service could one day go astray or fall into inactivity if they do not endure to the end. May we always and emphatically keep in our minds and hearts the phrase “This will not happen to me.”

When Jesus Christ taught in Capernaum, “many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

“Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?”<sup>3</sup>

I believe that today, Jesus Christ asks all of us who have made sacred covenants with Him, “Will ye also go away?”

I pray that all of us, with profound reflection about what the eternities hold for us, may respond as did Simon Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”<sup>4</sup>

Let us be faithful to what we have believed and know. If we have not been living according to our knowledge, let us change. Sinners who persist in their sins, and do not repent, sink deeper and deeper into filthiness, until Satan claims them for himself, significantly jeopardizing their opportunity to repent, to be forgiven, and to be blessed with all the blessings of eternity.

I have heard many justifications from those who have stopped participating actively in the Church and have lost the correct vision of the purpose of our journey on this earth. I exhort them to reflect and to return, because I believe that no one will be able to make excuses before our Lord, Jesus Christ.

When we were baptized, we made covenants—not with any man but with the Savior, agreeing to “take upon [ourselves] the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.”<sup>5</sup>

Attendance at sacrament meetings is one of the key ways we can evaluate our determination to serve Him, our spiritual fortitude, and the growth of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Partaking of the sacrament is the most important thing we do on the Sabbath day. The Lord explained this ordinance to His Apostles just before He died. He did the same on the American continent. He tells us that if we participate in this ordinance, it will be a testimony to the Father that we always remember Him, and He promises that, accordingly, we will have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>6</sup>

In the teachings of Alma the Younger to his son Shiblon, we find wise counsel and warnings that help us remain faithful to our covenants:

“See that ye are not lifted up unto pride; yea, see that ye do not boast in your own wisdom, nor of your much strength.

“Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness.”<sup>7</sup>

Several years ago, while on vacation, I wanted to go kayaking for the first time. I rented a kayak, and full of enthusiasm, I launched into the sea.

After a few minutes, a wave overturned the kayak. With a great deal of effort, holding the paddle in one hand and the kayak in the other, I was able to regain my footing.

I tried again to paddle my kayak, but just a few minutes later, the kayak tipped over again. I stubbornly kept on trying, to no avail, until someone who understood kayaking told me that there must be a crack in the shell and the kayak must have filled up with water, making it unstable and impossible to control. I dragged the kayak to the shore and removed the plug, and sure enough, out came a large amount of water.

I think that at times we move through life with sins that, like the leak in my kayak, impede our spiritual progress.

If we persist in our sins, we forget the covenants we have made with the Lord, even though we keep capsizing because of the imbalance that those sins create in our lives.





Like the cracks in my kayak, the cracks in our lives need to be dealt with. Some sins will require more efforts than others to repent of.

We should therefore ask ourselves: Where are we regarding our attitude toward the Savior and His work? Are we in Peter's situation when he denied Jesus Christ? Or have we advanced to the point where we have the attitude and determination he had after the great commission he received from the Savior?<sup>8</sup>

We must strive to obey all the commandments and pay close attention to those that are hardest for us to keep. The Lord will be at our side, helping us in times of need and weakness, and if we demonstrate a sincere desire and act accordingly, He will make "weak things become strong."<sup>9</sup>

Obedience will give us the strength to overcome sin. We must also understand that the trial of our faith requires us to obey, often without knowing the results.

I suggest a formula that will help us endure to the end:

1. Daily, pray and read the scriptures.
2. Weekly, partake of the sacrament with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.
3. Pay our tithing and our monthly fast offering.
4. Every two years—every year for the youth—renew our temple recommends.
5. Throughout our whole lives, serve in the work of the Lord.

May the great truths of the gospel steady our minds, and may we keep our lives free of the cracks that can impede our safe journey through the sea of this life.

Success in the Lord's way has a price, and the only way to achieve it is to pay that price.

How grateful I am that our Savior endured unto the end, completing His great atoning sacrifice.

He suffered for our sins, pains, depression, anguish, infirmities, and fears, and so He knows how to help us, how to inspire us, how to comfort

us, and how to strengthen us so that we may endure and obtain the crown that is reserved for those who are not defeated.

Life is different for each of us. We all have a time of trials, a time for happiness, a time for making decisions, a time for overcoming obstacles, and a time for taking advantage of opportunities.

Whatever our personal situations may be, I testify that our Heavenly Father is constantly saying, "I love you. I sustain you. I am with you. Do not give up. Repent and endure in the path that I have shown you. And I assure you that we will see each other again in our celestial home." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 24:13.
2. Guide to the Scriptures, "Endure," scriptures.lds.org.
3. John 6:66–67.
4. John 6:68.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
6. See 3 Nephi 18:7.
7. Alma 38:11–12.
8. See Mark 16:15.
9. Ether 12:27.





By President Henry B. Eyring  
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

# His Spirit to Be with You

*I pray with all my heart that you will hear the voice of the Spirit, which is sent to you so generously.*

**M**y brothers and sisters, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you on the Lord's Sabbath, in the general conference of His Church, at this Easter season. I thank our Heavenly Father for the gift of His Beloved Son, who came voluntarily to earth to be our Redeemer. I am grateful to know that He atoned for our sins and rose in the Resurrection. Every day I am blessed to know that, because of His Atonement, I may someday be resurrected to live forever in a loving family.



I know those things by the *only way* any of us can know them. The Holy Ghost has spoken to my mind and heart that they are true—not just once but often. I have needed that continuing comfort. We all experience tragedy during which we need the reassurance of the Spirit. I felt it one day as I stood with my father in a hospital. We watched my mother take a few shallow breaths—and then no more. As we looked on her face, she was smiling as the pain left. After a few silent moments, my father spoke first. He said, “A little girl has gone home.”

He said it softly. He seemed to be at peace. He was reporting something he knew was true. He quietly began to gather Mother's personal things. He went out into the hospital hallway to thank each of the nurses and doctors who had ministered to her for days.

My father had the companionship of the Holy Ghost at that moment to feel, to know, and to do what he did that day. He had received the promise, as many have: “That they may have his Spirit to be with them” (D&C 20:79).

My hope today is to increase your desire and your ability to receive the Holy Ghost. Remember, He is the third member of the Godhead. The Father and the Son are resurrected beings. The

Holy Ghost is a person of spirit. (See D&C 130:22.) It is your choice whether to receive Him and welcome Him into your heart and mind.

The conditions on which we can receive that supernal blessing are made clear in the words that are spoken every week but perhaps do not always sink into our hearts and minds. To have the Spirit sent to us, we must “always remember” the Savior and “keep his commandments” (D&C 20:77).

This time of year helps us remember the Savior's sacrifice and His rising from the tomb a resurrected being. Many of us hold images of those scenes in our memories. I once stood with my wife outside a tomb in Jerusalem. Many believe that it was the tomb from which the crucified Savior emerged as a resurrected and living God.

The respectful guide that day motioned with his hand and said to us, “Come, see an empty tomb.”

We stooped to enter. We saw a stone bench against a wall. But into my mind came another picture, as real as what we saw that day. It was of Mary, who was left by the Apostles at the tomb. That is what the Spirit let me see and even hear in my mind, as clearly as if I had been there:

“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

“And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

“And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

“And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus



standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:11–17).

I have prayed to be allowed to feel something of what Mary felt at the tomb and what two other disciples felt on the road to Emmaus as they walked with the resurrected Savior, thinking Him a visitor to Jerusalem:

“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:29–32).

Some of those words were repeated in a sacrament meeting I attended more than 70 years ago. In those days sacrament meetings were held in the evening. It was dark outside. The congregation sang these familiar words. I had heard them many times. But my lasting memory is of a feeling on one particular night. It draws me closer to the Savior. Perhaps if I recite the words, it will come to all of us again:

*Abide with me; 'tis eventide.  
The day is past and gone;  
The shadows of the evening fall;  
The night is coming on.  
Within my heart a welcome guest,  
Within my home abide.*

*Abide with me; 'tis eventide.  
Thy walk today with me*

*Has made my heart within me burn,  
As I communed with thee.  
Thy earnest words have filled my soul  
And kept me near thy side.*

*O Savior, stay this night with me;  
Behold, 'tis eventide.  
O Savior, stay this night with me;  
Behold, 'tis eventide.<sup>1</sup>*

More precious than a memory of events is the memory of the Holy Ghost touching our hearts and His continuing affirmation of truth. More precious than seeing with our eyes or remembering words spoken and read is recalling the feelings that accompanied the quiet voice of the Spirit. Rarely I have felt it exactly as the travelers on the road to Emmaus did—as a soft but unmistakable burning in the heart. More often it is a feeling of light and quiet assurance.

We have the priceless promise of the Holy Ghost as a companion, and we also have true directions on how to claim that gift. These words are said by the Lord’s authorized servant with his hands on our head: “Receive the Holy



Ghost.” At that moment you and I have the assurance He will be sent. But our obligation is to choose to open our hearts to receive the ministration of the Spirit over a lifetime.

The experiences of the Prophet Joseph Smith offer a guide. He began and continued his ministry with the decision that his own wisdom was not sufficient to know what course he should pursue. He chose to be humble before God.

Next, Joseph chose to ask of God. He prayed in faith that God would answer. The answer came when he was a young boy. Those messages came when he needed to know how God would have His Church established. The Holy Ghost comforted and guided him throughout his life.

He obeyed inspiration when it was difficult. For instance, he received direction to send the Twelve to England when he needed them most. He sent them.

He accepted correction and comfort from the Spirit when he was imprisoned and the Saints were terribly oppressed. And he obeyed when he went down the road to Carthage even as he knew he faced mortal danger.

The Prophet Joseph set an example for us of how to receive continual spiritual direction and comfort through the Holy Ghost.

The first choice he made was to be humble before God.

The second was to pray with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The third was to obey exactly. Obedience may mean to move quickly. It may mean to prepare. Or it may mean to wait in patience for further inspiration.

And the fourth is to pray to know the needs and hearts of others and how to help them for the Lord. Joseph



prayed for the Saints in distress when he was in prison. It has been my opportunity to observe the prophets of God as they pray, ask for inspiration, receive direction, and act on it.

I have seen how often their prayers are about the people they love and serve. Their concern for others seems to open their hearts to receive inspiration. That can be true for you.

Inspiration will help us minister to others for the Lord. You have seen that in your experience, as I have. My bishop once said to me—at a time when my wife was under great strain in her own life—“Every time I hear of someone in the ward who needs help, when I get there to help, I find that your wife was there ahead of me. How does she do that?”

She is like all who are great ministers in the Lord’s kingdom. It seems there are two things they do. Great ministers have qualified for the Holy Ghost as a nearly constant companion. And they have qualified for the gift of charity, which is the pure love of Christ. Those gifts have grown in them as they have used them in serving out of love for the Lord.

The way in which prayer, inspiration, and love of the Lord work together in our service is described

for me perfectly in these words:

“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:14–21).

I bear my personal witness that the Father is at this moment aware of you, your feelings, and the spiritual and temporal needs of everyone around you. I bear testimony that the Father and the Son are sending the Holy



By President Dallin H. Oaks  
First Counselor in the First Presidency

Ghost to all who have that gift, ask for that blessing, and seek to be worthy of it. Neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Ghost force Themselves into our lives. We are free to choose. The Lord has said to all:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith” (Revelation 3:20–22).

I pray with all my heart that you will hear the voice of the Spirit, which is sent to you so generously. And I pray that you will open your heart always to receive Him. If you ask with real intent and with faith in Jesus Christ for inspiration, you will receive it in the Lord’s way and in His time. God did that for the young Joseph Smith. He does it today for our living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. He has placed you in the way of other children of God to serve them for Him. I know that not only by what I have seen with my eyes but more powerfully by what the Spirit has whispered to my heart.

I have felt the love of the Father and of His Beloved Son for all the children of God in the world and for His children in the spirit world. I have felt the comfort and the direction of the Holy Ghost. I pray that you may have the joy of having the Spirit with you as your companion constantly. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTE

1. “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” *Hymns*, no. 165.

## Small and Simple Things

*We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, seemingly small things bring to pass great things.*

### I.

My dear brothers and sisters, like you, I have been profoundly touched and edified and inspired by the messages and music and the feelings of this time together. I’m sure I speak for you in expressing thanks to our brothers and sisters who, as instruments in the hands of the Lord, have given us the strengthening effect of this time together.

I am grateful to speak to this audience on Easter Sunday. Today we join other Christians in celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a pillar of our faith.

Because we believe the accounts in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon about the literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we also believe the numerous scriptural teachings that a similar resurrection will come to all mortals who have ever lived upon this earth. That resurrection gives us what the Apostle Peter called “a lively hope” (1 Peter 1:3). That lively hope is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in our Heavenly Father’s merciful plan for the salvation of His

children. That plan calls for a transition from mortality to immortality. Central to that transition is the sunset of death and the glorious morning made possible by the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior that we celebrate on this Easter Sunday.

### II.

In a great hymn whose words were written by Eliza R. Snow, we sing:

*How great, how glorious, how complete  
Redemption’s grand design,  
Where justice, love, and mercy meet  
In harmony divine!*<sup>1</sup>

In furtherance of that divine design and harmony, we assemble in meetings, including this conference, to teach and encourage one another.

This morning I have felt to use as my text Alma’s teaching to his son Helaman, recorded in the Book of Mormon: “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

We are taught many small and simple things in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, these seemingly small things bring to pass great things. There have been



many talks on this subject by General Authorities and by other respected teachers. The subject is so important that I feel to speak of it again.

I was reminded of the power of small and simple things over time by something I saw on a morning walk. Here is the picture I took. The thick and strong concrete sidewalk is cracking. Is this the result of some large and powerful thrust? No, this cracking is caused by the slow, small growth of one of the roots reaching out from the adjoining tree. Here is a similar example I saw on another street.



The thrusting power that cracked these heavy concrete sidewalks was too small to measure on a daily or even a monthly basis, but its effect over time was incredibly powerful.

So is the powerful effect over time of the small and simple things we are taught in the scriptures and by living prophets. Consider the scripture study we've been taught to incorporate into our daily lives. Or consider the personal prayers and the kneeling family prayers that are regular practices for

faithful Latter-day Saints. Consider attendance at seminary for youth or institute classes for young adults. Though each of these practices may seem to be small and simple, over time they result in powerful spiritual uplift and growth. This occurs because each of these small and simple things invites the companionship of the Holy Ghost, the Testifier who enlightens us and guides us into truth, as President Eyring has explained.

Another source of spiritual uplift and growth is an ongoing practice of repenting, even of seemingly small



transgressions. Our own inspired self-evaluations can help us see how we have fallen short and how we can do better. Such repentance should precede our weekly partaking of the sacrament. Some subjects to consider in this process of repentance are suggested in the hymn "Have I Done Any Good?"

*Have I done any good in the world today?*  
*Have I helped anyone in need?*

*Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad?*  
*If not, I have failed indeed.*  
*Has anyone's burden been lighter today*  
*Because I was willing to share?*  
*Have the sick and the weary been helped on their way?*  
*When they needed my help was I there?*<sup>2</sup>

Surely these are small things, but surely they are good examples of what Alma taught his son Helaman: "And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord . . . bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:7).

President Steven C. Wheelwright gave an audience at Brigham Young University–Hawaii this inspired description of Alma's teaching: "Alma confirms for his son that indeed the pattern the Lord follows when we exercise faith in Him and follow His counsel in small and simple things is that He blesses us with small daily miracles, and over time, with marvelous works."<sup>3</sup>

President Howard W. Hunter taught that "frequently it is the commonplace tasks . . . that have the greatest positive effect on the lives of others, as compared with the things that the world so often relates to greatness."<sup>4</sup>

A persuasive secular teaching of this same principle comes from former Senator Dan Coats of Indiana, who wrote: "The only preparation for that one profound decision which can change a life, or even a nation, is those hundreds and thousands of half-conscious, self-defining, seemingly insignificant decisions made in private."<sup>5</sup>

Those "seemingly insignificant" private decisions include how we use our time, what we view on television and the internet, what we read, the art and music with which we surround

ourselves at work and at home, what we seek for entertainment, and how we apply our commitment to be honest and truthful. Another seemingly small and simple thing is being civil and cheerful in our personal interactions.

None of these desirable small and simple things will lift us to great things unless they are practiced consistently and continuously. President Brigham Young was reported as saying: “Our lives are made up of little, simple circumstances that amount to a great deal when they are brought together, and sum up the whole life of the man or woman.”<sup>6</sup>

We are surrounded by media influences and cultural deteriorations that will carry us downstream in our values if we are not continually resisting. To move upstream toward our eternal goal, we must constantly keep paddling. It helps if we are part of a team that is paddling together, like a rowing crew in action. To extend that example even further, the cultural currents are so strong that if we ever stop paddling, we will be carried downstream toward a destination we do not seek but which becomes inevitable if we do not constantly try to move forward.

After reciting a seemingly small event that had great consequences, Nephi wrote, “And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things” (1 Nephi 16:29). The Old Testament includes a memorable example of this. There we read how the Israelites were plagued by fiery serpents. Many people died from their bites (see Numbers 21:6). When Moses prayed for relief, he was inspired to make “a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole.” Then, “if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (verse 9). Such a small thing



for such a miraculous result! Yet, as Nephi explained when he taught this example to those who were rebelling against the Lord, even when the Lord had prepared a simple way by which they could be healed, “because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished” (1 Nephi 17:41).

That example and that teaching remind us that the simplicity of the way or the easiness of the commanded task cannot mean that it is unimportant to achieve our righteous desire.

Similarly, even small acts of disobedience or minor failures to follow

righteous practices can draw us down toward an outcome we have been warned to avoid. The Word of Wisdom provides an example of this. Likely the effect on the body of one cigarette or one drink of alcohol or one dose of another drug cannot be measured. But over time, the effect is powerful and may be irreversible. Remember the cracking of the sidewalk by the gradual small expansions of the root of the tree. One thing is certain, the terrible consequences of partaking of anything that can become addictive, like drugs that attack our bodies or pornographic material that degrades our thoughts, is





totally avoidable if we never partake for the first time—even once.

Many years ago, President M. Russell Ballard described to a general conference audience “how small and simple things can be negative and destructive to a person’s salvation.” He taught: “Like weak fibers that form a yarn, then a strand, and finally a rope, these small things combined together can become too strong to be broken. We must ever be aware of the power that the small and simple things can have in building spirituality,” he said. “At the same time, we must be aware that Satan will use small and simple things to lead us into despair and misery.”<sup>7</sup>

President Wheelwright gave a similar caution to his BYU–Hawaii audience: “It is in failing to do the small and simple things that faith wavers, miracles cease, and progress towards the Lord and His kingdom is first put on hold and then begins to unravel as seeking after the kingdom of God is replaced with more temporal pursuits and worldly ambitions.”<sup>8</sup>

To protect against the cumulative negative effects that are destructive to our spiritual progress, we need to follow the spiritual pattern of small and

simple things. Elder David A. Bednar described this principle in a BYU Women’s Conference: “We can learn much about the nature and importance of this spiritual pattern from the technique of . . . dripping water onto the soil at very low rates,” in contrast to flooding or spraying large quantities of water where it may not be needed.

He explained: “The steady drips of water sink deep into the ground and provide a high moisture level in the soil wherein plants can flourish. In like manner, if you and I are focused and frequent in receiving consistent drops of spiritual nourishment, then gospel roots can sink deep into our soul, can become firmly established and grounded, and can produce extraordinary and delicious fruit.”

Continuing, he said, “The spiritual pattern of small and simple things bringing forth great things produces firmness and steadfastness, deepening devotion, and more complete conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.”<sup>9</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught this principle in words now included in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Let no man count them as small things;

for there is much . . . pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things” (D&C 123:15).

In connection with the earliest attempts to establish the Church in Missouri, the Lord counseled patience for “all things must come to pass in their time” (D&C 64:32). Then He gave this great teaching: “Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

I believe we all desire to follow President Russell M. Nelson’s challenge to press forward “on the covenant path.”<sup>10</sup> Our commitment to do so is strengthened by consistently following the “small things” we are taught by the gospel of Jesus Christ and the leaders of His Church. I testify of Him and invoke His blessings on all who seek to keep on His covenant path, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
2. “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.
3. Steven C. Wheelwright, “The Power of Small and Simple Things” (Brigham Young University–Hawaii devotional, Aug. 31, 2007), 2, devotional.byuh.edu.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (2015), 165.
5. Dan Coats, “America’s Youth: A Crisis of Character,” *Imprimis*, vol. 20, no. 9 (Sept. 1991), 4; see also Elder Wilford Andersen in his column in the *Mesa Tribune*, May 1996.
6. Brigham Young, discourse in Ogden Tabernacle, July 19, 1877, as reported in “Discourse,” *Deseret News*, Oct. 17, 1877, 578.
7. M. Russell Ballard, “Small and Simple Things,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 7, 8.
8. Steven C. Wheelwright, “The Power of Small and Simple Things,” 3.
9. David A. Bednar, “By Small and Simple Things Are Great Things Brought to Pass” (Brigham Young University Women’s Conference, Apr. 29, 2011), womensconference.byu.edu.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2018, 7.



By President Russell M. Nelson

# Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives

*In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.*

What a glorious privilege it has been to celebrate Easter with you on this Sunday of general conference! Nothing could be more fitting than to commemorate the most important event that ever occurred on this earth by worshipping the most important being who ever walked this earth. In this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we worship Him who commenced His infinite Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was willing to suffer for the sins and weaknesses of each of us, which suffering caused Him “to bleed at every pore.”<sup>1</sup> He was crucified on Calvary’s cross<sup>2</sup> and rose the third day as the first resurrected being of our Heavenly Father’s children. I love Him and testify that He lives! It is He who leads and guides His Church.

Without our Redeemer’s infinite Atonement, not one of us would have hope of ever returning to our Heavenly Father. Without His Resurrection, death would be the end. Our Savior’s Atonement made eternal life a

possibility and immortality a reality for all.

It is because of His transcendent mission and the peace He grants His followers that my wife, Wendy, and I felt comfort late on January 2, 2018, when we were awakened by a phone call telling us that President Thomas S. Monson had stepped through the veil.

How we miss President Monson! We honor his life and his legacy. A spiritual giant, he left an indelible imprint upon all who knew him and upon the Church that he loved.

On Sunday, January 14, 2018, in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple, the First Presidency was reorganized in the simple yet sacred pattern established by the Lord. Then, at yesterday morning’s solemn assembly, members of the Church throughout the world raised their hands to confirm the earlier action taken by the Apostles. I am humbly grateful for your sustaining support.

I am also grateful for those upon whose shoulders I stand. It has been

my privilege to serve in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for 34 years and to know personally 10 of the 16 previous Presidents of the Church. I learned much from each of them.

I also owe much to my forebears. All eight of my great-grandparents were converts to the Church in Europe. Each of these stalwart souls sacrificed everything to come to Zion. During subsequent generations, however, not all my ancestors remained so committed. As a result, I was not raised in a gospel-centered home.

I adored my parents. They meant the world to me and taught me crucial lessons. I cannot thank them enough for the happy homelife they created for me and my siblings. And yet, even as a boy, I knew I was missing something. One day I jumped on the streetcar and went to an LDS bookstore to find a book about the Church. I loved learning about the gospel.

As I came to understand the Word of Wisdom, I wanted my parents to live







that law. So, one day when I was very young, I went to our basement and smashed on the concrete floor every bottle of liquor! I expected my father to punish me, but he never said a word.

As I matured and began to understand the magnificence of Heavenly Father's plan, I often said to myself, "I don't want one more Christmas present! I just want to be sealed to my parents." That longed-for event did not happen until my parents were past 80, and then it did happen. I cannot fully express the joy that I felt that day,<sup>3</sup> and each day I feel that joy of their sealing and my being sealed to them.

In 1945, while I was in medical school, I married Dantzel White in the Salt Lake Temple. She and I were blessed with nine splendid daughters and one precious son. Today our ever-growing family is one of the greatest joys of my life.

In 2005, after nearly 60 years of marriage, my dear Dantzel was unexpectedly called home. For a season, my grief was almost immobilizing. But the message of Easter and the promise of resurrection sustained me.

Then the Lord brought Wendy Watson to my side. We were sealed in

the Salt Lake Temple on April 6, 2006. How I love her! She is an extraordinary woman—a great blessing to me, to our family, and to the entire Church.

Each of these blessings has come as a result of seeking and heeding the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Said President Lorenzo Snow, "This is the grand privilege of every Latter-day Saint . . . that it is our right to have the manifestations of the Spirit every day of our lives."<sup>4</sup>

One of the things the Spirit has repeatedly impressed upon my mind since my new calling as President of the Church is how willing the Lord is to reveal His mind and will. The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children.

Through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, the Lord will assist us in all our righteous pursuits. I remember in an operating room, I have stood over a patient—unsure how to perform an unprecedented procedure—and experienced the Holy Ghost diagramming the technique in my mind.<sup>5</sup>

To strengthen my proposal to Wendy, I said to her, "I know about revelation and how to receive it." To her credit—and, as I have come to

learn, typical of her—she had already sought and received her own revelation about us, which gave her the courage to say yes.

As a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I prayed daily for revelation and gave thanks to the Lord every time He spoke to my heart and mind.

Imagine the miracle of it! Whatever our Church calling, we can pray to our Heavenly Father and receive guidance and direction, be warned about dangers and distractions, and be enabled to accomplish things we simply could not do on our own. If we will truly receive the Holy Ghost and learn to discern and understand His promptings, we will be guided in matters large and small.

When I recently faced the daunting task of choosing two counselors, I wondered how I could possibly choose just two from twelve men whom I love and respect.

Because I know that good inspiration is based upon good information, I prayerfully met one-on-one with each Apostle.<sup>6</sup> I then sequestered myself in a private room in the temple and sought the Lord's will. I testify that the

Lord instructed me to select President Dallin H. Oaks and President Henry B. Eyring to serve as my counselors in the First Presidency.

In like manner, I testify that the Lord inspired the call of Elder Gerrit W. Gong and Elder Ulisses Soares to be ordained as His Apostles. I and we welcome them to this unique brotherhood of service.

When we convene as a Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, our meeting rooms become rooms of revelation. The Spirit is palpably present. As we wrestle with complex matters, a thrilling process unfolds as each Apostle freely expresses his thoughts and point of view. Though we may differ in our initial perspectives, the love we feel for each other is constant. Our unity helps us to discern the Lord's will for His Church.

In our meetings, the majority never rules! We listen prayerfully to one another and talk with each other until we are united. Then when we have reached complete accord, the

unifying influence of the Holy Ghost is spine-tingling! We experience what the Prophet Joseph Smith knew when he taught, "By union of feeling we obtain power with God."<sup>7</sup> No member of the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve would ever leave decisions for the Lord's Church to his own best judgment!

Brothers and sisters, how can we become the men and women—the Christlike servants—the Lord needs us to be? How can we find answers to questions that perplex us? If Joseph Smith's transcendent experience in the Sacred Grove teaches us anything, it is that the heavens are open and that God speaks to His children.

The Prophet Joseph Smith set a pattern for us to follow in resolving our questions. Drawn to the promise of James that if we lack wisdom we may ask of God,<sup>8</sup> the boy Joseph took his question directly to Heavenly Father. He sought personal revelation, and his seeking opened this last dispensation.

In like manner, what will your seeking open for you? What wisdom do you lack? What do you feel an urgent need to know or understand? Follow the example of the Prophet Joseph. Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.

Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will "grow into the principle of revelation."<sup>9</sup>

Does God really *want* to speak to you? Yes! "As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course . . . as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints."<sup>10</sup>

You don't have to wonder about what is true.<sup>11</sup> You do not have to wonder whom you can safely trust. Through personal revelation, you can receive your own witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that Joseph Smith is a prophet, and that this is the Lord's Church. Regardless of what others may say or do, no one can ever take away a witness borne to your heart and mind about what is true.

I urge you to stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation, for the Lord has promised that "if thou shalt [seek], 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."<sup>12</sup>

Oh, there is so much more that your Father in Heaven wants you to know. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, "To those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, it is clear that the Father and the Son are giving away the secrets of the universe!"<sup>13</sup>

Nothing opens the heavens quite like the combination of increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon,<sup>14</sup> and regular time committed to temple and family history work.

To be sure, there may be times when you feel as though the heavens are closed. But I promise that as you continue to be obedient, expressing





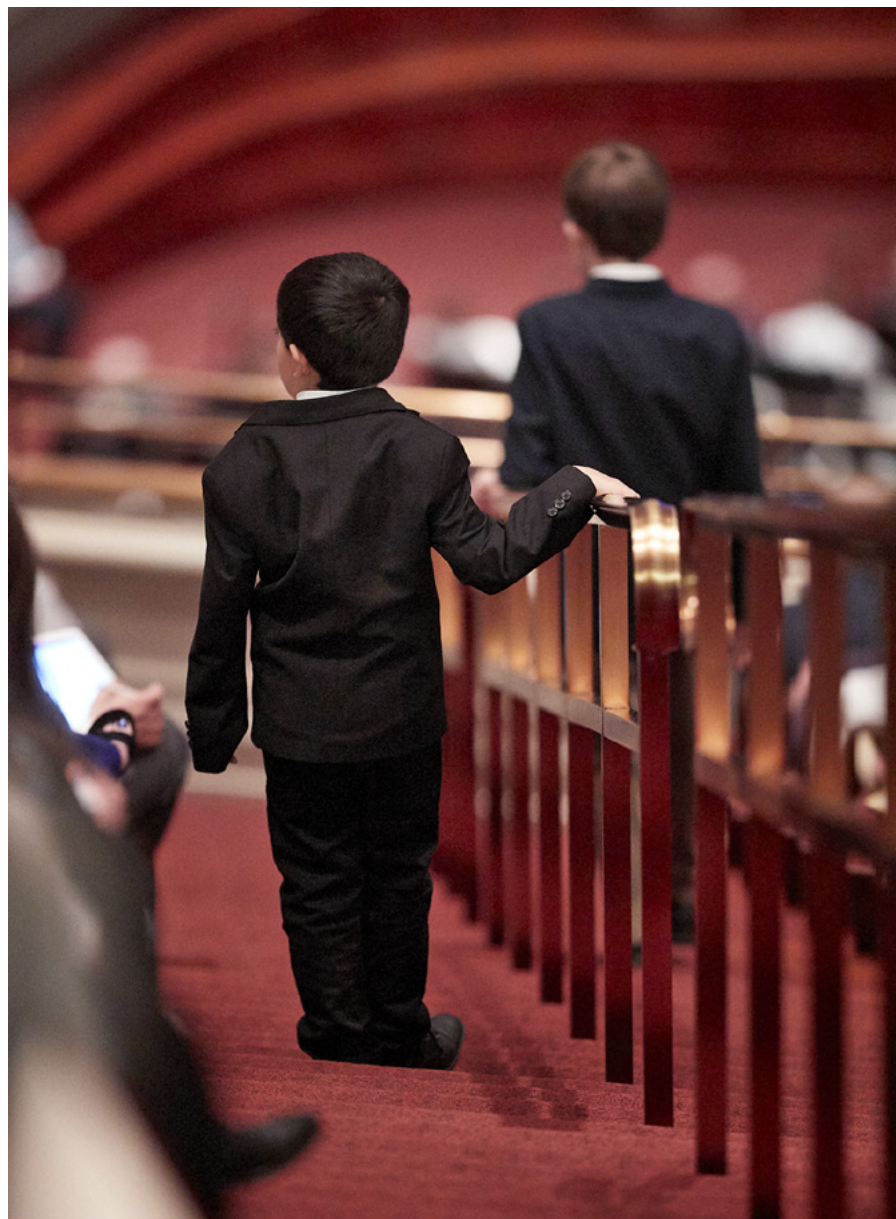
gratitude for every blessing the Lord gives you, and as you patiently honor the Lord's timetable, you will be given the knowledge and understanding you seek. Every blessing the Lord has for you—even miracles—will follow. That is what personal revelation will do for you.

I am optimistic about the future. It will be filled with opportunities for each of us to progress, contribute, and take the gospel to every corner of the earth. But I am also not naive about the days ahead. We live in a world that is complex and increasingly contentious. The constant availability of social media and a 24-hour news cycle bombard us with relentless messages. If we are to have any hope of sifting through the myriad of voices and the philosophies of men that attack truth, we must learn to receive revelation.

Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory. But in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I plead with you to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation. Let this Easter Sunday be a defining moment in your life. Choose to do the spiritual work required to enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost and hear the voice of the Spirit more frequently and more clearly.

With Moroni, I exhort you on this Easter Sabbath to “come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift,”<sup>15</sup> beginning with the gift of the Holy



Ghost, which gift can and will change your life.

We are followers of Jesus Christ. The most important truth the Holy Ghost will ever witness to you is that Jesus *is* the Christ, the Son of the living God. He lives! He is our Advocate with the Father, our Exemplar, and our Redeemer. On this Easter Sunday, we commemorate His atoning sacrifice, His literal Resurrection, and His divinity.

This is His Church, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I so testify, with my expression of love for each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
2. See Luke 23:33.
3. See Alma 26:16.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 76.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “Sweet Power of Prayer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 7–8.
6. See 3 Nephi 28:1.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 393–94.
8. See James 1:5.
9. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 132.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:33.
11. See Moroni 10:5.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.
13. Neal A. Maxwell, “Meek and Lowly” (Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 21, 1986), 9, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu).
14. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
15. Moroni 10:30.



By Elder Gerrit W. Gong  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

*This is Easter Sunday. I reverently witness and solemnly testify of the living Christ—He who “died, was buried, and rose again the third day.”*

Dear brothers and sisters, when our sons were very young, I told them bedtime stories about beagle puppies and hummed bedtime hymns, including “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.”<sup>1</sup> Sometimes I playfully changed the words: Now it’s time to go to sleep—hallelujah. Usually our sons fell asleep quickly; or at least they knew if I thought they were asleep, I would stop singing.

Words—at least my words—cannot express the overwhelming feelings since President Russell M. Nelson lovingly took my hands in his, my dear Susan at my side, and extended this sacred call from the Lord that took my breath away and has left me weeping many times these past days.

This Easter Sabbath, I joyfully sing, “Alleluia.” The song of our risen Savior’s redeeming love<sup>2</sup> celebrates the harmony of covenants (that connect us to God and to each other) and the Atonement of Jesus Christ (that helps us put off the natural man and woman and yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit).<sup>3</sup>

Together, our covenants and our Savior’s Atonement enable and ennoble. Together, they help us hold on and

let go. Together, they sweeten, preserve, sanctify, redeem.

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith: “It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth and binds in heaven. Nevertheless, in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the priesthood to any man by actual revelation,

or any set of men, this power has always been given.”<sup>4</sup>

And so it is today. Sacred covenants and ordinances, not available anywhere else, are received in 159 holy houses of the Lord in 43 countries. Promised blessings come through restored priesthood keys, doctrine, and authority, reflecting our faith, obedience, and the promises of His Holy Spirit to us in our generations, in time and eternity.

Dear brothers and sisters in every nation, kindred, and tongue, across our worldwide Church, thank you for your living faith, hope, and charity in every footstep. Thank you for becoming a gathering fulness of restored gospel testimony and experience.

Dear brothers and sisters, we belong to each other. We can be “knit together in unity and in love”<sup>5</sup> in all things and in all places.<sup>6</sup> As the Lord Jesus Christ invites each of us, wherever we are, whatever our circumstances, please “come and see.”<sup>7</sup>

This day I humbly pledge all the energies and faculties of my soul,<sup>8</sup>





whatever they be or may become, to my Savior, to my dear Susan and our family, to my Brethren, and to each of you, my beloved brothers and sisters.

Everything worthy and eternal is centered in the living reality of God, our loving Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement, witnessed by the Holy Ghost.<sup>9</sup> This is Easter Sunday. I reverently witness and solemnly testify of the living Christ—He who “died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven.”<sup>10</sup> He is Alpha and Omega<sup>11</sup>—with us in the beginning, He is with us to the end.

I testify of latter-day prophets, from the Prophet Joseph Smith to our dear President Russell M. Nelson, whom we joyfully sustain. As our Primary children sing, “Follow the prophet; he knows the way.”<sup>12</sup> I witness that, as prophesied in the holy scriptures, including in the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, “the Lord’s kingdom [is] once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.”<sup>13</sup> In the holy and sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Elder Ulisses Soares**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Prophets Speak by the Power of the Holy Spirit

*Having prophets is a sign of God’s love for His children. They make known the promises and the true nature of God and of Jesus Christ.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, wherever you may be, I would like to express my sincere and deep thanks for your sustaining vote yesterday. Though I feel ineloquent and slow of speech like Moses, I console myself in the Lord’s words to him:

“Who hath made man’s mouth or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?”

“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what

thou shalt say” (Exodus 4:11–12; see also verse 10).

I take solace also in the love and support of my beloved wife. She has been an example of goodness, love, and total devotion to the Lord and for me and my family. I love her with every ounce of my heart, and I am grateful for the positive influence she has had on us.

Brothers and sisters, I want to testify to you that President Russell M. Nelson is the prophet of God on earth.

## NOTES

1. “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,” *Hymns*, no. 200.
2. See Alma 5:26.
3. See Mosiah 3:19.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 128:9.
5. Mosiah 18:21.
6. See Mosiah 18:9.
7. John 1:39.
8. See 1 Nephi 15:25.
9. “Ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive” (2 Nephi 31:18).
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 49.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:1.
12. “Follow the Prophet,” *Children’s Songbook*, 111.
13. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.



I have never seen anyone more kind and loving than he is. Though I felt so inadequate for this sacred call, his words and the tender look in his eyes as he extended this responsibility made me feel embraced by the Savior's love. Thank you, President Nelson. I sustain you and I love you.

Isn't it a blessing to have prophets, seers, and revelators on earth in these days in which we live, who seek to know the will of the Lord and follow it? It is comforting to know that we are not alone in the world, despite the challenges we face in life. Having prophets is a sign of God's love for His children. They make known the promises and the true nature of God and of Jesus Christ to Their people. I have learned that through my personal experiences.

Eighteen years ago, my wife and I received a phone call from President James E. Faust, then Second Counselor in the First Presidency. He called us to serve as mission president and companion in Portugal. He told us that we had only six weeks before we started the mission. Although we felt unprepared and inadequate, we accepted the call. Our most important concern at the time was to obtain the visas required to serve in that country because, according to past experience, we knew the process took six to eight months to complete.

President Faust then asked if we had faith that the Lord would perform a miracle and that we would be able to solve the visa problem faster. Our answer was a big yes, and we started making the arrangements immediately. We prepared the documents required for the visas, took our three young children, and went to the consulate as fast as we could. A very nice lady met with us there. In reviewing our papers and



getting acquainted with what we were going to do in Portugal, she turned to us and asked, "Are you really going to help the people of my country?" We firmly answered yes and explained that we would represent Jesus Christ and testify of Him and His divine mission in the world. We returned there four weeks later, received our visas, and landed in the mission field within the six weeks, as a prophet of the Lord had asked us to do.

Brothers and sisters, from the bottom of my heart, I testify that the prophets speak by the power of the Holy Spirit. They testify of Christ and His divine mission on earth. They represent the mind and heart of the Lord and are called to represent Him and teach us what we must do to return to live in the presence of God and His

Son, Jesus Christ. We are blessed as we exercise our faith and follow their teachings. By following them, our lives are happier and less complicated, our difficulties and problems are easier to bear, and we create a spiritual armor around us that will protect us from the attacks of the enemy in our day.

On this Easter day I solemnly testify that Jesus Christ is risen, He lives, and He directs His Church on earth through His prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that He is the Savior and Redeemer of the world and that through Him we can be saved and exalted in the presence of our dear God. I love Him; I adore Him. I want to follow Him and do His will and become more like Him. I humbly say these things in the sacred name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■





By President Russell M. Nelson

# Ministering

*We will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others.*

Thank you, Elder Gong and Elder Soares, for your heartfelt expressions of faith. We are so very grateful for you and your dear companions.

Dear brothers and sisters, we constantly seek direction from the Lord on how we can help our members keep the commandments of God, especially those two great commandments to love God and our neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

For months we have been seeking a better way to minister to the spiritual and temporal needs of our people in the Savior's way.

We have made the decision to retire home teaching and visiting teaching as we have known them. Instead, we will implement a newer, holier approach to caring for and ministering to others. We will refer to these efforts simply as "ministering."

Effective ministering efforts are enabled by the innate gifts of the sisters and by the incomparable power of the priesthood. We all need such protection from the cunning wiles of the adversary.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sister Jean B. Bingham, General President of the Relief Society, will explain how assigned brethren of the priesthood and assigned sisters of the Relief Society and Young Women will now function in serving and watching over members of the Church throughout the world.

The First Presidency and the Twelve are united in endorsing their messages. Gratefully and prayerfully we open this new chapter in the history of the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTE

1. See Luke 10:27.





By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# “Be With and Strengthen Them”

*Our prayer today is that every man and woman will leave this general conference more deeply committed to heartfelt care for one another.*

To paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson, the most memorable moments in life are those in which we feel the rush of revelation.<sup>1</sup> President Nelson, I don’t know how many more “rushes” we can handle this weekend. Some of us have weak hearts. But as I think about it, you can take care of that too. What a prophet!

In the spirit of President Nelson’s marvelous declarations and testimonies last night and this morning, I bear my own witness that these adjustments are examples of the revelation that has guided this Church from its beginning. They are yet more evidence that the Lord is hastening His work in its time.<sup>2</sup>

For all who are eager to learn the details of these matters, please know that immediately upon the conclusion of this session of conference, a sequence will begin that includes, not necessarily in this order, sending a letter from the First Presidency to every member of the Church for whom we have an email address. A seven-page document of questions and answers will be attached for all priesthood and auxiliary leaders. Lastly, those

materials are being posted immediately on [ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org). “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.”<sup>3</sup>

Now to the wonderful assignment President Russell M. Nelson has given to me and to Sister Jean B. Bingham. Brothers and sisters, as the work of

quorums and auxiliaries matures institutionally, it follows that we should mature personally as well—individually rising above any mechanical, function-without-feeling routine to the heartfelt discipleship articulated by the Savior at the conclusion of His earthly ministry. As He prepared to leave His still-innocent and somewhat-confused little band of followers, He did not list a dozen administrative steps they had to take or hand them a fistful of reports to be filled out in triplicate. No, He summarized their task in one fundamental commandment: “Love one another; as I have loved you. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to move us closer to that gospel ideal, this newly announced priesthood and Relief Society ministering concept will include, among other things, the following elements, some of which the Relief Society has already put in place with wonderful success.<sup>5</sup>







- We will no longer use home teaching and visiting teaching language. That is partly because much of our ministering effort will be in settings other than the home and partly because our contact won't be defined by teaching a prepared lesson, though a lesson certainly may be shared if there is need for such. The primary purpose in this ministering idea will be, as was said of the people in Alma's day, to "watch over their people, and . . . nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness."<sup>6</sup>

- We will continue to visit homes as possible, but local circumstances such as large numbers, long distances, personal safety, and other challenging conditions may preclude a visit to every home every month. As the First Presidency counseled years ago, do the best you can.<sup>7</sup> In addition to whatever schedule you establish for actual visits, that calendar can be supplemented with telephone calls, written notes, texts, emails, video chats, conversations at Church meetings, shared service projects, social activities, and a host of possibilities in the world of social media. However, I should stress that this expansive new view

does not include the sorry statement I recently saw on an automobile bumper sticker. It read, "If I honk, you've been home taught." *Please*, please, brethren (the sisters would never be guilty of that—I speak to the brethren of the Church), with these adjustments we want more care and concern, not less.

- With this newer, more gospel-based concept of ministering, I feel you starting to panic about what counts on the report. Well, relax, because there isn't any report—at least not the 31st-of-the-month, "I made it through the door by the skin of my teeth" report. Here too we are trying to mature. The only report that will be made is the number of interviews leaders had with the ministering companionships in the ward that quarter. Simple as that sounds, my friends, those interviews are absolutely crucial. Without that information the bishop will have no way to receive the information he needs regarding the spiritual and temporal conditions of his people. Remember: ministering brethren represent the bishopric and elders quorum presidency; they don't replace them. The keys of a bishop and a quorum president go far

beyond this ministering concept.

- Because this report is different from anything you have submitted in the past, let me stress that *we* at Church headquarters don't need to know *how* or *where* or *when* you make contact with your people; we just need to know and care that you *do* make it and that you bless them in every way you can.

Brothers and sisters, we have a heaven-sent opportunity as an entire Church to demonstrate "pure religion . . . undefiled before God"<sup>8</sup>—"to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" and to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort,"<sup>9</sup> to minister to the widows and the fatherless, the married and the single, the strong and the distraught, the downtrodden and the robust, the happy and the sad—in short, all of us, every one of us, because we all need to feel the warm hand of friendship and hear the firm declaration of faith. However, I warn you, a new name, new flexibility, and fewer reports won't make an ounce of difference in our service unless we see this as an invitation to care for one another in a bold, new, holier way, as President Nelson has just said. As we lift our spiritual eyes toward living the law of love more universally, we pay tribute to the generations who have served that way for years. Let me note a recent example of such devotion in hopes that legions more will grasp the Lord's commandment to "be with and strengthen"<sup>10</sup> our brothers and sisters.

Last January 14, a Sunday, just a little after 5:00 p.m., my young friends Brett and Kristin Hamblin were chatting at their home in Tempe, Arizona, after Brett's day serving in the bishopric and Kristin's busy day caring for their five children.

Suddenly Kristin, a seemingly successful survivor of breast cancer the previous year, fell unresponsive. A call to 911 brought an emergency team trying desperately to revive her. As Brett prayed and pleaded, he quickly placed just two other telephone calls: one to his mother requesting her help with the children, the other to Edwin Potter, his home teacher. The latter conversation in its entirety went as follows:

Edwin, noting caller ID, said, “Hey, Brett, what’s up?”

Brett’s near-shouted response was “I need you here—now!”

In fewer minutes than Brett could count, his priesthood colleague was standing at his side, helping with the children and then driving Brother Hamblin to the hospital behind the ambulance carrying his wife. There, less than 40 minutes after she had first closed her eyes, the physicians pronounced Kristin dead.

As Brett sobbed, Edwin simply held him in his arms and cried with him—for a long, long time. Then, leaving Brett to grieve with other family members who had gathered, Edwin drove to the bishop’s home to tell him what had just transpired. A marvelous bishop started immediately for the hospital while Edwin drove on to the Hamblins’ home. There he and his wife, Charlotte, who had also come running, played with the five now-motherless Hamblin children, ages 12 down to 3. They fed them an evening meal, held an impromptu musical recital, and helped get them ready for bed.

Brett told me later, “The amazing part of this story isn’t that Edwin came when I called. In an emergency, there are always people willing to help. No, the amazing part of this story is that he was the one I thought of. There were other people around. Kristin has a

brother and sister less than three miles away. We have a great bishop, the greatest. But the relationship between Edwin and me is such that I felt instinctively to call him when I needed help. The Church provides us a structured way to live the second commandment better—to love, serve, and develop relationships with our brothers and sisters that help us move closer to God.”<sup>11</sup>

Edwin said about the experience, “Elder Holland, the irony in all of this is that Brett has been our family’s home teacher for longer than I have been theirs. Over that time, he has visited us more as a friend than by assignment. He has been a great example, the epitome of what an active and involved priesthood bearer should be. My wife, our boys—we don’t see him as one obligated to bring us a message at the end of each month; we think of him as a friend who lives just down the street and around the corner, who would do anything in this world to bless us. I am



glad I could repay just a little bit of the debt I owe him.”<sup>12</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I join with you in saluting every block teacher and ward teacher and home teacher and visiting teacher who has loved and served so faithfully throughout our history. Our prayer today is that every man and woman—and our older young men and young women—will leave this general conference more deeply committed to heartfelt care for one another, motivated only by the pure love of Christ to do so. In spite of what we all feel are our limitations and inadequacies—and we all have challenges—nevertheless, may we labor side by side with the Lord of the vineyard,<sup>13</sup> giving the God and Father of us all a helping hand with His staggering task of answering prayers, providing comfort, drying tears, and strengthening feeble knees.<sup>14</sup> If we will do that, we will be more like the true disciples of Christ we are meant to be. On this Easter Sunday, may we love one another as He has loved us,<sup>15</sup> I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (1860), 268.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.
3. Luke 11:9.
4. John 13:34–35.
5. See “Keep in Touch with Her Anytime, Anywhere, Any Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Jan. 2018, 7.
6. Mosiah 23:18; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
7. See “Watching Over and Strengthening Members,” First Presidency letter, Dec. 10, 2001.
8. James 1:27.
9. Mosiah 18:8–9.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
11. Brett Hamblin, personal correspondence, Feb. 2018.
12. Edwin Potter, personal correspondence, Feb. 2018.
13. See Jacob 5:70–72.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
15. See John 15:12.





By Jean B. Bingham  
Relief Society General President

# Ministering as the Savior Does

*May we show our gratitude and love for God by ministering with love to our eternal sisters and brothers.*

What a wonderful blessing to live in a time of continual revelation from God! As we look forward to and embrace the “restitution of all things,”<sup>1</sup> which has and will come through the prophesied events of our time, we are being prepared for the Savior’s Second Coming.<sup>2</sup>

And what better way to prepare to meet Him than to strive to become *like* Him through lovingly ministering to one another! As Jesus Christ taught His followers at the beginning of this dispensation, “If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me.”<sup>3</sup> Our service to others is a demonstration of discipleship and our gratitude and love for God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to “count” as serving our neighbors. Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves. What did the Savior do? Through His supernal gifts of the Atonement and Resurrection—which we celebrate on this beautiful Easter Sunday—“none other has had so profound an influence [on] all who have lived and who will yet live upon the

earth.”<sup>4</sup> But He also smiled at, talked with, walked with, listened to, made time for, encouraged, taught, fed, and forgave. He served family and friends, neighbors and strangers alike, and He invited acquaintances and loved ones to enjoy the rich blessings of His gospel. Those “simple” acts of service and love provide a template for our ministering today.

As you have the privilege to represent the Savior in your ministering

efforts, ask yourself, “How can I share the light of the gospel with this individual or family? What is the Spirit inspiring me to do?”

Ministering can be done in a great variety of individualized ways. So what does it look like?

Ministering looks like elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies prayerfully counseling about assignments. Rather than leaders just handing out slips of paper, it looks like counseling about the individuals and families in person as assignments are given to ministering brothers and sisters. It looks like going for a walk, getting together for a game night, offering service, or even serving together. It looks like visiting in person or talking on the phone or chatting online or texting. It looks like delivering a birthday card and cheering at a soccer game. It looks like sharing a scripture or quote from a conference talk that would be meaningful to that individual. It looks like discussing a gospel question and sharing testimony to bring clarity and peace. It looks like becoming part of someone’s life and caring about him



or her. It also looks like a ministering interview in which needs and strengths are discussed sensitively and appropriately. It looks like the ward council organizing to respond to a larger need.

This kind of ministering strengthened one sister who moved far away from home when her husband started graduate school. With no working phone and a small baby to care for, she felt disoriented in the new location, totally lost and alone. Without advance notice, a Relief Society sister came to the door bringing a little pair of shoes for the baby, put the two of them into her car, and took them to find the grocery store. The grateful sister reported, “She was my lifeline!”

True ministering is illustrated by an older sister in Africa who was assigned to seek out a sister who had not attended Church meetings for a long time. When she went to the sister’s home, she found that the woman had been beaten and robbed, had very little to eat, and possessed no clothes that she felt were appropriate for Sunday Church meetings. The woman assigned to minister to her brought a listening ear, produce from her garden, scriptures to read, and friendship. The “missing” sister soon came back to church and now holds a calling because she knows she is loved and valued.

Combining such Relief Society efforts with the now-restructured elders quorum will bring a unity that can yield astonishing results. Ministering becomes one coordinated effort to fulfill the priesthood duty to “visit the house of each member” and to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them,”<sup>5</sup> as well as to achieve the Relief Society purpose to help one another prepare for the blessings of eternal life.<sup>6</sup> Working together under the direction of the bishop,



elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies can be inspired as they seek the best ways to watch over and care for each individual and family.

Let me give you an example. A mother was diagnosed with cancer. Soon she began treatment, and immediately, the Relief Society sisters went to work, planning how to best help with meals, transportation to medical appointments, and other support. They visited her regularly, providing cheerful companionship. At the same time, the Melchizedek Priesthood quorum sprang into action. They provided labor in adding a remodeled bedroom and bathroom to make it easier to care for the sick sister. The young men lent their hands and backs to participate in that significant effort. And the young women got involved: they cheerfully arranged to faithfully walk the dog each day. As time passed, the ward continued their service, adding and adapting where necessary. It was clearly a labor of love, each member giving of him or herself, unitedly showing caring in individual ways that blessed not only the suffering sister but each member of her family.

After a valiant effort, the sister finally succumbed to the cancer and was laid to rest. Did the ward breathe a sigh of relief and consider the job well done and well over? No, the young women continue to walk the dog daily, the

priesthood quorums continue to minister to the father and his family, and the Relief Society sisters continue to reach out in love to ascertain strengths and needs. Brothers and sisters, this is ministering—this is loving as the Savior does!

Another blessing of these inspired announcements is the opportunity for young women ages 14 to 18 to participate in ministering as companions to Relief Society sisters, just as young men their age serve as ministering companions to Melchizedek Priesthood brethren. Youth can share their unique gifts and grow spiritually as they serve alongside adults in the work of salvation. Involving youth in ministering assignments can also increase the reach of Relief Society and elders quorums’ caring for others by increasing the number of members who participate.

As I think about the stellar young women I have known, I get excited for those Relief Society sisters who will have the privilege of being blessed by a young woman’s enthusiasm, talents, and spiritual sensitivity as they serve side-by-side or are ministered to by them. And I am equally delighted by the chance young women will have to be mentored and taught and strengthened by their sisters in Relief Society. This opportunity to participate in building the kingdom of God will be a tremendous benefit to young women,





helping them better prepare to fulfill their roles as leaders in the Church and the community and as contributing partners in their families. As Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson shared yesterday, young women “*want* to be of service. They need to know they are valued and essential in the work of salvation.”<sup>7</sup>

In fact, young women are already ministering to others, without assignment or fanfare. A family I know moved hundreds of miles to a new location where they knew no one. Within the first week, a 14-year-old girl from their new ward showed up on their doorstep with a plate of cookies, welcoming them to the area. Her mother stood smiling behind her as a willing chauffeur, supporting her daughter’s desire to minister.

Another mother was concerned one day that her 16-year-old daughter was not home at the usual hour. When the girl finally arrived, her mother quizzed her with some frustration about where she had been. The 16-year-old almost sheepishly replied that she had taken a flower to a widow who lived nearby. She had noticed the older sister looking

lonely and felt prompted to visit her. With her mother’s complete approval, the young woman continued to visit the elderly woman. They became good friends, and their sweet association continued for years.

Each of these young women, and many more like them, notice someone’s need and work to meet it. Young women have a natural desire to care and share that could be well directed through ministering in partnership with an adult sister.

No matter our age, when we consider how to minister most effectively, we ask, “What does she [or he] need?” Coupling that question with a sincere desire to serve, we are then led by the Spirit to do what would lift and strengthen the individual. I have heard countless stories of brothers and sisters who were blessed by a simple gesture of inclusion and welcome at church, a thoughtful email or text message, a personal contact at a difficult time, an invitation to participate in a group activity, or an offer to help with a challenging situation. Single parents, new converts, less-active members, widows

and widowers, or struggling youth may need extra attention and priority help from ministering brothers and sisters. Coordination between elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies allows for just the right assignments to be made.

After all is said and done, true ministering is accomplished one by one with love as the motivation. The value and merit and wonder of sincere ministering is that it truly changes lives! When our hearts are open and willing to love and include, encourage and comfort, the power of our ministering will be irresistible. With love as the motivation, miracles will happen, and we will find ways to bring our “missing” sisters and brothers into the all-inclusive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Savior is our example in everything—not only in what we should do but *why* we should do it.<sup>8</sup> “His life on earth was [an] invitation to us—to raise our sights a little higher, to forget our own problems and [to] reach out to others.”<sup>9</sup> As we accept the opportunity to wholeheartedly minister to our sisters and brothers, we are blessed to become more spiritually refined, more in tune with the will of God, and more able to understand His plan to help each one return to Him. We will more readily recognize His blessings and be eager to extend those blessings to others. Our hearts will sing in unison with our voices:

*Savior, may I love my brother  
As I know thou lovest me,  
Find in thee my strength, my beacon,  
For thy servant I would be.  
Savior, may I love my brother—  
Lord, I would follow thee.*<sup>10</sup>

May we show our gratitude and love for God by ministering with love

to our eternal sisters and brothers.<sup>11</sup> The result will be a unity of feeling such as the people in ancient America enjoyed 100 years after the Savior's appearance in their land.

"And it came to pass that there was no contention . . . because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

" . . . There were no envyings, nor strifes, . . . and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."<sup>12</sup>

I gladly bear my personal witness that these revelatory changes are inspired of God and that, as we embrace them with willing hearts, we will become better prepared to meet His Son, Jesus Christ, at His coming. We will be closer to becoming a Zion people and will feel surpassing joy with those whom we have helped along the path of discipleship. That we do so is my fervent and humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Acts 3:19–21.
2. See Robert D. Hales, "Preparations for the Restoration and the Second Coming: 'My Hand Shall Be over Thee,'" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 88–92.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
4. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, inside front cover.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 20:47, 53.
6. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.
7. Bonnie L. Oscarson, "Young Women in the Work," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 38.
8. See Ephesians 5:2.
9. Russell T. Osguthorpe, "What If Love Were Our Only Motive?" (Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 8, 2011), 7, speeches.byu.edu.
10. "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220.
11. See Mosiah 2:17.
12. 4 Nephi 1:15–16.



By Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## Behold the Man!

*Those who find a way to truly behold the Man find the doorway to life's greatest joys and the balm to life's most demanding despairs.*

My beloved brothers and sisters, dear friends, I am grateful to be with you on this wonderful general conference weekend. Harriet and I rejoice with you in sustaining Elders Gong and Soares and the many brothers and sisters who have received significant new callings during this general conference.

Although I miss my dear friend President Thomas S. Monson, I love, sustain, and support our prophet and

President, Russell M. Nelson, and his noble counselors.

I am also thankful and honored to once again work more closely with my beloved fellow Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Most of all, I am deeply humbled and very happy to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where millions of men, women, and children are willing to *lift where they stand*—in whatever capacity or calling—and strive with all their hearts to serve God and His children, building the kingdom of God.

Today is a sacred day. It is Easter Sunday, when we commemorate that glorious morning when our Savior broke the bands of death<sup>1</sup> and emerged triumphant from the tomb.

#### The Greatest Day in History

Recently I asked the internet, "What day most changed the course of history?"

The responses ranged from surprising and strange to insightful and thought-provoking. Among them, the day when a prehistoric asteroid struck the Yucatán Peninsula; or when in 1440, Johannes Gutenberg finished his printing press; and, of course, the day in 1903 when the Wright brothers







showed the world that man really can fly.

If the same question were asked of you, what would you say?

In my mind the answer is clear.

To find the most important day in history, we must go back to that evening almost 2,000 years ago in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus Christ knelt in intense prayer and offered Himself as a ransom for our sins. It was during this great and infinite sacrifice of unparalleled suffering in both body and spirit that Jesus Christ, even God, bled at every pore. Out of perfect love, He gave all that we might receive all. His supernal sacrifice, difficult to comprehend, to be felt only with all our heart and mind, reminds us of the universal debt of gratitude we owe Christ for His divine gift.

Later that night, Jesus was brought before religious and political authorities who mocked Him, beat Him, and sentenced Him to a shameful death. He hung in agony upon the cross until, finally, “it [was] finished.”<sup>2</sup> His lifeless body was laid in a borrowed tomb. And then, on the morning of the third day, Jesus Christ, the Son of Almighty God, emerged from the tomb as a glorious, resurrected being of splendor, light, and majesty.

Yes, there are many events throughout history that have profoundly affected the destiny of nations and peoples. But combine them all, and they cannot begin to compare to the importance of what happened on that first Easter morning.

What is it that makes the infinite sacrifice and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ the most important event in history—more influential than world wars, cataclysmic disasters, and life-changing scientific discoveries?

#### **Because of Jesus Christ, We Can Live Again**

The answer lies in two great, insurmountable challenges that every one of us faces.

First, we all die. No matter how young, beautiful, healthy, or cautious you are, someday your body will become lifeless. Friends and family will mourn you. But they cannot bring you back.

Nevertheless, because of Jesus Christ, your death will be temporary. Your spirit one day will reunite with your body. This resurrected body will not be subject to death,<sup>3</sup> and you will live in the eternities, free from pain and physical suffering.<sup>4</sup>

This will happen because of Jesus the Christ, who laid down His life and took it up again.

He did this for all who believe in Him.

He did this for all who do not believe in Him.

He did this even for those who mock, revile, and curse His name.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Because of Jesus Christ, We Can Live with God**

Second, we have all sinned. Our sins would forever keep us from living with God, because “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom.”<sup>6</sup>

As a result, every man, woman, and child was shut out of His presence—that is, until Jesus Christ, the Lamb without spot, offered His life as a ransom for our sins. Because Jesus owed no debt to justice, He could pay our debt and meet the demands of justice for every soul. And that includes you and me.

Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins.

All of them.

On that most important day in history, Jesus the Christ opened the gates of death and cast aside the barriers that prevented us from passing into the holy and hallowed halls of everlasting life. Because of our Lord and Savior, you and I are granted a most precious and priceless gift—regardless of our past, we can repent and follow the path that leads to celestial light and glory, surrounded by the faithful children of Heavenly Father.

#### **Why We Rejoice**

This is what we celebrate on Easter Sunday—we celebrate life!

Because of Jesus Christ, we will rise from the despair of death and embrace those we love, shedding tears of overwhelming joy and overflowing gratitude. Because of Jesus Christ, we will exist as eternal beings, worlds without end.

Because of Jesus the Christ, our sins can not only be erased; they can be forgotten.

We can become purified and exalted.  
Holy.

Because of our beloved Savior, we can forever drink from the fountain of water that springs up into eternal life.<sup>7</sup> We can dwell forever in the mansions of our eternal King, in unimaginable glory and perfect happiness.

#### Do We “Behold the Man”?

In spite of all this, there are many in the world today who are either not aware of or do not believe in the precious gift Jesus Christ has given us. They may have heard of Jesus Christ and know of Him as a historical figure, but they do not see Him for who He truly is.

When I think of this, I am reminded of the Savior standing before the

Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate, just a few hours before the Savior’s death.

Pilate viewed Jesus from a strictly worldly perspective. Pilate had a job to do, and it involved two major tasks: collecting taxes for Rome and keeping the peace. Now the Jewish Sanhedrin had brought before him a man who they claimed was an obstacle to both.<sup>8</sup>

After interrogating his prisoner, Pilate announced, “I find in him no fault at all.”<sup>9</sup> But he felt he had to appease Jesus’s accusers, so Pilate called upon a local custom that allowed one prisoner to be released during Passover season. Would they not have him release Jesus instead of the notorious robber and murderer Barabbas?<sup>10</sup>

But the tumultuous mob demanded that Pilate release Barabbas and crucify Jesus.

“Why?” Pilate asked. “What evil [has] he done?”

But they only shouted the louder. “Crucify him!”<sup>11</sup>

In one final effort to satisfy the mob, Pilate ordered his men to scourge Jesus.<sup>12</sup> This they did, leaving Him bloodied and bruised. They mocked Him, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and clothed Him in a purple robe.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps Pilate thought this would satisfy the mob’s lust for blood. Perhaps they would take pity on the man. “Behold, I bring him forth to you,” Pilate said, “that ye may know that I find no fault in him. . . . Behold the man!”<sup>14</sup>

The Son of God stood in the flesh before the people of Jerusalem.

They could see Jesus, but they did not truly behold Him.

They did not have eyes to see.<sup>15</sup>

In a figurative sense, we too are invited to “behold the man.” Opinions about Him vary in the world. Ancient and modern prophets testify that He is the Son of God. I do this too. It is significant and important that we each come to know for ourselves. So, when you ponder the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, what do you see?

Those who find a way to truly behold the Man find the doorway to life’s greatest joys and the balm to life’s most demanding despairs.

So, when you are encompassed by sorrows and grief, behold the Man.

When you feel lost or forgotten, behold the Man.

When you are despairing, deserted, doubting, damaged, or defeated, behold the Man.

He will comfort you.

He will heal you and give meaning to your journey. He will pour out His Spirit and fill your heart with exceeding joy.<sup>16</sup>







He gives “power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”<sup>17</sup>

When we truly behold the Man, we learn of Him and seek to align our lives with Him. We repent and strive to refine our natures and daily grow a little closer to Him. We trust Him. We show our love for Him by keeping His commandments and by living up to our sacred covenants.

In other words, we become His disciples.

His refining light saturates our souls. His grace uplifts us. Our burdens are lightened, our peace deepened. When we truly behold the Man, we have the promise of a blessed future that inspires and upholds us through the bends and bumps in life’s journey. Looking back, we will recognize that there is a divine pattern, that the dots really connect.<sup>18</sup>

As you accept His sacrifice, become His disciple, and finally reach the end of your earthly journey, what will become of the sorrows you have endured in this life?

They will be gone.

The disappointments, betrayals, persecutions you have faced?

Gone.

The suffering, heartache, guilt, shame, and anguish you have passed through?

Gone.

Forgotten.

Is it any wonder that “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins”?<sup>19</sup>

Is it any wonder that we strive with all our hearts to truly behold the Man?

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify that the most important day in the history of mankind was the day when Jesus Christ, the living Son of God, won the victory over death and sin for all of God’s children. And the most important day in your life and mine is the day when we learn to “behold the man”; when we see Him for who He truly is; when we partake with all our heart and mind of His atoning power; when with renewed enthusiasm and strength, we commit to follow Him. May that be a day that recurs over and over again throughout our lives.

I leave you my testimony and blessing that as we “behold the man,”

we will find meaning, joy, and peace in this earthly life and eternal life in the world to come. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Mosiah 15:23.
2. John 19:30.
3. See Alma 11:45.
4. See Revelation 21:4.
5. See 1 Corinthians 15:21–23.
6. 3 Nephi 27:19.
7. See John 4:14.
8. See Luke 23:2.
9. John 18:38. To avoid having to judge Jesus, Pilate tried to pass the case on to Herod Antipas. If Herod, who had commanded the death of John the Baptist (see Matthew 14:6–11), would condemn Jesus, Pilate could rubber-stamp the judgment and claim it was simply a local matter that he agreed to in order to keep the peace. But Jesus did not speak a word to Herod (see Luke 23:6–12), and Herod sent Him back to Pilate.
10. See Mark 15:6–7; John 18:39–40. One New Testament scholar writes, “It seems to have been the custom, that at the Passover the Roman Governor released to the Jewish populace some notorious prisoner who lay condemned to death” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [1899], 2:576). The name *Barabbas* means “son of the father.” The irony of giving the people of Jerusalem a choice between these two men is interesting.
11. See Mark 15:11–14.
12. This scourging was so terrible it was called “the intermediate death” (Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, 2:579).
13. See John 19:1–3.
14. John 19:4–5.
15. Earlier, Jesus had observed that “this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” And then with tenderness He said to His disciples, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13:15–16). Will we allow our hearts to be hardened, or will we open our eyes and hearts that we may truly behold the Man?
16. See Mosiah 4:20.
17. Isaiah 40:29.
18. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Adventure of Mortality” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 14, 2018), broadcasts.lds.org.
19. 2 Nephi 25:26.



By Bishop Gérald Caussé  
Presiding Bishop

# It Is All about People

*The Church is all about you, the Lord's disciples—those who love and follow Him and who have taken His name upon them.*

While preparing for the construction of the magnificent Paris France Temple, I had an experience I will never forget. In 2010, when property for the temple was found, the city mayor asked to meet with us to know more about our Church. This meeting was a critical step in obtaining a building permit. We meticulously prepared a presentation that included several impressive pictures of Latter-day Saint temples. My most fervent hope was that their architectural beauty would persuade the mayor to support our project.

To my surprise, the mayor indicated that rather than reviewing our presentation, he and his team preferred to conduct their own investigation to find out what kind of church we were. The following month, we were invited back to hear a report given by a city councilor who also happened to be a professor of religious history. She said, "Above all else, we wanted to understand who the members of your church are. First, we attended one of your sacrament meetings. We sat at the back of the chapel and carefully observed the people in the congregation and what they were doing. Then we met with your neighbors—those who live around your stake center—and we

asked them what kind of people you Mormons are."

"So what are your conclusions?" I asked, feeling a little bit of anxiety. She replied, "We discovered that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the closest to Jesus Christ's original Church than any other church we know of." I almost objected by saying, "That's not completely accurate! It's not the church that is closest; it *is* the Church of Jesus Christ—the



same Church, the true Church!" But I restrained myself and instead offered a silent prayer of gratitude. The mayor then advised us that, based on their findings, he and his team had no objections to the construction of a temple in their community.

Today, when I think about that miraculous experience, I feel grateful for the mayor's wisdom and spirit of discernment. He knew that the key to understanding the Church is not to see it through the outward appearance of its buildings or even as a well-organized institution but through its millions of faithful members, who strive each day to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

The definition of *the Church* might be derived from a passage in the Book of Mormon that states, "And they [meaning the Lord's disciples] who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the Church is all about people. It is all about you, the Lord's disciples—those who love and follow Him and who have taken His name upon them by covenant.

President Russell M. Nelson once likened the Church to a nice automobile. We all love it when our vehicle is clean and shiny. But the car's purpose is not to stand out as an attractive machine; it is to move the *people* in the car.<sup>2</sup> In the same manner, we, as members of the Church, appreciate having beautiful places of worship that are clean and well maintained, and we also enjoy having well-functioning programs. But these are merely support systems. Our sole aim is to invite each son and daughter of God to come unto Christ and to guide him or her along the covenant path. Nothing is more important. Our work is all about people and covenants.



Isn't it wonderful that the name given by revelation to the restored Church binds together the two most important elements in each gospel covenant? First is the name *Jesus Christ*. This Church belongs to Him, and His sanctifying Atonement and covenants are the only pathway to salvation and exaltation. The second name refers to *us*: the Saints, or in other words, His witnesses and His disciples.

I learned the importance of focusing on people when I served as a stake president in France. At the beginning of my service, I had in mind some very ambitious goals for the stake: the creation of new wards, the building of new meetinghouses, and even the construction of a temple in our area. When I was released six years later, not one of these objectives had been achieved. This could have felt like a complete failure except that, during the course of those six years, my objectives had become quite different.

As I sat on the stand on the day of my release, I was overwhelmed by a profound sense of gratitude and accomplishment. I looked at the faces of the hundreds of members in attendance. I could recall a spiritual experience connected with each one of them.

There were those brothers and sisters who had entered the waters of baptism, those for whom I had signed their first recommends so they could receive the sacred ordinances of the temple, and those young people and couples I had set apart or released as full-time missionaries. There were many others to whom I had ministered as they were going through trials and adversity in their lives. I felt intense brotherly love for each of them. I had found pure joy in serving them and rejoiced in their increased loyalty to and faith in the Savior.

President M. Russell Ballard taught, "What is most important in our Church responsibilities is not the statistics that

are reported or the meetings that are held but whether or not individual people—ministered to one at a time just as the Savior did—have been lifted and encouraged and ultimately changed."<sup>3</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, are we active in the gospel, or are we merely busy in the Church? The key is to follow the example of the Savior in all things. If we do that, we will naturally focus on saving individuals rather than performing tasks and implementing programs.

Have you ever asked yourself what it would be like if the Savior visited your ward or branch next Sunday? What would He do? Would He be worried to know if the visual aids were good enough or if the chairs were positioned properly in the classroom? Or would He find someone He could love, teach, and bless? Perhaps He would seek out a new member or a friend to welcome, a sick brother or sister in need of comfort, or a wavering young person who needed to be lifted and encouraged.

What classes would Jesus visit? I wouldn't be surprised if He visited the Primary children first. He would probably kneel down and speak to them eye to eye. He would express His love to them, tell them stories, congratulate them on their drawings, and testify of His Father in Heaven. His attitude would be simple, genuine, and without affectation. Can we do likewise?

I promise you that as you strive to be on the Lord's agenda, nothing will become more important than finding those people you can help and bless. At church you will focus on teaching individuals and touching their hearts. Your concern will be to foster a spiritual experience rather than organize a perfect activity, to minister to your fellow members rather than check a



box for the number of visits you have made. It will not be about you but about *them* whom we call our brothers and our sisters.

Sometimes we talk about *going* to church. But the Church is more than a building or a particular place. It is just as real and alive in the humblest of dwellings in the most remote areas of the world as it is here at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. The Lord Himself said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>4</sup>

We take the Church with us wherever we go: to work, to school, on vacation, and especially in our homes. Our very presence and influence can be enough to make wherever we find ourselves a holy place.

I remember a conversation I had with a friend who is not a member of our faith. He was surprised to learn that any worthy man in our Church could receive the priesthood. He asked, “But how many priesthood holders do you have in your ward?”

I answered, “Between 30 and 40.”

Perplexed, he continued, “In my congregation, we have only one priest. Why do you need so many priests on Sunday morning?”

Intrigued by his question, I felt inspired to reply, “I agree with you. I don’t think we need that many priesthood holders at church on Sunday. But we *do* need a priesthood holder in every home. And when there is no priesthood holder in a home, other priesthood holders are called upon to watch over and minister to that family.”

Ours is not just a Sunday church. Our worship continues each day of the week, wherever we are and in whatever we do. Our homes in particular are “the primary sanctuaries of our faith.”<sup>5</sup> It is most often in our homes that we pray,



we bless, we study, we teach the word of God, and we serve with pure love. I can testify from personal experience that our homes are sacred places where the Spirit can abound—as much as, and sometimes even more than, in our formal places of worship.

I bear witness that this Church is the Church of Jesus Christ. Its strength and vitality come from the daily actions of millions of His disciples who strive each day to follow His supreme example by caring for others. Christ lives and He directs this Church.

President Russell M. Nelson is the prophet whom He has chosen to lead and guide us in our days. Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 26:21.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, general conference leadership meeting, Apr. 2012.
3. M. Russell Ballard, “O Be Wise,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 20.
4. Matthew 18:20.
5. Russell M. Nelson, “The Doctrinal Importance of Marriage and Children” (worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 2012), [broadcasts.lds.org](https://broadcasts.lds.org).





By Elder Quentin L. Cook  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Prepare to Meet God

*Pursuing divinely appointed responsibilities in righteousness, unity, and equality will prepare us to meet God.*

E liza R. Snow, speaking of the Kirtland Temple dedication (which she attended), said: “The ceremonies of that dedication may be rehearsed, but no mortal language can describe the heavenly manifestations of that memorable day. Angels appeared to some, while a sense of divine presence was realized by all present, and each heart was filled with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”<sup>1</sup>

The divine manifestations that occurred in the Kirtland Temple were foundational to the purpose of the restored Church of Jesus Christ to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of our Heavenly Father’s children.<sup>2</sup> As we prepare to meet God, we can know what our divinely appointed responsibilities are by reviewing the sacred keys restored in the Kirtland Temple.

In the dedicatory prayer, the Prophet Joseph Smith humbly petitioned the Lord “to accept of this house . . . which thou didst command us to build.”<sup>3</sup>

One week later, on Easter Sunday, the Lord appeared in a magnificent vision and accepted His temple. This occurred on April 3, 1836, almost exactly 182 years ago from this Easter Sunday. It was also the Passover season—one of those rare times when Easter and Passover overlap. After the vision closed,

three ancient prophets, Moses, Elias, and Elijah, appeared and committed keys which were essential to accomplish the Lord’s purpose for His restored Church in this dispensation. That purpose has been simply, but eloquently, defined as gathering Israel, sealing them as families, and preparing the world for the Lord’s Second Coming.<sup>4</sup>

For both Elijah and Moses to appear was a “striking parallel . . . [with] Jewish tradition, according to which Moses and Elijah would arrive together at the ‘end of time.’”<sup>5</sup> In our doctrine, this appearance accomplished the foundational restoration of certain keys “given . . . for the last days and for the last time, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times.”<sup>6</sup>

The Kirtland Temple, both in location and size, was relatively obscure. But in terms of its enormous significance to mankind, it was *eternity-shaping*. Ancient prophets restored priesthood keys for the eternal saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This resulted in overwhelming joy for faithful members.

These keys provide the “power from on high”<sup>7</sup> for divinely appointed responsibilities that constitute the primary purpose of the Church.<sup>8</sup> On that



wonderful Easter day in the Kirtland Temple, three keys were restored:

**First**, Moses appeared and committed the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, which is missionary work.<sup>9</sup>

**Second**, Elias appeared and committed the keys of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, which includes the restoration of the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>10</sup> President Russell M. Nelson has taught that the purpose of the covenant keys is to prepare members for the kingdom of God. He said, “We know who we are and [we know] what God expects of us.”<sup>11</sup>

**Third**, Elijah appeared and committed the keys of the sealing power in this dispensation, which is family history work and temple ordinances enabling salvation for the living and the dead.<sup>12</sup>

There are, under the direction of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, three executive councils at Church headquarters that oversee these divinely appointed responsibilities based on the keys that were restored in the Kirtland Temple. They are the Missionary Executive Council, the Priesthood and Family Executive Council, and the Temple and Family History Executive Council.

#### Where Do We Stand Today in Fulfilling These Divinely Appointed Responsibilities?

First, with respect to Moses’s restoration of the keys for the gathering of Israel, today almost 70,000 missionaries are spread across the earth preaching His gospel to gather His elect. This is the commencement of the fulfillment of the great and marvelous work Nephi foresaw among both the Gentiles and the house of Israel. Nephi saw our time when the Saints of God would be upon



all the face of the earth, but their numbers would be small because of wickedness. However, he foresaw that they would be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”<sup>13</sup> When viewed across the brief history of the restored Church, the missionary effort has been most remarkable. We are seeing the fulfillment of Nephi’s vision. Though our numbers are relatively few, we will continue our effort and outreach to those who will respond to the Savior’s message.

Second, Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, declaring that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed. In this conference, significant guidance has been presented to assist in perfecting the Saints and preparing them for the kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup> The announcement in the priesthood session with respect to elders and high priests quorums will unleash priesthood power and authority. Home and visiting teaching, now “ministering,” as taught so eloquently in this session, will prepare Latter-day Saints to meet God.

Third, Elijah committed the sealing keys of this dispensation. For those of us alive at this time, the increase in temples and family history work is phenomenal. This pace will continue and accelerate until the Second Coming of the Savior, lest the whole earth “be utterly wasted at his coming.”<sup>15</sup>

Family history work, heaven-blessed by technology, has dramatically increased in the past few years. We would be unwise to become complacent about this divinely appointed responsibility and expect that Aunt Jane or some other committed relative will take care of it. Let me share President Joseph Fielding Smith’s jarring comments: “None is exempt from this great obligation. It is required of the apostle as well as the humblest elder [or sister]. Place, or distinction, or long service in the Church . . . will not entitle one to disregard the salvation of one’s dead.”<sup>16</sup>

We now have temples across the world and the resources of the patron assistance fund to help those in need who are far from a temple.

As individuals, we would do well to evaluate our effort in pursuing missionary work, temple and family history work, and preparations to meet God.

#### Righteousness, Unity, and Equality before the Lord Undergird These Sacred Responsibilities

**With respect to righteousness**, this life is the time for all of us to prepare to meet God.<sup>17</sup> The Book of Mormon provides multiple examples of the tragic consequences when individuals or groups fail to keep the commandments of God.<sup>18</sup>

During my lifetime, worldly issues and concerns have moved from one



extreme to another—from frivolous and trivial pursuits to serious immorality. It is commendable that nonconsensual immorality has been exposed and denounced.<sup>19</sup> Such nonconsensual immorality is against the laws of God and of society. Those who understand God's plan should also oppose consensual immorality, which is also a sin. The family proclamation to the world warns "that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring [or, for that matter, anyone else] . . . will one day stand accountable before God."<sup>20</sup>

As we look around, we see the devastation of wickedness and addiction at every turn. If, as individuals, we are really concerned about the Savior's ultimate judgment of us, we should seek repentance. I am afraid many people no longer feel accountable to God and do not turn to the scriptures or the prophets for guidance. If we, as a society, would contemplate the consequences of sin, there would be massive public opposition to pornography and the objectification of women.<sup>21</sup> As Alma told his son Corianton in the Book of Mormon, "Wickedness never was happiness."<sup>22</sup>

**In regard to unity**, the Savior declared, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>23</sup> We know that the spirit of contention is of the devil.<sup>24</sup>

In our day, the scriptural imperative for unity is largely ignored, and for many people the emphasis is on tribalism,<sup>25</sup> often based on status, gender, race, and wealth. In many countries, if not most, people are deeply divided about how to live. In the Lord's Church, the only culture we adhere to and teach is the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The unity we seek is to be unified with the Savior and His teachings.<sup>26</sup>



As we look at the primary purposes of the Church, they are all based on **equality before the Lord**<sup>27</sup> and following the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With respect to missionary work, the principal qualifications for baptism are humbling oneself before God and coming forth with a broken heart and contrite spirit.<sup>28</sup> Education, wealth, race, or national origin are not even considered.

In addition, missionaries humbly serve where called. They do not attempt to serve based on worldly standards of status or preparation for future careers. They serve with all their heart, might, mind, and strength wherever they are assigned. They do not choose their missionary companions, and they seek diligently to develop Christlike attributes,<sup>29</sup> which are at the heart of the culture of Jesus Christ.

The scriptures give guidance for our most important relationships. The Savior taught that the first commandment was to "love the Lord thy God." And the second is to "love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>30</sup>

The Savior additionally explained that everyone is our neighbor.<sup>31</sup> The Book of Mormon makes it clear that there must be no -ites, tribes, or classes.<sup>32</sup> We must be united and equal before God.

Sacred ordinances and divine responsibilities are built upon this premise. I would expect that your own experiences in the temple would be similar to mine. When I would

leave my workaday world in San Francisco and arrive at the Oakland Temple, I would experience an overwhelming feeling of love and peace. A major part of that was sensing I was closer to God and His purposes. The saving ordinances were my primary focus, but a significant part of those beautiful feelings was the equality and unity that permeate the temple. Everyone is dressed in white clothing. There is no evidence of wealth, rank, or educational attainment; we are all brothers and sisters humbling ourselves before God.

In the sacred sealing room, the eternal marriage ordinance is the same for everyone. I love the fact that the couple from the humblest background and the couple from the wealthiest background have exactly the same experience. They wear the same type of robes and make the same covenants across the same altar. They also receive the same eternal priesthood blessings. This is accomplished in a beautiful temple built by the tithes of the Saints as the sacred house of the Lord.

Fulfilling divinely appointed responsibilities, based on righteousness, unity, and equality before the Lord, brings personal happiness and peace in this world and prepares us for eternal life in the world to come.<sup>33</sup> It prepares us to meet God.<sup>34</sup>

We pray that each of you, regardless of your current circumstances, will counsel with your bishop and be worthy of a temple recommend.<sup>35</sup>

We are grateful that many more members are preparing to go to the temple. There has been a significant increase in the number of worthy adult temple recommend holders for many years. Limited-use recommends for worthy youth have increased dramatically over the last two years. Clearly the

faithful core membership of the Church has never been stronger.

In conclusion, please be assured that senior Church leaders who preside over the divinely appointed purposes of the Church receive divine assistance. This guidance comes from the Spirit and sometimes directly from the Savior. Both kinds of spiritual guidance are given. I am grateful to have received such assistance. But guidance is given in the Lord's time, line upon line and precept upon precept,<sup>36</sup> when "an omniscient Lord deliberately chooses to school us."<sup>37</sup> Guidance for the Church as a whole comes only to His prophet.

We have all had the privilege of sustaining President Russell M. Nelson as our prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this conference. The Twelve, as a group and individually, had a significant spiritual experience when we laid our hands on President Nelson's head and President Dallin H. Oaks,

acting as voice, ordained him and set him apart as President of the Church. I testify that he was foreordained and has been prepared his entire life to be the Lord's prophet for our day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Eliza R. Snow, in Janiece Johnson and Jennifer Reeder, *The Witness of Women: Firsthand Experiences and Testimonies from the Restoration* (2016), 124; see also Eliza R. Snow, in Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (1877), 65.
2. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 109:4.
4. See Russell M. Nelson, "Epistles of the Lord" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 25, 2015), 1–2.
5. Stephen D. Ricks, "The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover," *BYU Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Fall 1983), 485.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 112:30.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 38:38; see also Doctrine and Covenants 43:16; 84:20–21.
8. See *Handbook 2*, 2.2. The fourth responsibility, care for the poor and needy, did not need restored keys but does rely on the divinely inspired Church organization.
9. The Missionary Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
10. The Priesthood and Family Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "Covenants," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 88.
12. The Temple and Family History Executive Council oversees this divinely appointed responsibility. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
13. 1 Nephi 14:14; see also 1 Nephi 14:5, 7, 12.
14. See Mosiah 18:9; Alma 6:1; 32:37; see also Jeffrey R. Holland, "Emissaries to the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 61–62, 67.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 2:3.
16. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (1955), 2:148–49.
17. See Alma 34:32.
18. A recurring theme in the Book of Mormon is that if the people keep the commandments, they will prosper in the land, but if they do not keep the commandments, they will be cut off from the presence of the Lord. See, among others, 2 Nephi 1:9; 4:4; Alma 9:13.
19. This has occurred in the #MeToo movement.
20. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 145.
21. See Ross Douthat, "Let's Ban Porn," *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2018, SR11.
22. Alma 41:10.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.
24. See 3 Nephi 11:29.
25. See David Brooks, "The Retreat to Tribalism," *New York Times*, Jan. 2, 2018, A15.
26. See John 17:21–22.
27. See 2 Nephi 26:33: "All are alike unto God," including "black and white, bond and free, male and female."
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
29. See *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), chapter 6.
30. See Matthew 22:36–39.
31. See Luke 10:29–37.
32. See 4 Nephi 1:17.
33. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
34. See Alma 34:32.
35. The temple recommend interview questions are a good evaluation of how we are doing in living the gospel.
36. See 2 Nephi 28:30; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; 128:21.
37. Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (2007), 31.







By President Russell M. Nelson

# Let Us All Press On

*Your desire to obey will be enhanced as you remember and reflect upon what you have felt these past two days.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, as we come to the close of this historic conference, I join with you in thanking the Lord for His direction and inspiring influence. The music has been beautiful and uplifting. Not only have the messages

been edifying, but they have been life-changing!

In solemn assembly we sustained a new First Presidency. Two great men have been placed in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. And eight new General Authority Seventies have been called.

Now a favorite hymn summarizes our renewed resolve, our challenge, and our charge going forward:

*Let us all press on in the work of the Lord,  
That when life is o'er we may gain  
a reward;  
In the fight for right let us wield a sword,  
The mighty sword of truth.*

*Fear not, though the enemy deride;  
Courage, for the Lord is on our side.  
We will heed not what the wicked  
may say,  
But the Lord alone we will obey.<sup>1</sup>*

I exhort you to study the messages of this conference frequently—even repeatedly—during the next six months. Conscientiously look for ways to incorporate these messages in your family home evenings, your gospel teaching, your conversations with family and friends, and even your discussions with those not of our faith. Many good people will respond to the truths taught in this conference when offered in love. And your desire to obey will be enhanced as you remember and reflect upon what you have felt these past two days.

This general conference marks the beginning of a new era of ministering. The Lord has made important adjustments in the way we care for each other. Sisters and brothers—old and young—will serve one another in a new, holier way. Elders quorums will be strengthened to bless the lives of men, women, and children throughout the world. Relief Society sisters will continue to minister in their unique and loving way, extending opportunities to younger sisters to join them as appropriately assigned.

Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God's children on both sides of



the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life.<sup>2</sup>

Eventual exaltation requires our complete fidelity now to covenants we make and ordinances we receive in the house of the Lord. At this time, we have 159 functioning temples, and more are under construction. We want to bring temples closer to the expanding membership of the Church. So we are now pleased to announce plans to construct seven more temples. Those temples will be located in the following locations: Salta, Argentina; Bengaluru, India; Managua, Nicaragua; Cagayan de Oro, Philippines; Layton, Utah; Richmond, Virginia; and a major city yet to be determined in Russia.

My dear brothers and sisters, construction of these temples may not change your life, but your time in the temple surely will. In that spirit, I bless you to identify those things you can set aside so you can spend more time in the temple. I bless you with greater harmony and love in your homes and a deeper desire to care for your eternal family relationships. I bless you with increased faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a greater ability to follow Him as His true disciples.

I bless you to raise your voice in testimony, as I do now, that we are engaged in the work of Almighty God! Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, which He directs through His anointed servants. I so testify, with my expression of love for each of you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. "Let Us All Press On," *Hymns*, no. 243.
2. Defined in Doctrine and Covenants 14:7 as "the greatest of all the gifts of God."

# Statistical Report, 2017

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistics concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2017.

#### Church Units

Stakes	3,341
Missions	421
Districts	553
Wards and Branches	30,506

#### Church Membership

Total Membership	16,118,169
New Children of Record	106,771
Converts Baptized	233,729

#### Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries	67,049
Church-Service Missionaries	36,172

#### Temples

Temples Dedicated during 2017 (Paris France, Tucson Arizona, Meridian Idaho, Cedar City Utah)	4
Temples Rededicated during 2017 (Idaho Falls Idaho)	1
Temples in Operation at Year End	159



*The following is a list of selected experiences related during general conference. The number refers to the first page of the talk.*

Speaker	Story
<b>Reyna I. Aburto</b>	(78) Latter-day Saints in Chile, Peru, Mexico, and the United States offer relief following disasters.
<b>Neil L. Andersen</b>	(24) Kathy Andersen reads President Russell M. Nelson's past general conference talks and prays for a deeper assurance of his prophetic role.
<b>M. Russell Ballard</b>	(9) When he sees the size of a mustard seed in Jerusalem, M. Russell Ballard recalls the Savior's teachings on faith.
<b>David A. Bednar</b>	(30) Russell M. Nelson and Henry B. Eyring follow President Thomas S. Monson's invitation to study the Book of Mormon and apply its truths.
<b>Jean B. Bingham</b>	(104) A Relief Society sister ministers to a "lost and alone" young mother. An African sister ministers to a sister who has been beaten and robbed. Ward members care for a sister battling cancer. Young women work to meet a neighbor's needs.
<b>Gérald Caussé</b>	(111) Before approving the construction of the Paris France Temple, local city council members visit a sacrament meeting. As a stake president, Gérald Caussé rejoices in stake members' increased loyalty to the Savior. Gérald Caussé tells a friend that every family needs a priesthood holder in the home.
<b>D. Todd Christofferson</b>	(55) An elders quorum harvests the crop of a farmer after several of his family members die from influenza.
<b>Quentin L. Cook</b>	(114) Divine manifestations fill members with joy at the Kirtland Temple dedication. Quentin L. Cook feels love and peace in the Oakland California Temple.
<b>Massimo De Feo</b>	(81) Massimo De Feo's son tells classmates that his father is "chief of the universe." Massimo De Feo's dying mother shows she loves him more than herself.
<b>Devin G. Durrant</b>	(42) A family home evening game builds young Devin G. Durrant's confidence. The Durrant family takes pictures outside the temple.
<b>Larry J. Echo Hawk</b>	(15) The Echo Hawk family comforts the parents of a drunk driver who killed Larry J. Echo Hawk's brother and sister-in-law.
<b>Henry B. Eyring</b>	(61) Henry B. Eyring's great-grandparents fall in love while crossing the plains. A young man understands what priesthood holders can accomplish in serving the Lord. An inspired home teacher serves a family in desperate need. (86) After Henry B. Eyring's mother passes way, his father receives comfort from the Holy Ghost.
<b>Taylor G. Godoy</b>	(34) The death of a friend's son prompts Taylor G. Godoy to use each "one more day" of life wisely. A Peruvian sister takes her covenants seriously after sacrificing to attend the temple. Taylor G. Godoy wants to be the best student after his mother sacrifices for his dental studies.
<b>Gerrit W. Gong</b>	(97) Gerrit W. Gong tells his sons bedtime stories and sings them to sleep.
<b>Jeffrey R. Holland</b>	(101) A brother whose wife falls ill instinctively calls his home teacher for help.
<b>Douglas D. Holmes</b>	(50) Aaronic Priesthood holders share their testimonies with their peers. Priests quorum members learn what it means to be "commissioned of Jesus Christ."
<b>Russell M. Nelson</b>	(68) Priesthood holders fail to give true blessings to family members or sisters with new callings. Russell M. Nelson helps a man return to the Church. (93) As a boy, Russell M. Nelson loves learning about the gospel and longs to be sealed to his parents. Young Russell M. Nelson smashes liquor bottles because he wants his parents to live the Word of Wisdom.
<b>Dallin H. Oaks</b>	(65) An elders quorum president counsels a quorum member not to drop out of college.
<b>Bonnie L. Oscarson</b>	(36) As a young woman, Bonnie L. Oscarson is asked to fulfill assignments and callings normally done by adults.
<b>Dale G. Renlund</b>	(46) Parley and Orson Pratt's love for their ancestors helps them mend their relationship. Temple blessings help heal a family whose deceased son's heart was donated.
<b>Lynn G. Robbins</b>	(21) Lynn G. Robbins's college professor encourages students to consider failure as a tutor and to keep trying.
<b>Ulisses Soares</b>	(98) Ulisses Soares and his wife receive expedited visas after showing faith that the Lord would perform a miracle on their behalf.
<b>Gary E. Stevenson</b>	(17) Gary E. Stevenson gains a testimony of succeeding prophets after President David O. McKay's death. A former student praises Dr. Russell M. Nelson's teaching style.
<b>Brian K. Taylor</b>	(12) Brian K. Taylor remembers his patient Primary teachers. Following a car accident she caused, a young woman finds peace in knowing she is a child of God.
<b>Taniela B. Wakolo</b>	(39) After attending church for 39 years, a man is baptized and confirmed and later sealed to his wife in the temple.
<b>Larry Y. Wilson</b>	(75) Acting on spiritual impressions, an LDS chaplain helps save a transport ship and its crew from a typhoon.
<b>Claudio D. Zivic</b>	(83) "Endure and you shall triumph," President Thomas S. Monson tells Claudio D. Zivic and his wife. A crack in Claudio D. Zivic's kayak makes it impossible to control.



## Elder Gerrit W. Gong

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

**T**his Easter Sabbath, I joyfully sing, ‘Alleluia,’” Elder Gerrit W. Gong said in his first general conference address as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “The song of our risen Savior’s redeeming love celebrates the harmony of covenants . . . and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Elder Gong has spent a lifetime rejoicing in that harmony. He knows that the power of our covenants, coupled with the Savior’s Atonement, “enable and ennoble” us. “Together, they sweeten, preserve, sanctify, [and] redeem,” he said.

At a marriage in the temple one day, the power of covenants, coupled with the Atonement, was reflected in the temple mirrors. He imagined the generations of his family stretching across eternity, from his earliest known relative, First Dragon Gong, born AD 837, through 36 generations to his own grandchildren and then on and on in both directions.

“I began to understand my wife and myself as children of our parents and parents to our children, as grandchildren of our grandparents and grandparents to our grandchildren,” he said. “Mortality’s great lessons distill upon our souls as we learn and teach in eternal roles, including child and parent, parent and child.”

Elder Gong had served as a General Authority Seventy since April 2010 and as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy since October 2015. He was sustained as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on March 31, 2018, which he described as a “sacred call from the Lord that took my breath away.”

From 2011 to 2015, Elder Gong served as a member of the Asia Area Presidency, concluding that service as the Area President. He has served as a full-time missionary in the Taiwan Taipei Mission, high councilor, high priests group leader, stake Sunday School president, seminary teacher, bishop, stake mission president, stake president, and Area Seventy.

Elder Gong earned a bachelor of arts degree in Asian Studies and University Studies from Brigham Young University

in 1977. In 1979 he received a master of philosophy degree and in 1981 a doctorate in international relations from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. In 1985 he served as special assistant to the undersecretary of state at the U.S. State Department and in 1987 as special assistant to the U.S. ambassador in Beijing, China. Beginning in 1989, he served in several positions at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. He was assistant to the president for planning and assessment at Brigham Young University until April 2010.

Elder Gong’s grandparents immigrated to the United States from China. Elder Gong was born in Redwood City, California, USA, in 1953. He married Susan Lindsay in January 1980, and they are the parents of four children and have three grandchildren.

“Everything worthy and eternal is centered in the living reality of God, our loving Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement, witnessed by the Holy Ghost,” Elder Gong said this conference. “I reverently witness and solemnly testify of the living Christ—He [was] . . . with us in the beginning, He is with us to the end.” ■







## Elder Ulisses Soares

*Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

Living prophets, including President Russell M. Nelson, are a sign of God's love for His children, Elder Ulisses Soares testified during his first general conference address as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

"Isn't it a blessing to have prophets, seers, and revelators on earth in these days in which we live, who seek to know the will of the Lord and follow it? It is comforting to know that we are not alone in the world, despite the challenges we face in life."

Though he felt inadequate for his call as an Apostle, Elder Soares said, President Nelson's "words and the tender look in his eyes as he extended this responsibility made me feel embraced by the Savior's love."

With his sustaining on March 31, 2018, Elder Soares became the Church's first Apostle from Latin America. Prior to his call, he had been a member of the Presidency of the Seventy since January 6, 2013, and was serving in a special assignment for the Presiding Bishopric in Salt Lake City.

Elder Soares was called as a General Authority Seventy on April 2, 2005. In that capacity, he served as a counselor in the Africa Southeast and Brazil South Areas and as President of the Brazil Area.

Elder Soares has served in numerous other Church callings. He has been a full-time missionary in the Brazil Rio de Janeiro Mission, elders quorum president, counselor in a bishopric, high councilor, stake executive secretary, regional welfare agent, stake president, and president of the Portugal Porto Mission from 2000 to 2003.

One of his most important callings came at age 15, when his bishop asked him to temporarily teach a Sunday School class for youth. In preparation for a lesson on how to gain a testimony, young Ulisses decided to pray for a confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel.

"When I knelt down and asked the Lord if the gospel is true," he recalled, "there came to my heart a very sweet feeling, a small voice that confirmed to me that I should continue in it. It was so strong that I could never say that I didn't know."



In 1985 he received a bachelor of arts degree in accounting and economics from the School of Economic Science at São Paulo Pontifical Catholic University. After receiving a master of business administration degree, he worked as an accountant and auditor for multinational corporations in Brazil and as director for temporal affairs in the Church's São Paulo area office.

Ulisses Soares was born in São Paulo, Brazil, on October 2, 1958. He married Rosana Fernandes in October 1982. In his general conference address, Elder Soares credited his wife for her love and support.

"She has been an example of goodness, love, and total devotion to the Lord and for me and my family," including the couple's three children and three grandchildren, he said in his conference talk. "I love her with every ounce of my heart, and I am grateful for the positive influence she has had on us." ■





## Elder Carl B. Cook

*Presidency of the Seventy*

Elder Carl B. Cook believes that the privilege of serving is one of the great blessings of membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But, he acknowledged, accepting and magnifying callings requires faith.

Elder Cook, sustained a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on March 31, 2018, likens members of the Church—who serve together in branches and wards, quorums, and auxiliaries—to a “compound gear” on an automobile, which generates more torque.

A compound gear, along with four-wheel drive, “allows you to gear down, power up, and move,” he said in the October 2016 general conference. “Just as gears combine to provide greater power in compound, we have greater power when we join together. As we unite to serve one another, we accomplish much more together than we could on our own. It is thrilling to be engaged and unified as we serve and assist in the Lord’s work.”

Elder Cook was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 2, 2011. Prior to his new assignment, Elder Cook served at Church headquarters, where he assisted with the oversight of the North America West Area, among other responsibilities. Previously, he served as President of the Africa Southeast Area.

Elder Cook has encouraged Latter-day Saints to remember that callings in the Church come from God through His appointed servants.

“Blessings come as we persevere in our callings and responsibilities and hang on with all the faith we have.”

Elder Cook received a bachelor of arts degree from Weber State College in Utah and a master of business administration from Utah State University. Before being called to the Seventy, he worked in commercial real estate development.

Elder Cook’s callings include serving as a full-time missionary in Hamburg, Germany, and as a bishop, stake president, Area Seventy, and president of the New Zealand Auckland Mission.

He was born in Ogden, Utah, USA, on October 15, 1957. He married Lynette Hansen in December 1979. They are the parents of five children. ■



## Elder Robert C. Gay

*Presidency of the Seventy*

While serving as a mission president in Ghana, Elder Robert C. Gay received an impression one day to stop and help a crying boy. Initially, he ignored that impression but later sent a Church member to find and bring the boy to him.

Elder Gay, sustained a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on March 31, 2018, learned that the boy sold dried fish for his caretaker. That day the boy had lost his earnings through a hole in his pocket.

“If he returned without the money, he would be called a liar, most likely beaten, and then cast out onto the street,” Elder Gay said. “We calmed his fear, replaced his loss, and took him home to his caretaker.”

As he explained in the October 2012 general conference, that experience taught Elder Gay two great truths: “First, I knew as never before that God is mindful of each of us and will never forsake us; and second, I knew that we must always hearken to the voice of the Spirit within us and go ‘straightway’ wherever it takes us, regardless of our fears or any inconvenience.”

Elder Gay was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on March 31, 2012. At the time of his call to the Presidency of the Seventy, he was serving as President of the Asia North Area. He previously served at Church headquarters as chairman of the Self-Reliance Services/Perpetual Education Fund Committee, with responsibilities for worldwide self-reliance services.

Before his call to the Seventy, he was the chief executive officer of an investment firm he cofounded. He also cofounded and served as a director on several global humanitarian organizations and worked in investment banking on Wall Street, as a management consultant, and as an economics instructor at Harvard University.

Elder Gay received a bachelor of arts degree in economics with an emphasis in statistics from the University of Utah and a PhD in business economics from Harvard University.

Elder Gay has served as a full-time missionary in Spain, high priests group leader, ward Young Men president, high counselor, counselor in a bishopric, and Area Seventy.

He was born in Los Angeles, California, USA, on September 1, 1951. He married Lynette Nielsen in April 1974. They are the parents of seven children. ■





Elder Terence M. Vinson

*Presidency of the Seventy*

Elder Terence M. Vinson believes that the Savior is never far away. “He is always near, especially in sacred places and in times of need,” he testified in the October 2013 general conference. “Sometimes, when I least expect, I feel almost like He taps me on the shoulder to let me know He loves me.”

Once, while Elder Vinson was walking with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Elder Holland draped his arm around Elder Vinson’s shoulder and told him he loved him. Elder Vinson said, “I believe that if we could have the privilege of walking physically with the Savior, that we would feel His arm draped over our shoulder just like that.”

Elder Vinson, sustained a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on March 31, 2018, says that God’s love “is the sweetest feeling.”

Elder Vinson, who will assume his new calling on August 1, 2018, was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of the Church on April 6, 2013. At the time, he was serving as a member of the Eighth Quorum of the Seventy in the Pacific Area. He is currently serving as President of the Africa West Area.

Elder Vinson received a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and statistics, an education and teaching diploma, and a master’s degree in applied finance. His career has involved teaching, training, and lecturing at universities. He has worked mainly as a financial adviser and funds manager.

While investigating the Church as a young adult, Elder Vinson received a strong spiritual impression. He felt clearly that he should join the Church in order to progress and to find answers to remaining questions. He was baptized and confirmed the following week.

From then on, “I knew what the Lord expected me to do and discovered that all my questions did have answers.”

Since his baptism in 1974, Elder Vinson has served as a counselor in a bishopric, bishop, high councilor, counselor in a stake presidency, regional representative, counselor in a mission presidency, temple ordinance worker, and Area Seventy.

He was born in Sydney, Australia, on March 12, 1951. He married Kay Anne Carden in May 1974. They are the parents of six children. ■



Elder José A. Teixeira

*Presidency of the Seventy*

Elder José A. Teixeira recalls a lesson he learned as a young boy in Portugal. During a family reunion, he sneaked away to go fishing. He felt he should tell his parents where he was going, but he decided not to because they were busy talking.

Hours later, his worried parents found him at the riverbank. From that experience, he learned to obey not only his parents but also the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

Since then, Elder Teixeira has made a habit of heeding the still, small voice. He and his family were introduced to the gospel in 1976, after Portugal was opened to missionary work. He was baptized at age 16 and later served as a missionary in the Lisbon Portugal Mission.

“Our choices have the undeniable power of transforming our lives,” said Elder Teixeira, sustained a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on March 31, 2018. “This gift is an extraordinary sign of trust in us and simultaneously a cherished personal responsibility to use wisely,” he taught in the April 2009 general conference.

Elder Teixeira earned degrees in accounting and business management and worked for the Church as an international controller. He also served in the Portuguese Air Force as part of a NATO unit. During that time, he was called as a national public affairs director for the Church. Soon afterward, he met his wife, Maria Filomena Lopes Teles Grilo. They were married in 1984 in the Bern Switzerland Temple and are the parents of three children.

José Augusto Teixeira da Silva was born in Vila Real, Portugal, on February 24, 1961. He has served as a counselor in a bishopric, district president, stake president, Area Seventy, and president of the Brazil São Paulo South Mission. He was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 5, 2008. He currently serves as President of the South America South Area and will begin his service in the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1, 2018.

Above all, Elder Teixeira counseled us in the April 2015 general conference to “deepen our understanding of the Savior. . . . Let us not leave for tomorrow what we can do today. It is now that we must come unto Christ.” ■



## Elder Carlos A. Godoy

*Presidency of the Seventy*

In the late 1980s, Elder Carlos A. Godoy had just been released as bishop. He had also graduated from college, was working for a successful company, and thought life couldn't get better—until an old friend came to visit.

That friend congratulated him but then asked a question that left him unsettled: “If you continue to live as you are living, will the blessings promised in your patriarchal blessing be fulfilled?”

Elder Godoy realized that he needed to make changes if he wanted to receive all his promised blessings. Despite his contentment, he decided to pursue a master's degree. He quit his job, sold everything he owned, and, with his family, left the familiarity of Brazil to attend school in the United States.

Elder Godoy, named to the Presidency of the Seventy on March 31, 2018, said this experience taught him a lot about trusting in the Lord's plan and being willing to leave his comfort zone.

“I know that the Lord has a plan for us in this life,” he testified in the October 2014 general conference. “He knows us. He knows what is best for us. Just because things are going well does not mean that we should not from time to time consider whether there might be something better.”

Elder Godoy was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on April 5, 2008. He is serving as President of the South America Northwest Area and will take his place in the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1, 2018.

Prior to his call to the Seventy, Elder Godoy worked as a human resources manager for two major corporations before starting his own consulting company. He received a bachelor's degree in economics and political science from São Paulo Pontifical Catholic University in 1987 and a master's degree in organizational behavior from Brigham Young University in 1994.

Elder Godoy has served as a full-time missionary in the Brazil São Paulo South Mission, bishop, high councilor, regional welfare agent, Area Seventy, and president of the Brazil Belém Mission.

He was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on February 4, 1961. He married Mônica Soares Brandao in March 1984, and they have four children. ■



## Elder Steven R. Bangerter

*General Authority Seventy*

During a childhood camping trip, Elder Steven R. Bangerter and his family rode dirt bikes to the top of a mountain. On the way down, he lost his way and became separated from the others.

As he knelt that afternoon and pleaded with his Father in Heaven for help, in his mind's eye he saw the trail he had lost. Just as he started down it, “my brother reached the top of the trail on his motorcycle, embraced me, and guided me back through the dark to the camp, which was hours away.”

That incident is just one of many that made him feel loved during his childhood. “There was never a moment in my life that I wondered whether I was loved or cared for,” Elder Bangerter said.

Elder Bangerter was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, to Max E. and Thelma R. Bangerter on July 29, 1961. He grew up in Granger, Utah.

Within weeks of returning from serving in the Canada Vancouver Mission, Elder Bangerter met Susann Alexis Hughes. On their first date, he sensed in her a humble desire to serve that prompted him to propose to her on their second date. They were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple on March 17, 1983. They are the parents of six sons.

Elder Bangerter earned a bachelor of arts degree from Arizona State University in religious studies and a juris doctor degree from Western State University College of Law. For the past 25 years, Elder Bangerter has represented churches and faith-based organizations in law practices in Southern California and southern Utah. He was a partner at Cooksey, Toolen, Gage, Duffy, and Woog from 1993 to 2003 and became a managing partner of Bangerter, Frazier, and Graff in 2004.

Elder Bangerter has served as an Area Seventy, stake president, counselor in a stake presidency, bishop, elders quorum president, and ward Young Men president. ■





## Elder Matthew L. Carpenter

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Matthew L. Carpenter remembers the first time he recognized feeling the Holy Ghost. He was a young boy, about seven years old, sitting in junior Primary. A light was coming into the room, and he had a feeling of warmth he had not recognized before.

“I felt stirrings in my heart—and not because I was warm,” he said. “I knew God is real; I felt it.”

When he was 11 years old, he attended a session of general conference in the Salt Lake Tabernacle with his father. It was the first time he was in the same room as a prophet, President Joseph Fielding Smith.

“When I saw him,” he said, “the Spirit bore witness to me that he was the prophet.”

These simple spiritual confirmations at a young age helped him look to the Spirit as a guiding influence throughout his life.

“My testimony has not been one singular angelic experience,” said the General Authority Seventy, who was sustained on March 31, 2018, “but it has developed and evolved over time.”

Matthew Leslie Carpenter was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on October 21, 1959, to Leone Erikson and Robert Allred Carpenter. He is the youngest of the couple’s eight children, and he grew up in a household with five older sisters.

In his last month of high school, he met Michelle “Shelly” Brown. They started to date but put their courtship on hold while he served in the Swiss Geneva Mission from 1979 to 1981. After his return, the couple married in the Salt Lake Temple on July 9, 1982. They are the parents of five children.

Elder Carpenter earned a bachelor’s degree in finance from Brigham Young University and a master of business administration degree from Harvard Business School. Most recently he was the managing director of the Foundation Specialty Financing Fund.

Elder Carpenter has served as a bishop, counselor in a bishopric, stake Young Men president, high councilor, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■



## Elder Jack N. Gerard

*General Authority Seventy*

As a boy, Elder Jack N. Gerard woke every day around 5:00 a.m. to help care for the family’s dairy cows. Growing up in a small farming community near Mud Lake, Idaho, USA, taught him not only to work hard and take responsibility but also to recognize the worth of all individuals as children of God.

“Everyone had a role to play and everyone was here for a purpose, regardless of status or stature in life,” said Elder Gerard, who was sustained on March 31, 2018, as a General Authority Seventy. That lesson has been a gift throughout his life.

His career, which has included prominent leadership roles for several entities—such as the National Mining Association, the America Chemistry Council, and, recently, the American Petroleum Institute—has provided him with opportunities to associate with people from all walks of life.

Elder Gerard was born in 1957 to James and Cecil Gasser Gerard. After serving in the Sydney Australia Mission, Elder Gerard attended the University of Idaho, where he received an internship and then a full-time position on the staff of an Idaho congressman.

While working in Washington, D.C., he met Claudette Neff, who was working as a staff assistant to a Utah senator. “She radiated the light of the gospel,” Elder Gerard said of their meeting. The two were married on April 4, 1984, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have eight children and four grandchildren.

Elder Gerard received both a bachelor of arts degree in political science and a juris doctor degree from George Washington University.

Elder Gerard has served as a bishop, stake president, Area Seventy, Gospel Doctrine teacher, and Sunday School president.

Elder Gerard said he and his wife share a desire to do the Lord’s will. “As weak mortals, we are committed to whatever the Lord would have us do, and we are humbled and honored . . . to consecrate our time and efforts to the work of the Lord.” ■



## Elder Mathias Held

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Mathias Held and his wife, Irene, could aptly be called personifications of a global Church. Both are Colombians of German ancestry. Jobs and schooling have taken them from their South American homeland to Canada, Germany, Guatemala, Brazil, and, finally, back to Colombia. In each country, they've adjusted to new languages and cultures.

"But the Church was exactly the same wherever we went," said Elder Held, who was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on March 31, 2018.

That spiritual "sameness" anchored the couple while they raised three children and grew in the gospel.

The Helds were childhood classmates at a German-language school in their hometown of Bogotá, Colombia. They were sealed on June 13, 1989, in the Frankfurt Germany Temple, after Mathias earned a mechanical engineering degree in Bogotá and a master's degree in business administration in Canada.

Work opportunities later took the young couple to Hanover, Germany, where Sister Held received a powerful impression that their lives were about to change.

"I told Mathias I had a feeling that we would get a message from heaven," she said. That heavenly message arrived on a rainy afternoon in 1987 with a knock at the front door. Standing outside were Mormon missionaries speaking German with American accents.

For the next 10 months, the Helds studied with the missionaries and made friends in the local LDS congregation. After much prayer, they received spiritual confirmation of the gospel's truthfulness and were baptized in 1988.

Elder Held worked for more than 25 years for the auto manufacturer Daimler-Benz, with his management duties taking him around the world. The Helds have relied upon the Lord at each stop.

"It does not matter what trials you are going through," he said. "If you are communicating with heaven, you will be all right."

Born on June 5, 1960, to Michael and Elisabeth Held, Elder Held has served as a counselor in a stake presidency, a counselor in a bishopric, and an Area Seventy in the South America Northwest Area. ■



## Elder David P. Homer

*General Authority Seventy*

One of Elder David P. Homer's earliest recollections pertaining to the gospel is of being assigned at age 14 as a home teaching partner to a member of his ward who "took an unusual approach to home teaching," said Elder Homer. "It wasn't about getting in the home and visiting people; it was about ministering to their needs."

As a companionship, they would pray for and talk about their assigned families, not as an adult to a youth but as peers in priesthood service. "I learned that the Spirit comes with and is associated with service," said Elder Homer.

That lesson has stayed with him throughout his life and subsequent service in the Church, whether serving as an Area Seventy, nursery leader, or bulletin board specialist—a calling he fulfilled while he and his wife lived in Melbourne, Australia.

David Paul Homer was born on April 25, 1961, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, to Frederick and Phyllis LeNila Homer. After his mission in Hong Kong from 1980 to 1982, he met Nancy Dransfield, a graduate of Brigham Young University, at an institute fireside in Salt Lake City, where she was working and attending classes at the University of Utah. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple on July 31, 1984. They have reared five daughters and a son.

Elder Homer received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Utah and a master's degree in business administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

During his 30-year career as an executive with General Mills, he and his wife lived in Miami, Florida, USA; Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA; Burlington, Ontario, Canada; and Saint-Sulpice, Vaud, Switzerland.

Elder Homer has served as a stake president, bishop, elders quorum president, and ward executive secretary. As an Area Seventy he began his service in Canada and continued it in Europe, where he served the past four years before being sustained as a General Authority Seventy on March 31, 2018. ■





## Elder Kyle S. McKay

*General Authority Seventy*

Besides his family and the Church, Elder Kyle S. McKay's greatest passion is being on his horse in the mountains.

"It's not my religion," he said, "but there's no question it has strengthened my [faith]. I alternate between the Lord's mountains and the mountain of the Lord's house. He meets me in both places."

Elder McKay likens the mountains above Huntsville, Utah, USA, to the waters and forest of Mormon and their importance for the people of Alma—they are where, in his youth, he came to a knowledge of his Redeemer.

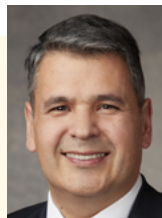
Elder McKay was born on February 14, 1960, in Chicago, Illinois, USA, to Barrie Gunn McKay and Elaine Stirland McKay, whom he credits for shaping him into the person he is.

He took a break from his studies at Brigham Young University in 1979 to serve a full-time mission in Kobe, Japan. Shortly after returning from his mission to complete his degree in English, Elder McKay met Jennifer Stone, who had recently returned from the England Bristol Mission. She was also studying English. The two were married in the Oakland California Temple on June 12, 1984.

With family at the center of his life, Elder McKay says, he and Sister McKay derive their greatest joy from their posterity. While the McKays reside in Kaysville, Utah, USA, they regularly spend time with their nine children in Huntsville, where his ancestors settled in the early 1860s.

Elder McKay graduated with a juris doctor degree in 1987 from the J. Reuben Clark School of Law at BYU and immediately accepted a job with a large regional law firm in Portland, Oregon, USA. He later returned to Utah to pursue an opportunity with another law firm before accepting a position with the Kroger Company. He worked as a vice president for both Smith's and Fry's, two Kroger divisions in Utah and Arizona, USA, from 2000 to 2017.

Elder McKay has served previously as a bishop, high counselor, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■



## Elder Juan Pablo Villar

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Juan Pablo Villar's introduction to the Church came in Santiago, Chile, when his eldest brother, Ivan, announced to the family that he had been baptized without his parents' approval and later said he planned to serve a mission. When asked why, Ivan shared his testimony and desire to serve.

"I didn't understand all the meaning of that," recalled Elder Villar, then age 17. "But at that moment, he put a seed in my heart."

That seed was given a chance to grow when his brother referred him to the missionaries. During his first lesson, Elder Villar received his own testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

"For myself, it was not necessary to kneel down and pray, because the moment they shared their testimony, I knew in my heart it was true," he said. "When I knew that, everything else had to be true."

Ivan, serving in a neighboring mission, received permission to baptize Elder Villar in 1988. Later, their mother and other brother, Claudio, also joined the Church.

A year after his baptism, Elder Villar began serving in the Chile Viña del Mar Mission, beginning a life of service that has since included serving as a stake president, bishop, counselor in a bishopric, counselor in the Chile Santiago East Mission, and Area Seventy in the South America South Area. He was sustained on March 31, 2018, as a General Authority Seventy.

Elder Villar was born on September 11, 1969, in Valparaiso, Chile, to Sergio Villar Vera and Genoveva Saavedra. He married Carola Cristina Barrios on March 31, 1994, in the Santiago Chile Temple. They are the parents of three children.

After earning a bachelor's degree in social communications and public relations and a master's degree in marketing, he worked in the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry. In 2007 he added a master's degree in business administration from Brigham Young University. Then he returned to Chile to work for Orica, a mining services company, most recently as a senior manager. ■



## Elder Takashi Wada

*General Authority Seventy*

On a cold November day, a question from an American missionary asking for directions to the local postal office caught Takashi Wada off guard.

The 15-year-old had been warned by his father to avoid Mormons, who had been visiting with people on the streets of Nagano, Japan, just three minutes from their home. But Takashi was impressed with the American elder's Japanese.

A few days later, another missionary stopped Takashi. He had not been in Japan long. In broken Japanese, he tried to share the story of Joseph Smith.

Takashi did not understand everything, "but I felt that I should listen," he recalled.

The missionaries taught him the steps to prayer and the lessons. He attended Church meetings and was touched by the testimonies of local members. Feeling constrained by the expectations of his Buddhist family, Takashi kept telling the missionaries, "I can't join the Church, but I would like to learn more."

Two years later, before Takashi left to study in the United States at age 17, his parents consented, and he joined the Church.

Elder Wada, who was born on February 5, 1965, to Kenzo and Kazuko Wada, received a bachelor of arts degree in linguistics in 1990 and a master's degree in business administration in 1996, both from Brigham Young University.

He served a mission in the Utah Salt Lake City North Mission and married Naomi Ueno on June 18, 1994, in the Tokyo Japan Temple. The couple has two sons.

Elder Wada's career included several positions with multinational corporations in the United States and Japan, as well as the position of director for temporal affairs for the Church in the North America West, North America Northwest, and Asia North Areas.

Elder Wada is a former bishop, high councilor, and seminary teacher. He served as president of the Japan Tokyo South Mission from 2013 to 2016. He was sustained as a General Authority Seventy on March 31, 2018. ■



## Bonnie H. Cordon

*Young Women General President*

A much-loved scripture of Sister Bonnie H. Cordon is found in Doctrine and Covenants 123:17: "Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed."

For her this verse encapsulates lessons she has learned throughout her life. "We can do hard things, but we can also do them joyfully," said Sister Cordon, who was sustained on March 31, 2018, as the new Young Women General President.

That knowledge was instilled in her during a "fairy-tale childhood" laboring on a small farm in southeast Idaho and then again as she struggled to learn a new language as a missionary in Portugal. It was also a message she repeated often to missionaries while she served with her husband as he presided over the Brazil Curitiba Mission. And it is one she now plans to share with young women around the world.

Today's young women, she said, are being asked to step up and move the work of the Lord forward. "And we can do it," she added.

Bonnie Hiram Cordon was born on March 11, 1964, to Harold and Carol Rasmussen Hiram in Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA. After her mission she received her bachelor's degree in education at Brigham Young University, where she met Derek Lane Cordon. They were married on April 25, 1986, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have four children and four grandsons.

Her lifetime of Church service has included time as a nursery leader and seminary teacher. Before her call two years ago to serve as a counselor in the Primary General Presidency, Sister Cordon loved serving as a stake Young Women president. Even after being released from that calling, "I have never stopped praying for the young women," she said.

A message she is eager to share with young women throughout the world is that she loves them and, more important, that God loves them. ■





## Michelle D. Craig

*First Counselor, Young Women  
General Presidency*

When she was 16 years old, Sister Michelle D. Craig learned that her family would be moving from Provo, Utah, USA, to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, so her father could begin an assignment to serve as a mission president.

She was happy to be with her family, but the move left young Michelle “lonely socially” during her junior and senior years of high school.

“Those were really formative years,” Sister Craig said. “Instead of relying on friends, I relied on my family and my testimony, and church became a lifeline.” She valued most her relationship with Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Michelle Daines Craig was born on July 13, 1963, in Provo, Utah, and is the oldest of seven children born to Janet Lundgren and Robert Henry Daines III. She lived in Provo until her family moved to Pennsylvania. Two years later, Sister Craig returned to Provo to attend Brigham Young University, where she received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. In 1984 she accepted a call to serve in the Dominican Republic Santo Domingo Mission.

“I have always been a believer,” said Sister Craig, who was sustained as First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency on March 31, 2018. “From a young age, I knew that I was a daughter of God. But I remember [on my mission] that every time I bore testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, I would feel the Spirit. I had a beautiful confirmation that solidified my testimony.”

Just days after her return, Sister Craig’s brother told her she needed to go on a date with Boyd Craig, a friend from his mission. Eight months later the couple was engaged. They married on December 19, 1986, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of three children, and they have six grandchildren.

She has served in many callings, including as a temple ordinance worker in the Provo Utah Temple and as a Gospel Doctrine teacher. At the time of her call to the Young Women General Presidency, she was serving on the Primary general board. ■



## Becky Craven

*Second Counselor, Young Women  
General Presidency*

There is a saying Sister Becky Craven shared frequently as a missionary: “When you know who you are, you act differently.”

“And that’s in every aspect—from how you dress, how you speak, how you present yourself, and the activities you participate in,” said Sister Craven, who served with her husband, Ronald L. Craven, as he presided over the North Carolina Charlotte Mission from 2012 to 2015.

Sister Craven was sustained as Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency on March 31, 2018. “When young women start to see themselves in God’s plan, they will be able to see a vision for themselves,” she said. “You have to have a vision. If you don’t have a vision, you don’t know where you’re going and you don’t know what to do to get there.”

Rebecca Lynn Craven was born on October 26, 1959, in Chardon, Ohio, USA, to Corless Walter Mitchell and Linda Louise Kazsuk Mitchell. Proud to call herself “an army brat,” she grew up in Texas, USA, where her family joined the Church; Germany, during which time her family was sealed in the Swiss Temple; England; Utah, USA, where she was baptized during her father’s first tour in Vietnam; and the U.S. states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Kansas.

Married on August 5, 1980, in the Salt Lake Temple, the Cravens are the parents of five children.

Before being sustained to her new calling, she was serving as a counselor in a ward Relief Society presidency and as an ordinance worker in the Bountiful Utah Temple. She has also served as ward Young Women president, stake Relief Society board member, stake missionary, and Webelos leader.

Sister Craven has a bachelor’s degree in interior design from Brigham Young University, where she has served on the athletic advisory committee. She has also served as an executive board member of CHOICE Humanitarian, a Utah-based international charitable organization.

She enjoys hiking, water sports, snowshoeing, traveling, painting, quilting, and games and activities with her family. ■



## Lisa L. Harkness

*First Counselor, Primary  
General Presidency*

Lisa L. Harkness has always had a love of learning and the world around her, something she picked up from her parents. She has studied political science and even learned how to handle reptiles while working at the Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum during her time at Brigham Young University—including the snakes.

“They have personalities, believe it or not,” she said. “There’s one that knew me every time I would hold him.” Howard, a red-tailed boa constrictor, would crawl up her shoulder, curl around her neck, and rest his head on hers while she taught groups that had come to the museum.

Nowadays, she can still pick up and identify a variety of snakes—as long as they don’t hiss at her.

Sister Harkness was born in Los Angeles, California, USA, to Ronald and LaRae Long on January 13, 1965. The oldest of five children, she and her family were “always up for adventures, being outside, and exploring the world.” She said that because she could always ask her parents questions, “I totally believed and trusted that I could go to Heavenly Father and get answers.”

After serving a Spanish-speaking mission in the Louisiana Baton Rouge Mission, Sister Harkness graduated from BYU with a bachelor of science degree in political science and secondary teaching. She married David S. Harkness on April 22, 1988, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have five children and two grandchildren.

Sister Harkness—who was named as First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency on March 31, 2018—has also served as a Primary general board member, stake Young Women president, ward Relief Society president, counselor in a ward Young Women presidency, Mia Maid adviser, Young Women camp director, stake family history director, ward family history consultant, and Gospel Doctrine teacher.

She has also volunteered with her local parent-teacher association, community council, the Utah Symphony, and with the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, as well as with her local government in various positions. ■





## Emphasis on Ministering

Home teaching and visiting teaching will be retired, President Russell M. Nelson announced during the Sunday afternoon session of general conference. “Ministering,” a “new, holier approach” to Christlike caring for others, will provide a coordinated effort to help meet members’ spiritual and temporal needs.

Sister Jean B. Bingham, Relief Society General President, and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also spoke about how this new approach will better focus the efforts of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and Relief Societies on ministering as the Savior did (see pages 101 and 104).

Laurels and Mia Maids may now serve as ministering companions to

Relief Society sisters. In a quarterly interview, ministering brothers and sisters will counsel with leaders about the needs and strengths of those they are assigned. The number of interviews leaders had during a quarter will be the only formal report made. Visits are important when possible, but ministering does not include a prescribed way to keep in contact each month.

“Youth can share their unique gifts and grow spiritually as they serve alongside adults in the work of salvation,” Sister Bingham said. Involving youth also increases the number of members caring for others and helps the youth “better prepare to fulfill their roles as leaders in the Church and the community and as contributing partners in their families.”

“We at Church headquarters don’t need to know *how* or *where* or *when* you make contact with your people,” said Elder Holland; “we just need to know and care that you *do* make it and that you bless them in every way you can.”

According to a letter from the First Presidency, the ministering adjustments may take some time but should be made as soon as possible. **Ministering.lds.org** provides additional details, including answers to frequently asked questions. Instructional videos and other resources will be added to the website over the coming weeks.

Beginning in June, the *Ensign* and *Liahona* will include a monthly feature called “Ministering Principles” to help members understand how to be more Christlike as they minister to each other. ■



## Quorums Restructured

The ward (or branch) high priests group and elders quorum will now be combined into one elders quorum, President Russell M. Nelson announced during the priesthood session of general conference. The stake presidency will continue to serve as the presidency of the stake high priests quorum, but that quorum will include only high priests currently serving in the stake presidency, in bishoprics, on the high council, and as functioning patriarchs.

The elders quorum will be led by a presidency that may be composed of elders and high priests. The elders quorum president will report to the stake president and meet regularly with the bishop. Priesthood offices will remain the same. The current ward (or branch) elders quorum presidency and high priests group leadership will be released, and the stake president will call a new elders quorum presidency. ■

## Seven New Temples Announced

Temples will be built in Salta, Argentina; Bengaluru, India; Managua, Nicaragua; Cagayan de Oro, Philippines; Layton, Utah, USA; Richmond, Virginia, USA; and a major city yet to be determined in Russia, President Russell M. Nelson announced at the end of the Sunday afternoon session of general conference.

Just before conference, the First Presidency announced that the Rome Italy Temple will be dedicated on Sunday, March 10, 2019, through Sunday, March 17, 2019. The Church also released an artistic rendering of the Bangkok Thailand Temple.

In October 2017, ground was broken for the Port-au-Prince Haiti Temple; the Meridian Idaho Temple was dedicated in November 2017; and the Cedar City Utah (USA) Temple was dedicated in December 2017.

Two temples will soon be rededicated: the Houston Texas Temple on Sunday, April 22, 2018, following repairs due to flooding; and the Jordan River Utah Temple on Sunday, May 20, 2018, following renovations. And two additional temples will be dedicated later this year: the Concepción Chile Temple on Sunday, October 28, 2018; and the Barranquilla Colombia Temple on Sunday, December 9, 2018.

The Hamilton New Zealand Temple will close in July 2018 for extensive renovation and will be rededicated in 2021.

There are currently 159 operating temples worldwide, with 30 temples announced or under construction. ■

*Rome Italy Temple*



*Rendering of the Bangkok Thailand Temple*







## Family History: Discover, Gather, Connect

Local temple and family history consultants can help Church members and others to find the joy that comes from discovering, gathering, and connecting with ancestors, according to Elder Bradley D. Foster, General Authority Seventy and Executive Director of the Church's Family History Department.

Everyone has stories from their family history. And wonderful things can happen when you start searching for and finding them.

"Our emphasis for the coming year is to help the consultants see their role in helping members to have this experience," Elder Foster said. "We do that one by one. We go to [people] wherever they are, with a special emphasis on those who are turning 12 and those who are new converts." Those two groups benefit quickly from seeing how temple work strengthens families through the eternities, and they often generate enthusiasm among their own friends and families.

Even those who are not members of the Church can have the discover-gather-connect experience through one-on-one assistance in any of more than 5,000 FamilySearch family history centers worldwide. ■



## Facilitating Missionary Work

During the last six months, the Church has taken several steps to facilitate missionary work.

**Standard questions.** The First Presidency introduced a set of standard questions for bishops and stake presidents to use while interviewing prospective full-time missionaries. They encouraged leaders, parents, and youth to become familiar with the questions.

Standards reflected in the questions do not change or add to the requirements for full-time missionary service, but reviewing them regularly will enable prospective missionaries and parents to learn principles and identify areas where improvement or additional preparation may be required.

**Use of technology.** The number of missions using mobile devices is increasing from 87 to 162, and tablets are being replaced with smartphones. The phones will assist missionaries with studying, finding, and teaching.

Technology is also being used to provide online content to people seeking answers to religious questions. The Church began using online teaching centers six years ago and today operates 20 online teaching centers around the world.

Thanks to technology, members who refer friends to missionaries can now communicate with missionaries who are teaching their friend. They can discuss needs with the missionaries and participate in lessons via the internet. Find out how at **[lds.org/referrals](https://www.lds.org/referrals)**.

**Meeting current needs.** Effective July 2018, the Church will adjust boundaries of 19 missions, and 5 new missions will be created. This will adjust the number of missions from 421 to 407. The new missions will be Brazil Rio de Janeiro South, Cote d'Ivoire Yamoussoukro, Nigeria Ibadan, Philippines Cabanatuan, and Zimbabwe Bulawayo. Details about merging missions will be coming in future communications from mission presidents to parents of missionaries in the affected missions.

Since the change in ages for missionary service was announced in 2012, the Church created 76 new missions to accommodate the surge of growth from 58,000 to 88,000 missionaries. The initial wave of missionaries has since receded, as anticipated, and currently about 68,000 missionaries are serving. This means that, for the present, fewer missions are required. But it also means that appropriate placement

of missionaries in areas of need around the world warrants particular attention.

**Missionary training centers.** The Provo Missionary Training Center in Utah, USA, and the MTC in the Philippines have both been expanded and dedicated, and the new missionary training center in Ghana has been dedicated. The Spain and Chile training centers will close in January 2019, and missionaries who would have attended either of these centers will be trained at one of the remaining 13 missionary training centers around the world. ■



## New Policies, Procedures, and Products

**Y**outh and temple work. The First Presidency has announced changes in temple policies that give young men and young women more opportunities in temple work and help Primary children better prepare to serve in the temple.

*Preventing, identifying, and responding to abuse.* In a continuing effort to counsel leaders on how to prevent, identify, and respond to abuse, on March 26, 2018, the First Presidency sent a letter and a resource document to Church leaders in the United States and Canada. The document includes updated guidelines for how bishops and stake presidencies should counsel victims of sexual abuse and how they should conduct interviews with Church members.

*Changes to Young Women camp.* Changes to the Church's Young Women camp program, included in a new camp guide to be released in the coming months, include eliminating certification and emphasizing youth leaders.

Meant to be "globally applicable" for young women living in all areas of the world, the new *Young Women Camp Guide* is currently available in English (and eventually in 23 languages) as a resource for Young Women presidencies, camp specialists, and youth camp leaders at **[youngwomen.lds.org](http://youngwomen.lds.org)**.

*Music submissions.* Recent changes to the Church music submission process now make it quick and easy for members to submit original sacred music to the Church. Music can be submitted at **[apps.lds.org/artcomp](http://apps.lds.org/artcomp)**.

*"How To" video channel.* The Church has launched a new channel

on YouTube called "How To" that provides simple, practical help for real-life challenges. Billed as a "one-stop channel for finding the help you need when you need it," the channel currently has more than 600 videos sorted into nine categories, each with multiple playlists of videos on a variety of related topics in English, with some Spanish and Portuguese content. Check it out at **[HowTo.lds.org](http://HowTo.lds.org)**.

*Scripture translations.* The Church has announced planned translation projects for 34 additional languages, plus a new process that will allow individuals to study draft portions of translations prior to publication of final translations, which means members will have earlier access to the scriptures in their language. ■

You can read more about these items at **[news.lds.org](http://news.lds.org)**.





# COME, FOLLOW ME—

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For Elders Quorum  
and Relief Society

*These resources can also be found on  
the Gospel Library app and at  
[comefollowme.lds.org](https://comefollowme.lds.org).*



# Why Do We Have

## Quorum and Relief Society Meetings?

In these latter days, God has restored the priesthood and organized priesthood quorums and the Relief Society to help accomplish His work of salvation. Because of this, each Sunday when we gather in elders quorum and Relief Society meetings, we discuss and plan what we will do to help accomplish God's work. To be effective, these meetings need to be more than classes. They are opportunities to counsel about the work of salvation, learn together about that work from the teachings of Church leaders, and plan and organize ourselves to accomplish it.



## First-Sunday Council Meetings

On the first Sunday of each month, elders quorum and Relief Society meetings *do not include a lesson taught by a teacher*. Instead, elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies lead council meetings. In these first-Sunday council meetings, each elders quorum and Relief Society counsels together about local responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges; learns from each other's insights and experiences; and plans ways to act on impressions received from the Spirit. These discussions should draw upon relevant scriptures and the teachings of living prophets.

Not all council meetings will be the same. Here are some guidelines to help presidencies lead a successful council.



## Topics for First-Sunday Council Meetings

Ideas for council meeting discussion topics may come from presidency meetings, ward council meetings, the area plan, impressions leaders receive as they minister to members, and promptings from the Holy Ghost. The topics below are suggestions only. Leaders may be aware of other needs that they feel inspired to address.

- What can we do to minister to those around us? (see Mosiah 23:18).
- How can we prioritize our different responsibilities?
- How will we share the gospel with our friends and neighbors? (see Alma 17).
- How can we protect ourselves and our families from inappropriate media and pornography?
- What will we do to mentor and strengthen our children and the youth in our ward?
- How can we be more involved in family history work and temple worship?
- How can we invite the Lord's help as we seek answers to our gospel questions and pursue a deeper understanding of the gospel?
- How can we strengthen our testimonies of the Lord and His gospel and help our families be spiritually self-reliant?

### BEFORE THE COUNCIL MEETING

#### DO:

- Identify local needs, opportunities, and challenges.
- Prayerfully select a topic to discuss.
- Invite quorum members or Relief Society sisters to come prepared to share their thoughts and experiences.

#### DON'T:

- Prepare a lesson.
- Come with a specific solution or action plan in mind.

### DURING THE COUNCIL MEETING

#### DO:

- Invite members to *share experiences* they had acting on impressions and plans from previous meetings.
- Introduce the meeting topic and encourage members to *counsel together* about it, seeking solutions and guidance from the scriptures, the words of the prophets, and the Holy Ghost.
- *Plan to act* on what was discussed. This may include group plans or plans that individuals make on their own.

#### DON'T:

- Dominate the conversation.
- Try to convince others of your ideas.
- Discuss sensitive or confidential issues.
- Teach a lesson.
- Pressure anyone to participate.

### AFTER THE COUNCIL MEETING

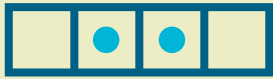
#### DO:

- Follow up on plans and assignments made during the council meeting.
- Find ways to include those who could not attend the meeting because of callings or other reasons. Let them know about plans that were made.
- Give members opportunities to share experiences in future meetings.

*“One of the beautiful things about this council meeting is that you actually come up with an action plan at the end of the meeting.”*

—Sister Jean B. Bingham,  
Relief Society General President





# Second- and Third-Sunday

## Meetings

On the second and third Sundays of each month, elders quorums and Relief Societies will learn from the teachings of Church leaders from the most recent general conference. *Emphasis should be given to messages from members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.* However, based on local needs and inspiration from the Spirit, any message from the most recent conference may be discussed.

In most cases, the elders quorum or Relief Society presidency will select a conference message to study based on the needs of the members, although the bishop or stake president may give input. Leaders may choose a message related to the topic discussed in a recent first-Sunday council meeting, or they may choose a message on a different topic, based on inspiration from the Spirit.

Leaders and teachers should find ways to encourage members to read the selected message in advance and come prepared to share gospel truths and ideas about how to act on them. The suggested learning activities below, which are based on principles in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*, can help members learn from general conference messages.

*“Conscientiously look for ways to incorporate [general conference] messages in your family home evenings, your gospel teaching, [and] your conversations with family and friends.”*

President Russell M. Nelson,  
“Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign* or  
*Liahona*, May 2018, 118.

**M. Russell Ballard**, “*Precious Gifts from God*,” 9–11

President Ballard’s message addresses a variety of topics—including prophets, faith in Christ, the sacrament, and service—and members of your quorum or Relief Society may find different topics especially meaningful. Invite members to share something from this message that inspires them. What invitations or promised blessings do we find in President Ballard’s message? Consider inviting members to ponder for a few minutes what they feel inspired to do as a result of this discussion.

**Gary E. Stevenson**, “*The Heart of a Prophet*,” 17–20

To help members “comprehend the magnitude” of the calling of a new prophet, you could invite members to search Elder Stevenson’s message, looking for truths

and insights that help them understand the significance and sacredness of this divine process. Consider inviting members to share what they felt during the solemn assembly in which President Nelson was sustained as President of the Church. You could also draw a heart on the board and ask members to write in it words or phrases that describe the heart and character of President Nelson. What has he taught that has blessed us?

**Neil L. Andersen**, “*The Prophet of God*,” 24–27

Discussing Elder Andersen’s message could strengthen members’ faith in living prophets. You could invite them to search his message for something that helps them understand why God has prophets on the earth and why we follow them. How have we been blessed because we have a prophet? Members could share how they have gained

a testimony that President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**David A. Bednar**, “*Meek and Lowly of Heart*,” 30–33

To inspire a discussion about Elder Bednar’s message, you could write on the board *Meekness is . . .* and *Meekness is not . . .*. Members could then search Elder Bednar’s message and write on the board phrases they find that complete these statements. What do we learn from this message that inspires us to be more meek? What examples of meekness can we think of? How can we apply Elder Bednar’s counsel to become more meek?

**Bonnie L. Oscarson**, “*Young Women in the Work*,” 36–38

Questions are one way to invite pondering. Consider writing on the board a few

questions that Sister Oscarson's message answers, such as *How can we involve young women in the Lord's work?* Invite members to search her message for answers to these questions and discuss what they learn. What blessings come when young women are involved in ministering? Perhaps class members could share experiences they have had ministering alongside young women. Based on our discussion, what do we feel inspired to do?



**Dale G. Renlund**, *"Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing,"* 46–49

Elder Renlund spoke of Ezekiel's vision of a temple with water gushing out of it (see Ezekiel 47:8–9). Perhaps a member of the quorum or Relief Society could draw a picture of this vision on the board. How are the blessings of temple and family history work like the water in Ezekiel's vision? You might invite class members to share blessings of temple and family history work that they have experienced. What can we do to make family history and temple work a more regular part of our lives?

**D. Todd Christofferson**, *"The Elders Quorum,"* 55–58

In elders quorum, you might invite quorum members to read the section of Elder Christofferson's message titled "The Purpose of These Changes." What can we do to ensure that we accomplish these purposes? In Relief Society, you could ask someone to summarize the changes to Melchizedek Priesthood quorums that Elder Christofferson describes. Sisters could then identify principles implied in these changes that can apply to the work of your Relief Society. In elders quorum or Relief Society, members could discuss what they learn from the story of Brother Goates and how it applies to their work.

**Ronald A. Rasband**, *"Behold! A Royal Army,"* 58–61

Perhaps singing, listening to, or reading

the words of "Behold! A Royal Army" (*Hymns*, no. 251) together might inspire discussion about Elder Rasband's message. How are priesthood quorums and Relief Societies like a royal army? Members could also look for and discuss the "multitude of blessings" Elder Rasband mentions will come from the restructuring of priesthood quorums. What other blessings have we received—or do we hope to receive—from implementing these changes? How can Relief Societies also more fully receive blessings such as "diversity of gifts" and "mentoring"?

**Henry B. Eyring**, *"Inspired Ministering,"* 61–64

President Eyring tells of two sacrament meeting talks about ministering that impressed him. Perhaps you could ask half of the quorum or Relief Society members to review the words of the 14-year-old boy and the other half to review the story about the home teacher. As they read, members could think of advice they might give a young man or young woman who is newly assigned to minister to someone. How can we "become even more inspired and charitable in our . . . ministering service"?

**Dallin H. Oaks**, *"The Powers of the Priesthood,"* 65–68

To start a discussion, you could write the titles of the four sections of President Oaks's message on the board. Then invite each member to read one section silently

and then write on the board one sentence that summarizes the main message of that section. Members could then share what they feel inspired to do because of what they read. How will our service as priesthood holders or Relief Society sisters improve as we apply the teachings in President Oaks's message?

**Russell M. Nelson**, *"Ministering with the Power and Authority of God,"* 68–75

President Nelson invites priesthood holders to "rise up" and use the priesthood to bless Heavenly Father's children. Invite members of your quorum or Relief Society to search the examples he gives and discuss how they help us understand how the priesthood can be used to bless their families and others. What experiences can we share when we have been blessed by priesthood power? How can we help others or ourselves have the faith to use the priesthood of God to "minister in His name"?

**Reyna I. Aburto**, *"With One Accord,"* 78–80

Sister Aburto's message provides an opportunity for your quorum or Relief Society to evaluate how well you are working in unity to do the Lord's work. To help members do this, you could show pictures of monarch butterflies, the Savior's visit to the Nephites (see *Gospel Art Book*, 82, 83, 84), and the Church's humanitarian work (see LDS.org). Members could search the message and discover how Sister Aburto used these examples to teach about the purposes and blessings of working



## A Pattern for Our Meetings

- 1. Share experiences** with acting on impressions and invitations received in previous priesthood or Relief Society meetings (led by a presidency member).
- 2. Learn together** (led by a called teacher). It is often helpful to invite members to:
  - a. Search for something in the conference message (such as an answer to a question, an inspiring passage, or an example of a principle).
  - b. Share and discuss what they find.
  - c. Consider how the message applies to their lives and experiences.
- 3. Plan to act** as individuals or as a group (led by a presidency member).



in unity. What can we do to work “with one accord”?

**Henry B. Eyring**, *“His Spirit to Be with You,”* 86–89

To increase our desire and ability to receive the Holy Ghost, President Eyring shares several personal experiences and gives specific direction. After reviewing his experiences, what similar memories can members of your quorum or Relief Society share when the Holy Ghost touched their hearts or affirmed truth? Perhaps members could list on the board the guidance that President Eyring shares to help “open our hearts to receive the ministration of the Spirit.” How will following his direction help us in our own lives and in our families? in our quorum or Relief Society?

**Dallin H. Oaks**, *“Small and Simple Things,”* 89–92

President Oaks’s message contains metaphors that teach how small and simple things can have a powerful effect for good or evil. These metaphors include tree roots, a team of rowers, rope fibers, and dripping water. Members could read these metaphors and discuss what they teach about the power of doing small and simple things consistently. What are the small and simple things that bring the influence of the Holy Ghost into our lives? Invite members to ponder what they are impressed to do to follow President Oaks’s counsel.

**Russell M. Nelson**, *“Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,”* 93–96

In his message, President Nelson pleads with us to increase our “spiritual capacity to receive revelation.” To help members follow his direction, you could write questions like the following on the board: Why do we need revelation? How can we increase our capacity to receive revelation—both individually and as we counsel together? What blessings did President Nelson promise if we will seek

revelation? Divide members into groups, and invite each group to find and share answers to one of the questions.

**Gerrit W. Gong**, *“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,”* 97–98

What can members of your quorum or Relief Society learn from Elder Gong’s message about our covenants and the Atonement of Jesus Christ? You could invite members to search the message, looking for blessings that the Savior’s Atonement and our covenants—working together—offer us. Then consider asking questions like the following about what they found: How do our covenants and the Atonement work together to “enable and ennoble” us? What do they help us hold on to and let go of?

**Ulisses Soares**, *“Prophets Speak by the Power of the Holy Spirit,”* 98–99

Elder Soares’s message can inspire us to act in faith when we feel inadequate in doing the will of the Lord. How did Elder Soares receive comfort and assurance when he received his new calling as an Apostle? What did he learn from his experience of being called as a mission president? What can we learn from his experiences? Give members time to share experiences when they felt unsure about something the Lord wanted them to do. What did they do to find the faith to move forward?

**Jeffrey R. Holland**, *“Be With and Strengthen Them,”* 101–3

As members of your quorum or Relief Society learned about changes to the “priesthood and Relief Society ministering concept,” what questions did they have? Elder Holland’s message may provide answers. Members could look for gospel principles that Elder Holland teaches are the foundation of these changes. What invitations do we find in his message? What blessings are promised? How can these new ways of ministering help us become “true disciples of Christ”?

**Jean B. Bingham**, “*Ministering as the Savior Does*,” 104–7

In her message, Sister Bingham invites us to ask ourselves questions that can guide our ministering efforts. Members could discuss how these questions could guide their efforts and then look for answers to Sister Bingham’s question, “So what does [ministering] look like?” You might spend time reviewing some of the examples Sister Bingham shares of individuals ministering and invite members to share examples of their own. What do we find in Sister Bingham’s message that increases our understanding of why and how we minister?

**Dieter F. Uchtdorf**, “*Behold the Man!*” 107–10

How would we help someone understand that the atoning sacrifice and Resurrection of Jesus Christ were the most important events in the world’s history? Invite members to ponder this question as they read portions of Elder Uchtdorf’s message. What do they find that would help explain why these events are so important to them? After this discussion, class members could talk about what it means to them to “behold the man.” How have we learned to “behold the man?”

**Quentin L. Cook**, “*Prepare to Meet God*,” 114–17

You could begin your discussion of Elder Cook’s message by inviting a member to summarize the restoration of priesthood keys in the Kirtland Temple. According to Elder Cook’s message, what responsibilities does the Church have that are related to these keys? How are these responsibilities manifest in the Church today? Write the words *righteousness*, *unity*, and *equality* on the board, and ask members to share insights they gain about each of these principles from Elder Cook’s message. How do these principles help us fulfill the Church’s sacred responsibilities?



## Fourth-Sunday

### Meetings

On the fourth Sunday of each month, elders quorums and Relief Societies discuss a topic selected by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The fourth-Sunday topic will be updated after every general conference. From now until the next general conference, the topic will be “Ministering to Others.” Each month, leaders or teachers may choose to lead discussions on any of the following principles related to ministering.

For additional resources to support discussions about ministering, see [ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org) and “Ministering Principles” articles in future issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*.

#### What does it mean to minister?

What does *ministering* mean to the members in your ward or branch? To find out, you could write *Ministering* on the board and then invite members to write words around it that they associate with ministering. Members could find words or phrases to add to the list from scriptures like the following: Matthew 25:34–40; Luke 10:25–37; 2 Nephi 25:26; Mosiah 18:8–9; 3 Nephi 18:25; and Doctrine and Covenants 81:5. What do we learn from these verses about ministering? You could ask members to share examples of

ministering they have seen. How can our ministering help meet people’s spiritual and temporal needs? How can it help people come closer to Christ?

#### The Savior is our perfect example of ministering.

To learn about how to minister effectively, members could share stories from the scriptures in which the Savior ministered to others—several examples can be found in John 4–6 and Mark 2:1–12. Members could share what impresses them about these stories and what



principles they learn about ministering. For example, how did the Savior personalize His service to others? How did He meet people's spiritual needs as well as temporal needs? Class members could share times when they have seen people use these principles in their ministering.

### **Ministering is motivated by Christlike love.**

To explore the power of ministering motivated by Christlike love, you could write the following sentences on the board and invite members to suggest ways to fill in the blanks: *When I truly love the people I serve, I \_\_\_\_\_.* *When I serve for other reasons, I \_\_\_\_\_.* What can we do to ensure that our ministering to others is motivated by Christlike love? How do we develop Christlike love for those to whom we are assigned to minister? (see Moroni 7:45–48). Perhaps members could share examples of ministering that was inspired by Christlike love.

### **God wants all of His children to be watched over and cared for.**

President Russell M. Nelson said, “A hallmark of the Lord’s true and living Church will always be an organized, directed effort to minister to the individual children of God and their families” (“Ministering with the Power and Authority of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 69). What does President Nelson teach are some of the “organized, directed” ways in which the Church helps us better care for individuals? Why are these efforts “a hallmark of the Lord’s true and living Church”? (see Mosiah 18:21–22 and Moroni 6:4–6 for some ideas). What blessings have come into our lives or the lives of others because people ministered in their Church callings or assignments?

### **The worth of souls is great in the sight of God.**

The experiences of the sons of Mosiah illustrate that the way we see people affects how we minister to them. You could write on the board *How the Nephites saw the Lamanites*

and *How the sons of Mosiah saw the Lamanites*. Then invite members to search Mosiah 28:1–3 and Alma 26:23–26 to find words and phrases to write under each of these statements. What does this comparison teach us about how the way we see people affects the way we minister to them? How can we learn to see people more as God sees them? (see D&C 18:10–16).

### **True ministers focus on the needs of others.**

To help members better understand the value of focusing on the needs of others as we minister, you could compare ministering to giving and receiving gifts. Have we ever received a meaningful gift from someone who clearly knew what we needed or wanted? How is ministering similar to giving a thoughtful gift? Consider discussing stories from the most recent general conference that demonstrate how people ministered according to the needs of others (see, for example, Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 105–6). Members could also share other stories that demonstrate this principle.

How can we learn what others’ needs are? Invite each member to make a list of some of the people to whom they minister. Next to each name they could write an answer to the question “What does this person need to come closer to Christ?” As applicable, encourage members to include ordinances each person may need to receive. Invite members to continue to think about this question and seek inspiration to help them meet the needs of others.

### **The Lord wants us to accept ministering from others.**

Elder Robert D. Hales said: “The gospel plan requires giving and receiving. . . . Individuals in difficulty often say: ‘I’ll do it alone,’ . . . ‘I can take care of myself.’ It has been said that no one is so rich that he does not need another’s help, no one so poor as not to be useful in some way to his fellowman. The disposition to ask assistance from

others with confidence, and to grant it with kindness, should be part of our very nature” (“We Can’t Do It Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 91, 93). Why are we sometimes hesitant to accept help from others? How does our willingness to accept help bless those who serve us? Give members a few moments to ponder ways they can be more open to receiving the ministering of others. What does 1 Corinthians 12:13–21 suggest about why we need each other?

### **There are many ways we can minister to others.**

To help members consider the many ways we can minister to one another, you could invite them to review Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s message “Be With and Strengthen Them” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 101–3; see also “Ministering Principles” in upcoming issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*). Members could divide into small groups, and each group could think of several scenarios in which a person might need help. They could then brainstorm various ways in which people could minister to the spiritual and temporal needs of the individuals in the scenarios. Ask the groups to share their ideas and ponder whether any of the ideas discussed could bless the people to whom they minister. ■





The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Seated, from left: President M. Russell Ballard, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Elder David A. Bednar, Elder Quentin L. Cook.  
Standing, from left: Elder D. Todd Christofferson, Elder Neil L. Andersen, Elder Ronald A. Rasband, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, Elder Dale G. Renlund,  
Elder Gerrit W. Gong, Elder Ulisses Soares.





"I bless you to identify those things you can set aside so you can spend more time in the temple," said President Russell M. Nelson during the closing session of the 188th Annual General Conference of the Church. "I bless you with greater harmony and love in your homes and a deeper desire to care for your eternal family relationships. I bless you with increased faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a greater ability to follow Him as His true disciples.

"I bless you to raise your voice in testimony, as I do now, that we are engaged in the work of Almighty God! Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church, which He directs through His anointed servants."

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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