

Ensign



General Conference Addresses

**Age Requirements
Lowered for Full-Time
Missionaries**

**Two New Temples
Announced**

**New Youth Curriculum
Introduced**



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They Were All Filled, by Walter Rane

“And when [Jesus] had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

“And they did all eat, and were filled” (Mark 6:41–42).

“And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children” (Matthew 14:21).

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▶ You will find quick-response (QR) codes for the speakers indicated. Using a camera-enabled smart phone or tablet with a QR-code-reader app, you can scan these codes and link to a short video clip (1–2 minutes) from the talk. To view the full talk, go to conference.lds.org.



Summary for the 182nd Semiannual General Conference

SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 2012, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Elder Kevin R. Duncan.
Benediction: Elder Juan A. Uceda.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: “Glory to God on High,” *Hymns*, no. 67; “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85, arr. Wilberg, pub. Oxford; “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19; “I Will Follow God’s Plan,” *Children’s Songbook*, 164, arr. Hofheins, unpublished; “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 6, 2012, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Gerrit W. Gong.
Benediction: Elder Jose L. Alonso.
Music by a combined youth choir from Bennion and Taylorsville, Utah; Leah Tarrant, director; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: “Arise, O Glorious Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 407; “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301, arr. Perry, unpublished; “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243; “On This Day of Joy and Gladness,” *Hymns*, no. 64, arr. Huff, unpublished.

SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 2012, PRIESTHOOD SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Jay E. Jensen.
Benediction: Elder Patrick Kearon.
Music by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Ogden, Utah; Stephen P. Schank and Derek Furch, directors; Andrew Unsworth, organist: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,” *Hymns*, no. 72; “Love One Another,” *Hymns*, no. 308, arr. Furch, unpublished; “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,” *Hymns*, no. 83; “Hope of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 259, arr. Schank, unpublished.

SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 2012, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Marlin K. Jensen.
Benediction: Elder Keith R. Edwards.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” *Hymns*, no. 272; “The Morning Breaks,” *Hymns*, no. 1, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Does the Journey Seem Long?” *Hymns*, no. 127, arr. Wilberg, unpublished (Shane Warby, soloist); “Called to Serve,” *Hymns*, no. 249; “If the Savior Stood Beside Me,” CSMP by Sally DeFord, arr. Cardon, unpublished; “If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not,” *Songs of Zion* (1912), no. 158, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 7, 2012, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Elder Octaviano Tenorio.
Benediction: Elder Larry W. Gibbons.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts, organists: “The Day Dawn Is Breaking,” *Hymns*, no. 52, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140, arr. Wilberg, pub. Jackman; “Rejoice, the Lord Is King,” *Hymns*, no. 66; “God Be with You Till We Meet Again,” *Hymns*, no. 152, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 29, 2012, GENERAL RELIEF SOCIETY MEETING

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: Linda K. Burton.
Invocation: Maria Torres.
Benediction: Melinda Barrow.
Music by a choir of young single adult sisters from the Salt Lake Bonneville, Salt Lake Holladay, and Murray Utah YSA Stakes; Emily Wadley, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243; medley of “He Sent His Son,” *Children’s Songbook*, 34, and “I’m Trying to Be like Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 78, arr. Sally DeFord, unpublished; “I Stand All Amazed,”

Hymns, no. 193; “I Need Thee Every Hour,” *Hymns*, no. 98, arr. Beebe, pub. Larice.

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To access general conference talks on the Internet in many languages, visit conference.lds.org. Generally within two months following conference, video and audio recordings are also available at distribution centers. Recordings for individuals who are deaf are available at languages.lds.org (select ASL) and generally within two months following conference from distribution centers (three DVDs with a signing insert). For more information, call 1-800-537-5971 or log on to store.lds.org.

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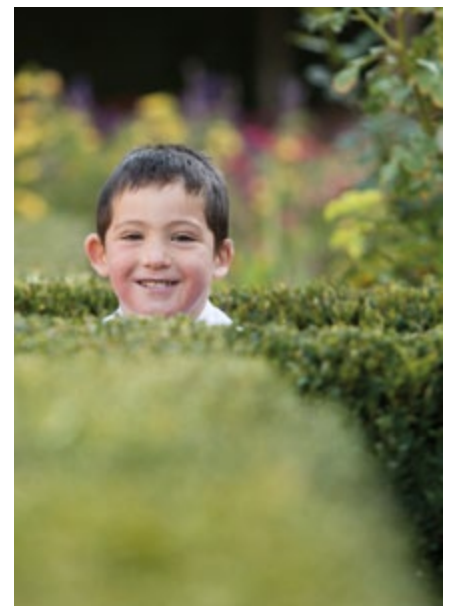
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Back: Photograph by Leslie Nilsson.

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Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar,
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By President Thomas S. Monson

Welcome to Conference

May we listen attentively to the messages . . . , that we may feel the Spirit of the Lord and gain the knowledge He would desire for us.

As far as I can see, every seat is filled—except for a few right there in the back. There is room for improvement. This is a courtesy to those who might be just a bit tardy, because of the traffic, to find a seat when they come.

This is a great day—conference day. We have heard a beautiful choir singing magnificent music. Every time I hear the choir or hear the organ or hear the piano, I think of my mother, who said, “I love all the acclaim that has been given you, all the degrees you have obtained, and all the work you have done. My only regret is that you did not stay with the piano.” Thanks, Mother. I wish I had.

How good it is, my brothers and sisters, to welcome you to the 182nd Semiannual General Conference of

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since we met six months ago, three new temples have been dedicated, and one temple has been rededicated. In May, it was my privilege to dedicate the beautiful Kansas City Missouri Temple and to attend the cultural celebration associated with it. I will mention that celebration in greater detail in my remarks tomorrow morning.

In June, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf dedicated the long-awaited temple in Manaus, Brazil, and in early September, President Henry B. Eyring rededicated the newly refurbished temple in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a temple which I had the privilege to dedicate nearly 27 years ago. Just two weeks ago, President Boyd K. Packer dedicated the lovely Brigham City Temple in the hometown where he was born and raised.

As I have indicated previously, no Church-built facility is more important than a temple, and we are pleased to have 139 temples in operation throughout the world, with 27 more announced or under construction. We are grateful for these sacred edifices and the blessings they bring into our lives.

This morning I am pleased to announce two additional temples, which in coming months and years will be built in the following locations: Tucson, Arizona, and Arequipa, Peru. Details concerning these temples will be provided in the future as necessary permits and approvals are obtained.

Brothers and sisters, I now turn to another matter—namely, missionary service.

For some time the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have allowed young men from certain countries to serve at the age of 18 when they are worthy, able, have graduated from high school, and have expressed a sincere desire to serve. This has been a country-specific policy and has allowed thousands of young men to serve honorable missions and also fulfill required military obligations and educational opportunities.

Our experience with these 18-year-old missionaries has been positive. Their mission presidents report that they are obedient, faithful, mature, and serve just as competently as do the older missionaries who serve in the same missions. Their faithfulness, obedience, and maturity have caused us to desire the same option of earlier missionary service for *all* young men, regardless of the country from which they come.

I am pleased to announce that effective immediately all worthy and able young men who have graduated from high school or its equivalent, regardless of where they live, will have the option of being recommended for missionary service beginning at the age of 18, instead of age 19. I am not suggesting that all young men will—or should—serve at this earlier age. Rather, based on individual circumstances as well as upon a





determination by priesthood leaders, this option is now available.

As we have prayerfully pondered the age at which young men may begin their missionary service, we have also given consideration to the age at which a young woman might serve. Today I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21.

We affirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty—and we encourage all young men who are worthy and

who are physically able and mentally capable to respond to the call to serve. Many young women also serve, but they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young men. We assure the young sisters of the Church, however, that they make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome their service.

We continue to need many more senior couples. As your circumstances allow, as you are eligible for retirement, and as your health permits, I encourage you to make yourselves available for full-time missionary service. Both husband and wife will

have a greater joy as they together serve our Father's children.

Now, my brothers and sisters, may we listen attentively to the messages which will be presented during the next two days, that we may feel the Spirit of the Lord and gain the knowledge He would desire for us. That this may be our experience I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code to watch or share a short video clip (1–2 minutes) of this message.



By Elder Quentin L. Cook
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Can Ye Feel So Now?

Some in the Church believe they can't answer Alma's question with a resounding yes. They do not "feel so now."

President Monson, we love, honor, and sustain you! This historically significant announcement with respect to missionary service is inspiring. I can remember the excitement in 1960 when the age for young men serving was reduced from 20 years of age to 19. I arrived in the British Mission as a newly called 20-year-old. The first 19-year-old in our mission was Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, an incredible addition. He was a few months shy of being 20. Then over the course of a year, many more 19-year-olds arrived. They were obedient and faithful missionaries, and the work progressed. I am confident that an even greater harvest will be achieved now as righteous, committed missionaries fulfill the Savior's commandment to preach His gospel.

In my view, those of you in the rising generation are better prepared than any previous generation. Your knowledge of the scriptures is particularly impressive. However, the challenges your generation faces as you prepare for service are similar to those faced by all members of the Church. We are aware the culture in most of the world is not conducive to righteousness or spiritual commitment. Throughout history, Church leaders have warned the people and taught repentance. In the Book of Mormon,

Alma the Younger was so concerned about unrighteousness and lack of commitment that he resigned as chief judge, the leader of the people of Nephi, and concentrated all his efforts on his prophetic calling.¹

In one of the most profound verses in all of scripture, Alma proclaims, "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?"²

Local leaders across the world report that when viewed as a whole, Church members, especially our youth, have never been stronger. But they almost always raise two concerns: first, the challenge of increased unrighteousness in the world and, second, the apathy and lack of commitment of some members. They seek counsel about how to help members to follow the Savior and achieve a deep and lasting conversion.

This question, "Can ye feel so now?" rings across the centuries. With all that we have received in this dispensation—including the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the outpouring of spiritual gifts, and the indisputable blessings of heaven—Alma's challenge has never been more important.

Soon after Ezra Taft Benson was called as an Apostle in 1943, President George Albert Smith³ counseled, "Your mission . . . is to . . . warn the people . . . in as kind a way as



possible that repentance will be the only panacea for the ills of this world.”⁴ When this statement was made, we were in the midst of the conflagration of World War II.

Today moral deterioration has escalated. One prominent writer recently said, “Everyone knows the culture is poisonous, and nobody expects that to change.”⁵ The constant portrayal of violence and immorality in music, entertainment, art, and other media in our day-to-day culture is unprecedented. This was dramatically described by a highly respected Baptist theologian when he stated, “The spiritual immune system of an entire civilization has been wounded.”⁶

It is not surprising that some in the Church believe they can’t answer Alma’s question with a resounding yes. They do not “feel so now.” They feel they are in a spiritual drought. Others are angry, hurt, or disillusioned. If these descriptions apply to you,⁷ it is important to evaluate why you cannot “feel so now.”

Many who are in a spiritual drought and lack commitment have not necessarily been involved in major sins or transgressions, but they have made unwise choices. Some are casual in their observance of sacred covenants. Others spend most of their time giving first-class devotion to lesser causes. Some allow intense cultural or political views to weaken their allegiance to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some have immersed themselves in Internet materials that magnify, exaggerate, and, in some cases, invent shortcomings of early Church leaders. Then they draw incorrect conclusions that can affect testimony. Any who have made these choices can repent and be spiritually renewed.

Immersion in the scriptures is essential for spiritual nourishment.⁸

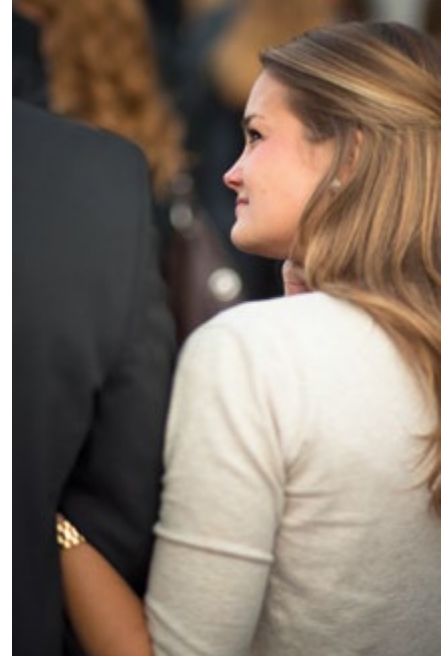
The word of God inspires commitment and acts as a healing balm for hurt feelings, anger, or disillusionment.⁹ When our commitment is diminished for any reason, part of the solution is repentance.¹⁰ Commitment and repentance are closely intertwined.

C. S. Lewis, the striving, pragmatic Christian writer, poignantly framed the issue. He asserted that Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness; but until people know and feel they need forgiveness, Christianity does not speak to them. He stated, “When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor.”¹¹

The Prophet Joseph pointed out that before your baptism, you could be on neutral ground between good and evil. But “when you joined this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can [go] back.” His counsel was that we must never forsake the Master.¹²

Alma emphasizes that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, “the arms of mercy are extended” to those who repent.¹³ He then asks penetrating and ultimate questions, such as: Are we prepared to meet God? Are we keeping ourselves blameless? We should all contemplate these questions. Alma’s own experience in failing to follow his faithful father and then coming to a dramatic understanding of how much he needed forgiveness and what it meant to sing the song of redeeming love is powerful and compelling.

While anything that lessens commitment is of consequence, two relevant challenges are both prevalent and significant. The first is unkindness, violence, and domestic abuse. The second is sexual immorality and impure thoughts. These often precede and are at the root of the choice to be less committed.



How we treat those closest to us is of fundamental importance. Violence, abuse, lack of civility, and disrespect in the home are not acceptable—not acceptable for adults and not acceptable for the rising generation. My father was not active in the Church but was a remarkably good example, especially in his treatment of my mother. He used to say, “God will hold men responsible for every tear they cause their wives to shed.” This same concept is emphasized in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” It reads, “[Those] who abuse spouse or offspring . . . will one day stand accountable before God.”¹⁴ Regardless of the culture in which we are raised, and whether our parents did or did not abuse us, we must not physically, emotionally, or verbally abuse anyone else.¹⁵

The need for civility in society has never been more important. The foundation of kindness and civility begins in our homes. It is not surprising that our public discourse has declined in equal measure with the breakdown of the family. The family is the foundation for love and for maintaining spirituality. The family promotes an atmosphere where religious observance can flourish. There is indeed “beauty all around when there’s love at home.”¹⁶

Sexual immorality and impure thoughts violate the standard established by the Savior.¹⁷ We were



this morning, it is essential that this be faithfully accomplished in homes which are places of refuge where kindness, forgiveness, truth, and righteousness prevail. Parents must have the courage to filter or monitor Internet access, television, movies, and music. Parents must have the courage to say no, defend truth, and bear powerful testimony. Your children need to know that you have faith in the Savior, love your Heavenly Father, and sustain the leaders of the Church. Spiritual maturity must flourish in our homes. My hope is that no one will leave this conference without understanding that the moral issues of our day must be addressed in the family. Bishops and priesthood and auxiliary leaders need to support families and make sure that spiritual principles are taught. Home and visiting teachers can assist, especially with children of single parents.

The young man I mentioned earnestly asked if the Apostles knew how early in life teaching and protecting against pornography and impure thoughts should start. With emphasis, he stated that in some areas even before youth graduate from Primary is not too early.

Youth who have been exposed to immoral images at a very early age are terrified that they may have already disqualified themselves for missionary service and sacred covenants. As a result, their faith can be severely impaired. I want to assure you young people, as Alma taught, that through repentance you can qualify for all the blessings of heaven.²⁰ That is what the Savior's Atonement is all about. Please talk with your parents or a trusted adviser, and counsel with your bishop.

When it comes to morality, some adults believe that adherence to a single, overriding humanitarian project or principle nullifies the need to comply

warned at the beginning of this dispensation that sexual immorality would be perhaps the greatest challenge.¹⁸ Such conduct will, without repentance, cause a spiritual drought and loss of commitment. Movies, TV, and the Internet often convey degrading messages and images. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf and I were recently in an Amazon jungle village and observed satellite dishes even on some of the small, simply built huts. We rejoiced at the wonderful information available in this remote area. We also recognized there is virtually no place on earth that cannot be impacted by salacious, immoral, and titillating images. This is one reason why pornography has become such a plague in our day.

I recently had an insightful conversation with a 15-year-old Aaronic Priesthood holder. He helped me understand how easy it is in this Internet age for young people to almost inadvertently be exposed

to impure and even pornographic images. He pointed out that for most principles the Church teaches, there is at least some recognition in society at large that violating these principles can have devastating effects on health and well-being. He mentioned cigarette smoking, drug use, and alcohol consumption by young people. But he noted that there is no corresponding outcry or even a significant warning from society at large about pornography or immorality.

My dear brothers and sisters, this young man's analysis is correct. What is the answer? For years, prophets and apostles have taught the importance of religious observance in the home.¹⁹

Parents, the days are long past when regular, active participation in Church meetings and programs, though essential, can fulfill your sacred responsibility to teach your children to live moral, righteous lives and walk uprightly before the Lord. With President Monson's announcement

with the Savior's teachings. They say to themselves that sexual misconduct is "a small thing . . . [if I am] a kind and charitable person."²¹ Such thinking is a gross self-deception. Some young people inform me that in our current culture it is not "cool" to try too hard in many areas, including living strictly in accordance with righteous principles.²² Please do not fall into this trap.

At baptism we promise to take upon us "the name of [Jesus] Christ, having [the] *determination* to serve him to the end."²³ Such a covenant requires courageous effort, commitment, and integrity if we are to continue to sing the song of redeeming love and stay truly converted.

A historic example of commitment to be strong and immovable for all ages was portrayed by a British Olympian who competed in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, France.

Eric Liddell was the son of a Scottish missionary to China and a devoutly religious man. He infuriated the British leadership of the Olympics by refusing, even under enormous pressure, to run in a preliminary 100-meter race held on Sunday. Ultimately he was victorious in the 400-meter race. Liddell's example of refusing to run on Sunday was particularly inspiring.

Depictions and memorials in his honor have referred to the inspirational words from Isaiah, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."²⁴

Liddell's admirable conduct was very influential in our youngest son's decision to not participate in Sunday sports and, more importantly, to separate himself from unrighteous and worldly conduct. He used the quote

from Isaiah for his yearbook contribution. Eric Liddell left a powerful example of determination and commitment to principle.

As our youth follow President Monson's counsel by preparing to serve missions, and as we all live the principles the Savior taught and prepare to meet God,²⁵ we win a much more important race.²⁶ We will have the Holy Ghost as our guide for spiritual direction. For any whose lives are not in order, remember, it is never too late to make the Savior's Atonement the foundation of our faith and lives.²⁷

In the words of Isaiah, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."²⁸

My sincere prayer is that each of us will take any necessary action to feel the Spirit *now* so we *can* sing the song of redeeming love with all our hearts. I testify of the power of the Savior's Atonement, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Alma 4:15–19.
2. Alma 5:26.
3. George Albert Smith was then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He would become President of the Church on May 21, 1945. (See *Deseret News 2012 Church Almanac* [2012], 98.)
4. George Albert Smith, in Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* (1987), 184.
5. Peggy Noonan, "The Dark Night Rises," *Wall Street Journal*, July 28–29, 2012, A17.
6. Dr. R. Albert Mohler Jr., president, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, presentation to religious leaders, New York City, Sept. 5, 2012.
7. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
8. See John 5:39; Amos 8:11; see also James E. Faust, "A Personal Relationship with the Savior," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 58–59.
9. See Alma 31:5.
10. See Alma 36:23–26.
11. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952), 31–32. Lewis was a Fellow in English literature at Oxford University and was subsequently chair of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University.
12. See *Teachings of Presidents of the*

Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 324; see also Revelation 3:15–16.

13. Alma 5:33.
14. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
15. See Richard G. Scott, "Removing Barriers to Happiness," *Ensign*, May 1998, 85–87. Some cultural imperatives are contrary to the Savior's teachings and can lead us astray. When I was in the South Pacific, I met a man who had investigated the Church for years. He reported he was deeply touched when a Church leader taught at a priesthood conference, "Hands which you have previously used to hit your children are to be used to bless your children." He received the missionary lessons, was baptized, and has been a great leader.
16. "Love at Home," *Hymns*, no. 294.
17. See Alma 39.
18. See Ezra Taft Benson, "Cleansing the Inner Vessel," *Ensign*, May 1986, 4.
19. President Gordon B. Hinckley introduced "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" in the general Relief Society meeting in September 1995. President Thomas S. Monson presided over changing the first chapter of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), "Families and the Church in God's Plan."
20. See Alma 13:27–30; 41:11–15.
21. Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (2012), 238; see also Alma 39:5.
22. Do not allow a culture that is filled with violence and immorality and is critical of those who live the principles the Savior taught to disturb your faith. As the poet Wordsworth gently penned, "Feed [your mind] with lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues, rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men . . . shall e'er prevail . . . or disturb [your] cheerful faith" ("Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Christopher Ricks [1999], 346).
23. Moroni 6:3; emphasis added; see also Mosiah 18:13.
24. Isaiah 40:31; see Robert L. Backman, "Day of Delight," *New Era*, June 1993, 48–49.
25. See Alma 34:32.
26. See 1 Corinthians 9:24–27.
27. See Helaman 5:12. Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. counseled, "I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it,—but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor" (*The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* [1858], 105).
28. Isaiah 1:18.



By Ann M. Dibb

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

I Know It. I Live It. I Love It.

We are followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Such conversion and confidence is the result of diligent and deliberate effort. It is individual. It is the process of a lifetime.

I am *inspired* by the examples being set by the righteous members of the Church, including the noble youth. You courageously look to the Savior. You are faithful, obedient, and pure. The blessings you receive because of your goodness affect not only your lives but also my life and the lives of countless others in profound but often unknown ways.

A few years ago, I was in line to make a purchase at my local grocery store. Ahead of me stood a young woman, about 15 years old. She appeared confident and happy. I noticed her T-shirt and couldn't resist talking to her. I began, "You're from out of state, aren't you?"

She was surprised by my question and replied, "Yes, I am. I'm from Colorado. How did you know?"

I explained, "Because of your T-shirt." I made my accurate supposition after reading the words on her shirt, "I'm a Mormon. Are you?"

I continued, "I must tell you that I'm impressed by your confidence to stand out and wear such a bold declaration. I see a difference in you, and I wish every young woman and every

member of the Church could have your same conviction and confidence." Our purchases completed, we said good-bye and parted.

Yet for days and weeks after this random everyday moment, I found myself seriously reflecting upon this encounter. I wondered how this young girl from Colorado came to possess such confidence in her identity as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I couldn't help but wonder what meaningful phrase I would figuratively choose to have printed on *my* T-shirt reflecting my belief and testimony. In my mind, I considered many possible sayings. Eventually, I came upon an ideal statement I would proudly wear: "I'm a Mormon. I know it. I live it. I love it."

Today I'd like to focus my remarks around this bold, hopeful statement.

The first part of the statement is a self-assured, unapologetic declaration: "I'm a Mormon." Just as the young woman I met in the grocery store was not afraid to let the world know she was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I hope we will never be afraid

or reluctant to acknowledge, "I'm a Mormon." We should be confident, as was the Apostle Paul when he proclaimed, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."¹ As members, we are followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Such conversion and confidence is the result of diligent and deliberate effort. It is individual. It is the process of a lifetime.

The next part of the statement affirms, "I know it." In today's world, there are a multitude of activities, subjects, and interests vying for every minute of our attention. With so many distractions, do we have the strength, discipline, and commitment to remain focused on what matters most? Are we as well versed in gospel truths as we are in our studies, careers, hobbies, sports, or our texts and tweets? Do we actively seek to find answers to our questions by feasting on the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets? Do we seek the confirmation of the Spirit?

The importance of gaining knowledge is an eternal principle. The Prophet Joseph Smith "loved knowledge for its righteous power."² He said: "Knowledge is necessary to life and godliness. . . . Hear, all ye brethren, this grand key: knowledge is the power of God unto salvation."³

All truth and knowledge is important, but amidst the constant distractions of our daily lives, we must especially pay attention to increasing our gospel knowledge so we can understand how to apply gospel principles to our lives.⁴ As our gospel knowledge increases, we will begin to feel confident in our testimonies and be able to state, "I know it."

Next is the statement, "I live it." The scriptures teach that we must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."⁵



We live the gospel and become “doers of the word” by exercising faith, being obedient, lovingly serving others, and following our Savior’s example. We act with integrity and do what we know is right “at all times and in all things, and in all places”⁶ no matter who may or may not be watching.

In our mortal condition, no one is perfect. Even in our most diligent efforts to live the gospel, all of us will make mistakes, and all of us will sin. What a comforting assurance it is to know that through our Savior’s redeeming sacrifice, we can be forgiven and made clean again. This process of true repentance and forgiveness strengthens our testimony and our resolve to obey the Lord’s commandments and live our life according to gospel standards.

When I think of the phrase, “I live it,” I am reminded of a young woman I met named Karigan. She wrote: “I’ve been a member of the Church for a little over a year. . . . For me, when investigating, one sign that this was the true Church came because I felt I’d finally found a church that taught

modesty and standards. I’ve seen with my own eyes what happens to people when they disregard commandments and choose the wrong path. I made up my mind, long ago, to live high moral standards. . . . I feel so blessed to have found the truth and to have been baptized. I am so happy.”⁷

The final phrase in my declarative statement is “I love it.” Gaining a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and diligently living gospel principles in our everyday lives leads many members of the Church to exclaim enthusiastically, “I love the gospel!”

This feeling comes as we feel the Holy Ghost witnessing to us that we are children of our Heavenly Father, He is mindful of us, and we are on the right path. Our love for the gospel grows as we experience the love of our Father in Heaven and the peace promised by the Savior as we show Him we are willing to obey and follow Him.

At different times in our lives, whether we are new converts to the Church or lifelong members, we may find that this vibrant enthusiasm

has faded. Sometimes this happens when times are challenging and we must practice patience. Sometimes it happens at the peak of our prosperity and abundance. Whenever I have this feeling, I know I need to refocus my efforts on increasing my gospel knowledge and living gospel principles more fully in my life.

One of the most effective but sometimes difficult gospel principles to apply is humility and submission to the will of God. In Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, He expressed to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”⁸ This should be our prayer as well. Oftentimes, it is in these quiet, prayerful moments that we feel encircled in Heavenly Father’s love and those joyful, loving feelings are restored.

At a Young Women leadership meeting in Eugene, Oregon, I had the privilege of meeting and talking with Sister Cammy Wilberger. The story Sister Wilberger shared with me was a witness of the power and blessing of one young woman’s knowing, living, and loving the gospel.

Sister Wilberger's 19-year-old daughter, Brooke, was tragically killed several years ago while on summer break after her first year at university. Sister Wilberger recalled, "It was a difficult and dark time for our family. However, Brooke had given us a great gift. We didn't recognize this as she was growing up, but every single year and moment of her brief life, Brooke had given us the greatest gift a daughter could give her parents. Brooke was a righteous daughter of God. . . . Because of this gift and especially because of the enabling power of the Atonement, I have had strength, comfort, and the Savior's promised peace. I have no question where Brooke is now and look forward to our loving reunion."⁹

I have a testimony of our Heavenly Father's great plan of eternal happiness. I know that He knows us and loves us. I know that He has prepared a prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, to encourage us and help guide us back to Him. I pray that each of us will put forth the effort to be able to confidently declare, "I'm a Mormon. I know it. I live it. I love it." I say these things humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Note: For further study, I recommend reading *Alma 32* and Elder Dallin H. Oaks's talk "The Challenge to Become" (*Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40–43; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–34).

NOTES

1. Romans 1:16.
2. George Q. Cannon, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 261.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 265; see also Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, notebook, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
4. See knowledge value experience number 1, *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 38.
5. James 1:22.
6. Mosiah 18:9.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. Luke 22:42.
9. Personal correspondence.



By Elder Craig C. Christensen
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

An Unspeakable Gift from God

The Holy Ghost works in perfect unity with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, fulfilling many important roles and distinct responsibilities.

In 1994, President Howard W. Hunter invited all members of the Church to "establish the temple . . . as the great symbol of [our] membership."¹ Later that same year, construction on the Bountiful Utah Temple was completed. Like many, we were anxious to take our young family to the open house prior to the dedication. We labored diligently to prepare our children to enter the temple, praying earnestly that they would have a spiritual experience so that the temple would become a focal point in their lives.

As we reverently walked through the temple, I found myself admiring the magnificent architecture, the elegant finishes, the light shining through towering windows, and many of the inspiring paintings. Every aspect of this sacred building was truly exquisite.

Stepping into the celestial room, I suddenly realized that our youngest son, six-year-old Ben, was clinging to my leg. He appeared anxious—perhaps even a little troubled.

"What's wrong, Son?" I whispered. "Daddy," he replied, "what's happening here? I've never felt this way before."

Recognizing that this was likely the first time our young son had felt the influence of the Holy Ghost in such a powerful way, I knelt down on the floor next to him. While other visitors stepped around us, Ben and I spent several minutes, side by side, learning about the Holy Ghost together. I was amazed at the ease with which we were able to discuss his sacred feelings. As we talked, it became clear that what was most inspiring to Ben was not what he *saw* but what he *felt*—not the physical beauty around us but the still, small voice of the Spirit of God within his heart. I shared with him what I had learned from my own experiences, even as his childlike wonder reawakened in me a deep sense of gratitude for this unspeakable gift from God—the gift of the Holy Ghost.²

Who Is the Holy Ghost?

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and, as such, like God the Father and Jesus Christ, He knows our thoughts and the intents of our hearts.³ The Holy Ghost loves us and wants us to be happy. Since He knows the challenges we will face, He

can guide us and teach us all things we must do to return and live with our Heavenly Father once again.⁴

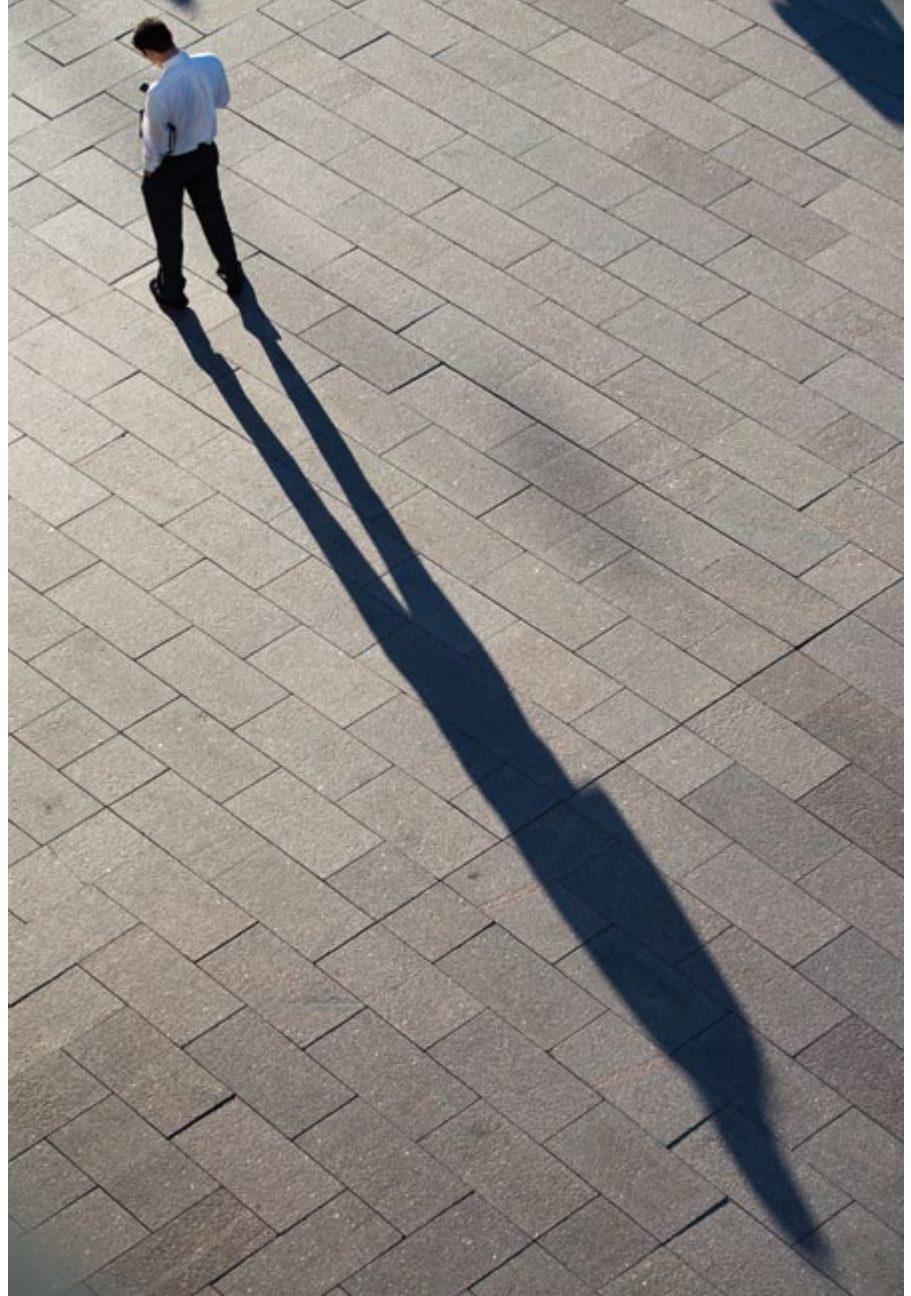
Unlike Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, who have glorified bodies of flesh and bones, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit who communicates to our spirits through feelings and impressions.⁵ As a spirit being, He has the unique responsibility of being an agent through which personal revelation is received. In scripture, the Holy Ghost is often referred to as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit of Promise, or simply the Spirit.⁶

What Is the Mission of the Holy Ghost?

The Holy Ghost works in perfect unity with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, fulfilling many important roles and distinct responsibilities. The primary purpose of the Holy Ghost is to bear witness of God the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ,⁷ and to teach us the truth of all things.⁸ A sure witness from the Holy Ghost carries far more certainty than a witness from any other source. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that “the Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth with greater effect and understanding than the truth can be imparted by personal contact even with heavenly beings.”⁹

The Holy Ghost is also known as the Comforter.¹⁰ During times of trouble or despair or simply when we need to know that God is near, the Holy Ghost can lift our spirits, give us hope, and teach us “the peaceable things of the kingdom,”¹¹ helping us feel “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”¹²

Several years ago as our extended family gathered for a holiday dinner, my father began playing games with many of his grandchildren. Suddenly and without warning, he collapsed



and quickly passed away. This unexpected event could have been devastating, especially for his grandchildren, raising questions that are difficult to answer. However, as we gathered our children around us, as we prayed and read the words of Book of Mormon prophets about the purpose of life, the Holy Ghost comforted each of us personally. In ways that are difficult to describe with words, the answers we sought came clearly into our hearts. We felt a peace that day that truly surpassed *our* understanding, yet the witness from the Holy Ghost was certain, undeniable, and true.

The Holy Ghost is a teacher and a revelator.¹³ As we study, ponder,

and pray about gospel truths, the Holy Ghost enlightens our minds and quickens our understanding.¹⁴ He causes the truth to be indelibly written in our souls and can cause a mighty change to occur in our hearts. As we share these truths with our families, with fellow members of the Church, and with friends and neighbors in our community, the Holy Ghost becomes their teacher as well, for He carries the message of the gospel “unto the hearts of the children of men.”¹⁵

The Holy Ghost inspires us to reach out to others in service. For me, the most vivid examples of heeding the promptings of the Holy Ghost in the service of others come from



whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, 'I had a *feeling* . . .'¹⁸ It is through these sacred feelings from the Holy Ghost that we come to know what God would have us do, for this, as stated in scripture, "is the spirit of revelation."¹⁹

What Does It Mean to Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost?

In teaching our six-year-old son, Ben, I thought it important to differentiate between what he was feeling, which was the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he would receive after baptism. Before baptism, all honest and sincere seekers of truth can feel the influence of the Holy Ghost from time to time. However, the opportunity to receive the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and the *fulness* of all the associated blessings is available only to worthy, baptized members who receive the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands through those holding the priesthood authority of God.

Through the gift of the Holy Ghost, we receive added capacity and spiritual gifts, increased revelation and protection, steady guidance and direction, and the promised blessings of sanctification and exaltation in the celestial kingdom. All of these blessings are given as a result of our personal desire to receive them and come as we align our lives with the will of God and seek His constant direction.

As I reflect back on my experience with Ben in the Bountiful Utah Temple, I have many sweet feelings and impressions. One clear recollection is that while I was absorbed in the grandeur of what I could see, a small child near my side was recognizing the powerful feelings in his heart. With a gentle reminder, I was

the life and ministry of President Thomas S. Monson, who said: "In the performance of our responsibilities, I have learned that when we heed a silent prompting and act upon it without delay, our Heavenly Father will guide our footsteps and bless our lives and the lives of others. I know of no experience more sweet or feeling more precious than to heed a prompting only to discover that the Lord has answered another person's prayer through you."¹⁶

I share just one tender experience. While President Monson was serving as a bishop, he learned that a member of his ward, Mary Watson, was in the hospital. As he went to visit her, he learned that she was staying in a large room with several other patients. When he approached Sister Watson, he noticed that the patient in a neighboring bed quickly covered her head.

After President Monson had visited with Sister Watson and given her a priesthood blessing, he shook her hand, said good-bye, and prepared to leave. Then a simple but amazing thing happened. I quote now from President Monson's own recollection of this experience:

"I could not leave her side. It was as though an unseen hand [was] resting on my shoulder, and I felt within my soul that I was hearing these words: 'Go over to the next bed where the little lady covered her

face when you came in.' I did so. . . .

"I approached the bedside of the other patient, gently tapped her shoulder and carefully pulled back the sheet which had covered her face. Lo and behold! She, too, was a member of my ward. I had not known she was a patient in the hospital. Her name was Kathleen McKee. When her eyes met mine, she exclaimed through her tears, 'Oh, Bishop, when you entered that door, I felt you had come to see me and bless me in response to my prayers. I was rejoicing inside to think that you would know I was here, but when you stopped at the other bed, my heart sank, and I knew that you had not come to see me.'

"I said to [Sister] McKee: 'It does not matter that I didn't know you were here. It is important, however, that our Heavenly Father knew and that you had prayed silently for a priesthood blessing. It was He who prompted me to intrude on your privacy.'¹⁷

How Does the Holy Ghost Speak to Us?

We all have experiences with the Holy Ghost, even though we may not always recognize them. As inspired thoughts come into our minds, we know them to be true by the spiritual feelings that enter into our hearts. President Boyd K. Packer has taught: "The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*. . . . While we speak of 'listening' to the

invited not only to pause and kneel down but also to heed the Savior's call to become as a little child—humble, meek, and ready to hear the still, small voice of His Spirit.

I bear witness of the living reality and divine mission of the Holy Ghost and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, we may know the truth of all things. I testify that the gift of the Holy Ghost is Heavenly Father's precious and unspeakable gift to all who will come unto His Son, be baptized in His name, and receive the Holy Ghost through confirmation in His Church. Of these sacred truths I bear personal witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Howard W. Hunter, in Jay M. Todd, "President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1994, 5; see also Howard W. Hunter, "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 3; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 2.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:26.
3. See Alma 12:7; 18:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 6:15–16.
4. See 2 Nephi 32:5.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
6. See Luke 4:1, 18; 11:13; John 1:33; Ephesians 1:13; Doctrine and Covenants 88:3.
7. See 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 28:11; Doctrine and Covenants 20:27.
8. See Moroni 10:5.
9. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:47–48.
10. See John 14:26; Doctrine and Covenants 35:19.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 36:2.
12. Philippians 4:7.
13. See Luke 12:12; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Doctrine and Covenants 50:13–22; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132–33.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.
15. 2 Nephi 33:1.
16. Thomas S. Monson, "Peace, Be Still," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 55.
17. See Thomas S. Monson, "Christ at Bethesda's Pool," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 18–19.
18. Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," *Liahona*, June 1997, 10; *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 8:3; see also verse 2.



By Elder Shayne M. Bowen
Of the Seventy

"Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also"

Because of Him, even our Savior, Jesus Christ, those feelings of sorrow, loneliness, and despair will one day be swallowed up in a fulness of joy.

While serving as young missionaries in Chile, my companion and I met a family of seven in the branch. The mother attended every week with her children. We assumed that they were longtime members of the Church. After several weeks we learned that they had not been baptized.

We immediately contacted the family and asked if we could come to their home and teach them. The father was not interested in learning about the gospel but had no objection to our teaching his family.

Sister Ramirez advanced rapidly through the lessons. She was anxious to learn all the doctrine that we taught. One evening as we were discussing infant baptism, we taught that little children are innocent and have no need for baptism. We invited her to read in the book of Moroni:

"Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children,

and they shall all be saved with their little children.

"And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

"But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!"¹

After reading this scripture, Sister Ramirez began sobbing. My companion and I were confused. I asked, "Sister Ramirez, have we said or done something that has offended you?"

She said, "Oh, no, Elder, you haven't done anything wrong. Six years ago I had a baby boy. He died before we could have him baptized. Our priest told us that because he had not been baptized, he would be in limbo for all eternity. For six years I have carried that pain and guilt. After reading this scripture, I know by the power of the Holy Ghost that it is true. I have felt a great weight taken off of me, and these are tears of joy."

I was reminded of the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who taught this comforting doctrine: “The Lord takes many away, even in infancy, that they may escape the envy of man, and the sorrows and evils of this present world; they were too pure, too lovely, to live on earth; therefore, if rightly considered, instead of mourning we have reason to rejoice as they are delivered from evil, and we shall soon have them again.”²

After she suffered almost unbearable grief and pain for six years, the true doctrine, revealed by a loving Father in Heaven through a living prophet, brought sweet peace to this tormented woman. Needless to say, Sister Ramirez and her children who were eight years and older were baptized.

I remember writing to my family, expressing the gratitude that I felt in my heart for the knowledge of this and so many other plain and precious truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I never dreamed how this wonderful true principle would come back to me in future years and prove to be my balm of Gilead.

I would like to speak to those who have lost a child and have asked the question, “Why me?” or maybe even questioned your own faith in a loving Father in Heaven. It is my prayer that



by the power of the Holy Ghost, I may bring some measure of hope, of peace, and of understanding. It is my desire to be an instrument in bringing about a restoration of your faith in our loving Father in Heaven, who knows all things and allows us to experience trials so that we can come to know and love Him and understand that without Him we have nothing.

On February 4 of 1990, our third son and sixth child was born. We named him Tyson. He was a beautiful little boy, and the family greeted him with open hearts and open arms. His brothers and sisters were so proud of him. We all thought he was the most perfect little boy who had ever been born.

When Tyson was eight months old, he aspirated a piece of chalk that he had found on the carpet. The chalk lodged in Tyson’s throat, and he quit breathing. His older brother brought Tyson upstairs, frantically calling, “The baby won’t breathe. The baby won’t breathe.” We began to administer CPR and called 911.

The paramedics arrived and rushed Tyson to the hospital. In the waiting room we continued in fervent prayer as we pled to God for a miracle. After what seemed a lifetime, the doctor came into the room and said, “I am so sorry. There is nothing more we can do. Take all the time you need.” She then left.

As we entered the room where Tyson lay, we saw our lifeless little bundle of joy. It seemed as though he had a celestial glow around his little body. He was so radiant and pure.

At that moment it felt as if our world had come to an end. How could we return to the other children and somehow try to explain that Tyson wasn’t coming home?

I will speak in the singular as I relate the rest of this experience. My

angel wife and I experienced this trial together, but I am inadequate in expressing the feelings of a mother and would not even try to do so.

It is impossible to describe the mixture of feelings that I had at that point in my life. Most of the time I felt as if I were in a bad dream and that I would soon wake up and this terrible nightmare would be over. For many nights I didn’t sleep. I often wandered in the night from one room to the other, making sure that our other children were all safe.

Feelings of guilt racked my soul. I felt so guilty. I felt dirty. I was his father; I should have done more to protect him. If only I would have done this or that. Sometimes even today, 22 years later, those feelings begin to creep into my heart, and I need to get rid of them quickly because they can be destructive.

About a month after Tyson died, I had an interview with Elder Dean L. Larsen. He took the time to listen to me, and I will always be grateful for his counsel and love. He said, “I don’t think the Lord would want you to punish yourself for the death of your little boy.” I felt the love of my Heavenly Father through one of his chosen vessels.

However, tormenting thoughts continued to plague me, and I soon began to feel anger. “This isn’t fair! How could God do this to me? Why me? What did I do to deserve this?” I even felt myself get angry with people who were just trying to comfort us. I remember friends saying, “I know how you feel.” I would think to myself, “You have no idea how I feel. Just leave me alone.” I soon found that self-pity can also be very debilitating. I was ashamed of myself for having unkind thoughts about dear friends who were only trying to help.



As I felt the guilt, anger, and self-pity trying to consume me, I prayed that my heart could change. Through very personal sacred experiences, the Lord gave me a new heart, and even though it was still lonely and painful, my whole outlook changed. I was given to know that I had not been robbed but rather that there was a great blessing awaiting me if I would prove faithful.

My life started to change, and I was able to look forward with hope, rather than look backward with despair. I testify that this life is not the end. The spirit world is real. The teachings of the prophets regarding life after death are true. This life is but a transitory step forward on our journey back to our Heavenly Father.

Tyson has remained a very integral part of our family. Through the years it has been wonderful to see the mercy and kindness of a loving Father in Heaven, who has allowed our family to feel in very tangible ways the influence of Tyson. I testify that the veil is thin. The same feelings of loyalty, love, and family unity don't end as our loved ones pass to the other side; instead, those feelings are intensified.

Sometimes people will ask, "How long did it take you to get over it?" The truth is, you will never completely get over it until you are together once again with your departed loved ones.

I will never have a fulness of joy until we are reunited in the morning of the First Resurrection.

"For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy;

"And when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy."³

But in the meantime, as the Savior taught, we can continue with good cheer.⁴

I have learned that the bitter, almost unbearable pain can become sweet as you turn to your Father in Heaven and plead for His comfort that comes through His plan; His Son, Jesus Christ; and His Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost.

What a glorious blessing this is in our lives. Wouldn't it be tragic if we didn't feel great sorrow when we lose a child? How grateful I am to my Father in Heaven that He allows us to love deeply and love eternally. How grateful I am for eternal families. How grateful I am that He has revealed once again through His living prophets the glorious plan of redemption.

Remember as you attended the funeral of your loved one the feelings in your heart as you drove away from the cemetery and looked back to see that solitary casket—wondering if your heart would break.

I testify that because of Him, even our Savior, Jesus Christ, those feelings of sorrow, loneliness, and despair will one day be swallowed up in a fulness of joy. I testify that we can depend on Him and when He said:

"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."⁵

I testify that, as stated in *Preach My Gospel*, "as we rely on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, He can help us endure our trials, sicknesses, and pain. We can be filled with joy, peace, and consolation. All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."⁶

I testify that on that bright, glorious morning of the First Resurrection, your loved ones and mine will come forth from the grave as promised by the Lord Himself and we will have a fulness of joy. Because He lives, they and we shall live also. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Moroni 8:10–12.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 176.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 93:33–34.
4. See John 16:33.
5. John 14:18–19.
6. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.



By Elder Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Ask the Missionaries! They Can Help You!

All missionaries, younger and older, serve with the sole hope of making life better for other people.

My beloved brothers, sisters, and friends, we extend our love and greetings to each of you. We are thrilled with President Thomas S. Monson's announcement this morning, which adjusts the minimum age for missionary service to 18 for young men and 19 for young women. Through this option, more of our youth may enjoy the blessings of a mission.

Two years ago and powerfully reaffirmed again this morning, President Monson declared "that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much."¹ Again he explained that for young sisters, a mission is a welcome option but not a responsibility. And again he invited many more mature couples to serve.

Preparation for a mission is important. A mission is a voluntary act of service to God and humankind. Missionaries support that privilege with their personal savings. Parents, families, friends, and donors to the General Missionary Fund may also assist. All missionaries, younger and

older, serve with the sole hope of making life better for other people.

The decision to serve a mission will shape the spiritual destiny of the missionary, his or her spouse, and their posterity for generations to come. A desire to serve is a natural outcome of one's conversion, worthiness, and preparation.

In this great worldwide audience, many of you are not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and know very little about us and our missionaries. You are here or tuned in because you want to know more about the Mormons and what our missionaries teach. As you learn more about us, you will find that we share many of the same values. We encourage you to keep all that is good and true and then see if we can add more. In this world filled with challenges, we do need help from time to time. Religion, eternal truth, and our missionaries are vital parts of that help.

Our young missionaries set aside their education, occupation, dating, and whatever else young adults would typically be doing at this stage of life. For 18 to 24 months they put it all on hold because of their deep desire to serve

the Lord.² And some of our missionaries serve in their more mature years of life. I know their families are blessed. In our own family, eight are currently serving as full-time missionaries—three daughters, their husbands, one granddaughter, and one grandson.

Some of you may wonder about the name *Mormon*. It is a nickname for us. It is not our real name, though we are widely known as Mormons. The term is derived from a book of sacred scripture known as the Book of Mormon.

The true name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the reestablished original Church of Jesus Christ. When He walked upon the earth, He organized His Church. He called Apostles, Seventies, and other leaders to whom He gave priesthood authority to act in His name.³ After Christ and His Apostles passed away, men changed the ordinances and doctrine. The original Church and the priesthood were lost. After the Dark Ages, and under the direction of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ brought back His Church. Now it lives again, restored and functioning under His divine direction.⁴

We follow the Lord Jesus Christ and teach of Him. We know that after His glorious triumph over death, the resurrected Lord appeared to His disciples on numerous occasions. He ate with them. He walked with them. Before His final Ascension, He commissioned them to "go . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."⁵ The Apostles heeded that instruction. They also called upon others to help them fulfill the Lord's command.

Today, under the direction of modern apostles and prophets, that same charge has been extended to



Milan, Italy

missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These missionaries serve in more than 150 nations. As representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, they strive to fulfill that divine command—renewed in our day by the Lord Himself—to take the fulness of the gospel abroad and bless the lives of people everywhere.⁶

Missionaries in their late teens or early 20s are young in ways of the world. But they are blessed with gifts—such as the power of the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and testimonies of the truth—that make them powerful ambassadors of the Lord. They share the good news of the gospel that will bring true joy and everlasting happiness to all who heed their message. And in many instances they do so in a country and a language foreign to them.

Missionaries strive to follow Jesus Christ in both word and deed. They preach of Jesus Christ and of His Atonement.⁷ They teach of the literal

Restoration of Christ’s ancient Church through the Lord’s first latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith.

You may have previously encountered, or even ignored, our missionaries. My hope is that you will not fear them but learn from them. They can be a heaven-sent resource to you.

That happened to Jerry, a Protestant gentleman in his mid-60s who lives in Mesa, Arizona. Jerry’s father was a Baptist minister; his mother, a Methodist minister. One day Jerry’s close friend Pricilla shared with him the pain she felt from the death of her child during childbirth and a bitter divorce that occurred shortly thereafter. Struggling as a single mother, Pricilla has four children—three daughters and a son. As she opened her heart to Jerry, she confessed that she was thinking of taking her own life. With all the strength and love Jerry could muster, he tried to help her understand that her life had value. He invited her to attend his church,

but Pricilla explained that she had given up on God.

Jerry did not know what to do. Later, while watering trees in his yard, this man of faith prayed to God for guidance. As he prayed, he heard a voice in his mind saying, “Stop the boys on the bikes.” Jerry, a little bewildered, wondered what this meant. As he reflected on this impression, he gazed up the street and saw two young men in white shirts and ties riding bicycles toward his home. Stunned by this “coincidence,” he watched them ride by. Then, realizing that the situation required him to act, he shouted out, “Hey, you, please stop! I need to talk to you!”

With a puzzled but excited look, the young men stopped. As they approached, Jerry noticed that they wore name tags identifying them as missionaries in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Jerry looked at them and said, “This may sound a little weird, but I was praying and was

told to ‘stop the boys on the bikes.’ I looked up the street, and here you are. Can you help me?”

The missionaries smiled, and one said, “Yes, I am sure we can.”

Jerry explained the worrisome plight of Pricilla. Soon the missionaries were meeting with Pricilla, her children, and Jerry. They discussed the purpose of life and God’s eternal plan for them. Jerry, Pricilla, and her children grew in faith through sincere prayer, their study of the Book of Mormon, and the loving fellowship with members of the Church. Jerry’s already strong faith in Jesus Christ grew even stronger. Pricilla’s doubts and thoughts of suicide turned to hope and happiness. They were baptized and became members of Christ’s restored Church.⁸

Yes, missionaries can help in many ways. For example, some of you might want to know more about your ancestors. You may know the names of your parents and your four grandparents, but what about your eight great-grandparents? Do you know

their names? Would you like to know more about them? Ask the missionaries! They can help you!⁹ They have ready access to the vast family history records of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Some of you are members but not presently participating. You love the Lord and often think of returning to His fold. But you don’t know how to start. I suggest that you ask the missionaries!¹⁰ They can help you! They can also help by teaching your loved ones. We and the missionaries love you and desire to bring joy and the light of the gospel back into your lives.

Some of you may want to know how to conquer an addiction or live longer and enjoy better health. Ask the missionaries! They can help you! Independent studies have shown that, as a group, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a healthy lot. Their death rates are among the lowest and their longevity greater than any yet reported in any well-defined group studied over a lengthy period of time in the United States.¹¹

Some of you may feel that life is busy and frenetic, yet down deep in your heart you feel a gnawing emptiness, without direction or purpose. Ask the missionaries! They can help you! They can help you to learn more about the true purpose of life—why you are here on earth and where you are going after death. You can learn how the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will bless your life beyond anything you can presently even imagine.

If you have concerns about your family, ask the missionaries! They can help you! Strengthening marriages and families is of utmost importance to Latter-day Saints. Families can be together forever. Ask the missionaries to teach you how this is possible for your family.

Missionaries can also help you with your desire for greater knowledge. The human spirit yearns for enlightenment. Whether truth comes from a scientific laboratory or by revelation from God, we seek it! The glory of God indeed is intelligence.¹²

Increase in learning includes spiritual as well as temporal knowledge. We stress the importance of understanding sacred scriptures. An independent study recently found that Latter-day Saints were the most knowledgeable about Christianity and the Bible.¹³ If you want to understand the Bible better, to understand the Book of Mormon better, and gain a broader comprehension of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, ask the missionaries! They can help you!

Many of you have a deep desire to help people in need. Because we follow Jesus Christ, Latter-day Saints are also compelled by that insatiable urge.¹⁴ Anyone may join with us to help the needy and provide relief to victims of disaster anywhere in the world. If you want to participate, ask the missionaries! They can help you!



And if you want to know more about life after death, about heaven, about God's plan for you; if you want to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ, His Atonement, and the Restoration of His Church as it was originally established, ask the missionaries! They can help you!

I know that God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored. Fervently I pray that God may bless each of you and each of our precious missionaries. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, "As We Meet Together Again," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:3.
3. See Matthew 10:1; Luke 6:13; 10:1; Ephesians 4:11–12.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
5. Matthew 28:19.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:8; 84:62; 112:28.
7. See 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Nephi 25:26.
8. Personal communication from W. Tracy Watson, former president of the Arizona Mesa Mission.
9. Where I have phrased the invitation to "ask the missionaries," you could also ask a friend who is a member of the Church for assistance.
10. Actively participating relatives, friends, and Church leaders would also be pleased to assist.
11. See James E. Enstrom and Lester Breslow, "Lifestyle and Reduced Mortality among Active California Mormons, 1980–2004," *Preventive Medicine*, vol. 46 (2008), 135.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.
13. See *U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey* (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Sept. 28, 2010), 7.
14. See Ram Cnaan, Van Evans, and Daniel W. Curtis, *Called to Serve: The Prosocial Behavior of Active Latter-day Saints* (University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice, 2012); "Mormon Volunteerism Highlighted in New Study" (Mar. 16, 2012), <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormon-volunteerism-report>; *Mormons in America: Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society* (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Jan. 12, 2012), 43; Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (2010), 444–54.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

Of Regrets and Resolutions

The more we devote ourselves to the pursuit of holiness and happiness, the less likely we will be on a path to regrets.

Of Regrets

President Monson, we love you. Thank you for the inspired and historic announcement on the building of new temples and missionary service. Because of them, I'm sure great blessings will come to us and to many future generations.

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends! We are all mortal. I hope this does not come as a surprise to anyone.

None of us will be on earth very long. We have a number of precious years which, in the eternal perspective, barely amount to the blink of an eye.

And then we depart. Our spirits "are taken home to that God who gave [us] life."¹ We lay our bodies down and leave behind the things of this world as we move to the next realm of our existence.

When we are young, it seems that we will live forever. We think there is a limitless supply of sunrises waiting just beyond the horizon, and the future looks to us like an unbroken road stretching endlessly before us.

However, the older we get, the more we tend to look back and marvel at how short that road really is. We wonder how the years could have passed

so quickly. And we begin to think about the choices we made and the things we have done. In the process, we remember many sweet moments that give warmth to our souls and joy to our hearts. But we also remember the regrets—the things we wish we could go back and change.

A nurse who cares for the terminally ill says that she has often asked a simple question of her patients as they prepared to depart this life.

"Do you have any regrets?" she would ask.²

Being so close to that final day of mortality often gives clarity to thought and provides insight and perspective. So when these people were asked about their regrets, they opened their hearts. They reflected about what they would change if only they could turn back the clock.

As I considered what they had said, it struck me how the foundational principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ can affect our life's direction for good, if only we will apply them.

There is nothing mysterious about the principles of the gospel. We have studied them in the scriptures, we have discussed them in Sunday School, and



we have heard them from the pulpit many times. These divine principles and values are straightforward and clear; they are beautiful, profound, and powerful; and they can definitely help us to avoid future regrets.

I Wish I Had Spent More Time with the People I Love

Perhaps the most universal regret dying patients expressed was that they wished they had spent more time with the people they love.

Men in particular sang this universal lament: they “deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the [daily] treadmill of . . . work.”³ Many had lost out on choice memories that come from spending time with family and friends. They missed developing a deep connection with those who meant the most to them.

Isn't it true that we often get so busy? And, sad to say, we even wear our busyness as a badge of honor, as though being busy, by itself, was an accomplishment or sign of a superior life.

Is it?

I think of our Lord and Exemplar, Jesus Christ, and His short life among the people of Galilee and Jerusalem. I have tried to imagine Him bustling between meetings or multitasking to get a list of urgent things accomplished.

I can't see it.

Instead I see the compassionate and caring Son of God purposefully living each day. When He interacted with those around Him, they felt important and loved. He knew the infinite value of the people He met. He blessed them, ministered to them. He lifted them up, healed them. He gave them the precious gift of His time.

In our day it is easy to merely pretend to spend time with others. With the click of a mouse, we can “connect” with thousands of “friends” without ever having to face a single one of them. Technology can be a wonderful thing, and it is very useful when we cannot be near our loved ones. My wife and I live far away from precious family members; we know how that is. However, I believe that we are not headed in the right direction, individually and as a society, when we connect with family or friends mostly by reposting humorous pictures, forwarding trivial things, or linking our loved ones to sites on the Internet. I suppose there is a place for this kind of activity, but how much time are we willing to spend on it? If we fail to give our best personal self and undivided time to those who are truly important to us, one day we will regret it.

Let us resolve to cherish those we

love by spending meaningful time with them, doing things together, and cultivating treasured memories.

I Wish I Had Lived Up to My Potential

Another regret people expressed was that they failed to become the person they felt they could and should have been. When they looked back on their lives, they realized that they never lived up to their potential, that too many songs remained unsung.

I am not speaking here of climbing the ladder of success in our various professions. That ladder, no matter how lofty it may appear on this earth, barely amounts to a single step in the great eternal journey awaiting us.

Rather, I am speaking of becoming the person God, our Heavenly Father, intended us to be.

We arrive in this world, as the poet said, “trailing clouds of glory”⁴ from the premortal sphere.

Our Heavenly Father sees our real potential. He knows things about us that we do not know ourselves. He prompts us during our lifetime to fulfill the measure of our creation, to live a good life, and to return to His presence.

Why, then, do we devote so much of our time and energy to things that are so fleeting, so inconsequential,

and so superficial? Do we refuse to see the folly in the pursuit of the trivial and transient?

Would it not be wiser for us to “lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”?⁵

How do we do this? By following the example of the Savior, by incorporating His teachings in our daily lives, by truly loving God and our fellowman.

We certainly cannot do this with a dragging-our-feet, staring-at-our-watch, complaining-as-we-go approach to discipleship.

When it comes to living the gospel, we should not be like the boy who dipped his toe in the water and then claimed he went swimming. As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we are capable of so much more. For that, good intentions are not enough. We must *do*. Even more important, we must *become* what Heavenly Father wants us to be.

Declaring our testimony of the gospel is good, but being a living example of the restored gospel is better. Wishing to be more faithful to our covenants is good; actually being faithful to sacred covenants—including living a virtuous life, paying our tithes and offerings, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and serving those in need—is much better. Announcing that we will dedicate more time for family prayer, scripture study, and wholesome family activities is good; but actually doing all these things steadily will bring heavenly blessings to our lives.

Discipleship is the pursuit of holiness and happiness. It is the path to our best and happiest self.

Let us resolve to follow the Savior and work with diligence to become the person we were designed to become.

Let us listen to and obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As we do so, Heavenly Father will reveal to us things we never knew about ourselves. He will illuminate the path ahead and open our eyes to see our unknown and perhaps unimagined talents.

The more we devote ourselves to the pursuit of holiness and happiness, the less likely we will be on a path to regrets. The more we rely on the Savior’s grace, the more we will feel that we are on the track our Father in Heaven has intended for us.

I Wish I Had Let Myself Be Happier

Another regret of those who knew they were dying may be somewhat surprising. They wished they had let themselves be happier.

So often we get caught up in the illusion that there is something just beyond our reach that would bring us happiness: a better family situation, a better financial situation, or the end of a challenging trial.

The older we get, the more we look back and realize that external circumstances don’t really matter or determine our happiness.

We do matter. *We* determine our happiness.

You and I are ultimately in charge of our own happiness.



My wife, Harriet, and I love riding our bicycles. It is wonderful to get out and enjoy the beauties of nature. We have certain routes we like to bike, but we don’t pay too much attention to how far we go or how fast we travel in comparison with other riders.

However, occasionally I think we should be a bit more competitive. I even think we could get a better time or ride at a higher speed if only we pushed ourselves a little more. And then sometimes I even make the big mistake of mentioning this idea to my wonderful wife.

Her typical reaction to my suggestions of this nature is always very kind, very clear, and very direct. She smiles and says, “Dieter, it’s not a race; it’s a journey. Enjoy the moment.”

How right she is!

Sometimes in life we become so focused on the finish line that we fail to find joy in the journey. I don’t go cycling with my wife because I’m excited about finishing. I go because the experience of being with her is sweet and enjoyable.

Doesn’t it seem foolish to spoil sweet and joyful experiences because we are constantly anticipating the moment when they will end?

Do we listen to beautiful music waiting for the final note to fade before we allow ourselves to truly enjoy it? No. We listen and connect to the variations of melody, rhythm, and harmony throughout the composition.

Do we say our prayers with only the “amen” or the end in mind? Of course not. We pray to be close to our Heavenly Father, to receive His Spirit and feel His love.

We shouldn’t wait to be happy until we reach some future point, only to discover that happiness was already



Yes, this life is passing swiftly; our days seem to fade quickly; and death appears frightening at times. Nevertheless, our spirit will continue to live and will one day be united with our resurrected body to receive immortal glory. I bear solemn witness that because of the merciful Christ, we will all live again and forever. Because of our Savior and Redeemer, one day we will truly understand and rejoice in the meaning of the words “the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ.”¹⁴

The path toward fulfilling our divine destiny as sons and daughters of God is an eternal one. My dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, we must begin to walk that eternal path *today*; we cannot take for granted one single day. I pray that we will not wait until we are ready to die before we truly learn to live. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Alma 40:11.
2. See Susie Steiner, “Top Five Regrets of the Dying,” *Guardian*, Feb. 1, 2012, www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/01/top-five-regrets-of-the-dying.
3. Bronnie Ware, in Steiner, “Top Five Regrets of the Dying.”
4. “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,” *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1924), 359.
5. Matthew 6:20.
6. Psalm 118:24.
7. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Richard Howard (2000), 63.
8. Mosiah 26:39; see also Doctrine and Covenants 59:7.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.
10. Alma 26:35.
11. See Revelation 7:17.
12. See Matthew 11:28–30.
13. See Psalm 24:4.
14. Mosiah 16:8; see also 1 Corinthians 15:54.



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code to watch or share a short video clip (1–2 minutes) of this message.

available—all the time! Life is not meant to be appreciated only in retrospect. “This is the day which the Lord hath made . . .,” the Psalmist wrote. “Rejoice and be glad in it.”⁶

Brothers and sisters, no matter our circumstances, no matter our challenges or trials, there is something in each day to embrace and cherish. There is something in each day that can bring gratitude and joy if only we will see and appreciate it.

Perhaps we should be looking less with our eyes and more with our hearts. I love the quote: “One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes.”⁷

We are commanded “to give thanks in all things.”⁸ So isn’t it better to see with our eyes and hearts even the small things we *can* be thankful for, rather than magnifying the negative in our current condition?

The Lord has promised, “He who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold.”⁹

Brothers and sisters, with the bountiful blessings of our Heavenly Father, His generous plan of salvation, the supernal truths of the restored gospel, and the many beauties of this mortal journey, “have we not reason to rejoice?”¹⁰

Let us resolve to be happy, regardless of our circumstances.

Of Resolutions

One day we will take that unavoidable step and cross from this mortal sphere into the next estate. One day we will look back at our lives and wonder if we could have been better, made better decisions, or used our time more wisely.

To avoid some of the deepest regrets of life, it would be wise to make some resolutions today. Therefore, let us:

- Resolve to spend more time with those we love.
- Resolve to strive more earnestly to become the person God wants us to be.
- Resolve to find happiness, regardless of our circumstances.

It is my testimony that many of the deepest regrets of tomorrow can be prevented by following the Savior today. If we have sinned or made mistakes—if we have made choices that we now regret—there is the precious gift of Christ’s Atonement, through which we can be forgiven. We cannot go back in time and change the past, but we can repent. The Savior can wipe away our tears of regret¹¹ and remove the burden of our sins.¹² His Atonement allows us to leave the past behind and move forward with clean hands, a pure heart,¹³ and a determination to do better and especially to become better.



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

The Sustaining of Church Officers

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen.

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so indicate.

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

All in favor, please manifest it.

Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Elder Jay E. Jensen has been released as a member of the

Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

Those who can join with us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Craig C. Christensen as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of appreciation for his excellent service Elder Marlin K. Jensen as Church Historian and Recorder.

All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Steven E. Snow as Church Historian and Recorder.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed.

It is proposed that we release Elders Keith K. Hilbig, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, and Octaviano Tenorio as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

It is proposed that we release Elders Keith R. Edwards and Larry W. Gibbons as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

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

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

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may manifest it.

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





By Elder L. Tom Perry
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Becoming Goodly Parents

There are many ways that goodly parents can access the help and support they need to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to their children.

I reached a special milestone this summer—I observed my 90th birthday. As you reach certain milestones in your life, it is helpful and instructive to reflect on the events and experiences of the past. You young people listening to or reading this talk may not be too impressed with 90 years of life, but at the time I was born, living this long was considered a great achievement. Every day I am grateful to Heavenly Father for blessing me with a long life.

So much has changed during my lifetime. I have seen the development of the industrial age and the information age. Mass-produced automobiles and telephones and airplanes were great innovations of my early days. Today the way we find, share, and use information changes almost daily. At my age I marvel at the rapidly changing world in which we all live. So many of today's breakthroughs excite the imagination with their potential to better our lives.

Through all the fast-paced changes occurring around us, we earnestly pray and work to ensure that the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ

endure. Already some of them are in jeopardy of being lost. At the top of the list of these values and, therefore, prime targets of the adversary, are the sanctity of marriage and the central importance of families. They provide an anchor and the safe harbor of a home where each child of a loving Heavenly Father can be influenced for good and acquire eternal values.

My own family, anticipating the celebration of this 90-year milestone in my life, started helping me remember and appreciate the experiences of my long life. For example, my niece gathered and shared with me several letters that I had written to my parents nearly 70 years ago from my marine outpost on the island of Saipan in the Pacific during World War II.

One of these letters particularly caught my eye. It was a letter I wrote to my mother for her to open and read on Mother's Day 1945. I would like to share some excerpts with you in the hope you will see why I will ever be grateful to my loving father and mother for the lessons I learned from their teaching in the home. My parents are the defining example I

retain of goodly parents who placed their marriage and the proper rearing of children as their highest priority.

My Mother's Day 1945 letter began:

"Dear Mom,

"For the last four years I have had the great misfortune of spending Mother's Day away from you. Each year I have wanted to be with you and tell you just how I love you and how much I think of you, but since it is once again impossible, I will have to do the next best thing and send my thoughts through the mail.

"This year more than any of the others I can see just what having a wonderful mother has done for me. First of all, I miss the little things you used to do for me. Whenever I got out of bed in the morning, I never had to worry about whether I'd find a clean shirt and clean socks. All that I had to do is open a drawer, and I would find them. At mealtime I always knew that I would find something I liked, prepared the best way possible. At night I always knew that I would find clean sheets on my bed and just the right amount of covers to keep me very comfortable. Living at home was really a great pleasure."

When I read these first two paragraphs of the letter, I was shocked by how sentimental they sounded. Perhaps living in a tent and sleeping under a mosquito net on a camp cot had my thoughts returning to my very special home.

My letter to my mother continued:

"But deeper is the feeling for you because of the example you set for me. Life was made so enjoyable for us as a family that we wanted to follow in your footsteps, to continue on through experiencing the same joy that had been ours in our younger days. You always found time to take the family into the canyon, and we



could count on you to do anything from climbing mountains to playing ball with us. You and Dad were never going on vacations alone. The family was always with you. Now that I am away from home, I always like to talk about my home life because it was so enjoyable. I couldn't turn from your teachings now because my actions would reflect on your character. Life is a great challenge to me to be worthy to be called the son of Nora Sonne Perry. I am very proud of this title, and I hope that I will always be worthy of it.

"I hope that next year finds me with you to show you the good time I have been planning to show you on Mother's Day for the past four years.

"May the Lord bless you for all the wonderful things you have done for this troubled world.

"All my love, Tom"¹

As I reread my letter, I also reflected on the culture of the family, the ward, the stake, and the community in which I was raised.

Culture is defined as the way of life of a people. There is a unique gospel culture, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This gospel culture, or way of life, comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of living prophets. It is given expression in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives.

The first instruction to Adam for his mortal responsibility is found in Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

The joining together of a man and a woman to be legally and lawfully wed not only is preparation for future generations to inherit the earth, but it also brings the greatest joy and satisfaction that can be found in this mortal experience. This is especially true when the powers of the priesthood proclaim a marriage to be for time and

for all eternity. Children born to such marriages have a security that is found nowhere else.

Lessons taught in the home by goodly parents are becoming increasingly important in today's world, where the influence of the adversary is so widespread. As we know, he is attempting to erode and destroy the very foundation of our society—the family. In clever and carefully camouflaged ways, he is attacking commitment to family life throughout the world and undermining the culture and covenants of faithful Latter-day Saints. Parents must resolve that teaching in the home is a most sacred and important responsibility. While other institutions such as church and school can assist parents to "train up a child in the way he [or she] should go" (Proverbs 22:6), this responsibility ultimately rests on the parents. According to the great plan of happiness, it is goodly parents who are entrusted with the care and development of Heavenly Father's children.

In our remarkable parental stewardship, there are many ways that goodly parents can access the help and support they need to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to their children. Let me suggest five things parents can do to create stronger family cultures:

First, parents can pray in earnest, asking our Eternal Father to help them love, understand, and guide the children He has sent to them.

Second, they can hold family prayer, scripture study, and family home evenings and eat together as often as possible, making dinner a time of communication and the teaching of values.

Third, parents can fully avail themselves of the Church's support network, communicating with their children's Primary teachers, youth leaders, and class and quorum presidencies. By communicating with those who are called and set apart to work with their children, parents can provide essential understanding of a child's special and specific needs.

Fourth, parents can share their testimonies often with their children, commit them to keep the commandments of God, and promise the blessings that our Heavenly Father promises His faithful children.

Fifth, we can organize our families based on clear, simple family rules and expectations, wholesome family traditions and rituals, and "family economics," where children have household responsibilities and can earn allowances so that they can learn to budget, save, and pay tithing on the money they earn.

These suggestions for creating stronger *family cultures* work in tandem with the culture of the Church. Our strengthened family cultures will be a protection for our children from "the fiery darts of the adversary"



(1 Nephi 15:24) embedded in their peer culture, the entertainment and celebrity cultures, the credit and entitlement cultures, and the Internet and media cultures to which they are constantly exposed. Strong family cultures will help our children live in the world and not become "of the world" (John 15:19).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "It is the duty of parents to teach their children these saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that they will know why they are to be baptized and that they may be impressed in their hearts with a desire to continue to keep the commandments of God after they are baptized, that they may come back into his presence. Do you, my good brethren and sisters, want your families, your children; do you want to be sealed to your fathers and your mothers before you . . . ? If so, then you must begin by teaching at the cradle-side. You are to teach by example as well as precept."²

The proclamation on the family says: "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. . . .

". . . By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."³

I believe it is by divine design that the role of motherhood emphasizes the nurturing and teaching of the next generation. But it is wonderful to see husbands and wives who have worked out real partnerships where they blend together their influence and communicate effectively both about their children and to their children.

The onslaught of wickedness against our children is more subtle and brazen than it has ever been. Building a strong family culture adds another layer of protection for our children, insulating them from worldly influences.

God bless you goodly mothers and fathers in Zion. He has entrusted to your care His eternal children. As parents we partner, even join, with God in bringing to pass His work and glory among His children. It is our sacred duty to do our very best. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mother's Day letter from L. Tom Perry to his mother, sent from Saipan, dated May 3, 1945.
2. Joseph Fielding Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1948, 153.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.



By Elder M. Russell Ballard
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Be Anxiously Engaged

Great things are brought about and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands “anxiously engaged in a good cause.”

Elder Perry, I think you must be the youngest 90-year-old in the whole Church. You noticed how he jumped out of his chair.

My beloved brothers and sisters, each time I enjoy a fresh, vine-ripened tomato or eat a juicy peach right off the tree, my thoughts go back 60 years to when my father owned a small peach orchard in Holladay, Utah. He kept beehives there to pollinate the peach blossoms that would eventually grow into very large, delicious peaches.

Father loved his gentle honeybees and marveled at the way thousands of them working together transformed the nectar gathered from his peach blossoms into sweet, golden honey—one of nature’s most beneficial foods. In fact, nutritionists tell us it is one of the foods that includes all the substances—enzymes, vitamins, minerals, and water—necessary to sustain life.

My father always tried to involve me in his work with his hives, but I was very happy to let him tend to his bees. However, since those days, I have learned more about the highly organized beehive—a colony of about 60,000 bees.

Honeybees are driven to pollinate, gather nectar, and condense

the nectar into honey. It is their magnificent obsession imprinted into their genetic makeup by our Creator. It is estimated that to produce just one pound (0.45 kg) of honey, the average hive of 20,000 to 60,000 bees must collectively visit millions of flowers and travel the equivalent of two times around the world. Over its short lifetime of just a few weeks to four months, a single honeybee’s contribution of honey to its hive is a mere one-twelfth of one teaspoon.

Though seemingly insignificant when compared to the total, each

bee’s one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey is vital to the life of the hive. The bees depend on each other. Work that would be overwhelming for a few bees to do becomes lighter because all of the bees faithfully do their part.

The beehive has always been an important symbol in our Church history. We learn in the Book of Mormon that the Jaredites carried honeybees with them (see Ether 2:3) when they journeyed to the Americas thousands of years ago. Brigham Young chose the beehive as a symbol to encourage and inspire the cooperative energy necessary among the pioneers to transform the barren desert wasteland surrounding the Great Salt Lake into the fertile valleys we have today. We are the beneficiaries of their collective vision and industry.

The beehive symbol is found in both the interiors and exteriors of many of our temples. This podium where I stand is made from the wood of a walnut tree grown in President Gordon B. Hinckley’s backyard and is adorned with carved beehive images.

All of this symbolism attests to one fact: great things are brought about





and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands “anxiously engaged in a good cause” (D&C 58:27). Imagine what the millions of Latter-day Saints could accomplish in the world if we functioned like a beehive in our focused, concentrated commitment to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Savior taught that the first and great commandment is:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37, 39–40).

The Savior’s words are simple, yet their meaning is profound and deeply significant. We are to love God and to love and care for our neighbors as ourselves. Imagine what good we can do in the world if we all join together, united as followers of Christ, anxiously and busily responding to the needs of others and serving those around us—our families, our friends, our neighbors, our fellow citizens.

As the Epistle of James notes, service is the very definition of pure religion (see James 1:27).

We read of the service Church members provide around the world and especially the humanitarian service given in times of crisis—fires and floods and hurricanes and tornadoes. These much-needed and much-appreciated emergency responses should certainly continue as a way

of bearing one another’s burdens. But what about our everyday lives? What would be the cumulative effect of millions of small, compassionate acts performed daily by us because of our heartfelt Christian love for others? Over time this would have a transformative effect upon all of our Heavenly Father’s children through the extension of His love to them through us. Our troubled world needs this love of Christ today more than ever, and it will need it even more in the years ahead.

These simple, daily acts of service may not seem like much in and of themselves, but when considered collectively they become just like the one-twelfth teaspoon of honey contributed by a single bee to the hive. There is power in our love for God and for His children, and when that love is tangibly manifest in millions of acts of Christian kindness, it will sweeten and nourish the world with the life-sustaining nectar of faith, hope, and charity.

What do we need to do to become like the dedicated honeybees and have that dedication become part of our nature? Many of us are dutiful in attending our Church meetings. We work hard in our callings and especially on Sundays. That is surely to be commended. But are our minds and our hearts just as anxiously engaged in good things during the rest of the week? Do we just go through the motions, or are we truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do we take the seed of faith that has been nurtured in our

minds and plant it deep in the fertile soil of our souls? How do we make the mighty change of heart that Alma says is essential for our eternal happiness and peace? (see Alma 5:12–21).

Remember, honey contains all of the substances necessary to sustain mortal life. And the doctrine and gospel of Christ is the only way to obtain eternal life. Only when our testimony transcends what is in our mind and burrows deep into our heart will our motivation to love and to serve become like unto the Savior’s. It is then, and only then, that we become deeply converted disciples of Christ empowered by the Spirit to reach the hearts of our fellowmen.

When our hearts are no longer set upon the things of this world, we will no longer aspire to the honors of men or seek only to gratify our pride (see D&C 121:35–37). Rather, we take on the Christlike qualities that Jesus taught:

- We are gentle and meek and long-suffering (see D&C 121:41).
- We are kind, without hypocrisy or guile (see D&C 121:42).
- We feel charity toward all men (see D&C 121:45).
- Our thoughts are always virtuous (see D&C 121:45).
- We no longer desire to do evil (see Mosiah 5:2).
- The Holy Ghost is our constant companion, and the doctrines of the priesthood distill upon our souls as the dew from heaven (see D&C 121:45–46).

Now, brothers and sisters, I’m not encouraging religious zealotry or fanaticism. Quite the contrary! I’m simply suggesting that we take the next logical step in our complete conversion to the gospel of Christ by

assimilating its doctrines deep within our hearts and our souls so we will act and live consistently—and with integrity—what we profess to believe.

This integrity simplifies our lives and amplifies our sensitivities to the Spirit and to the needs of others. It brings joy into our lives and peace to our souls—the kind of joy and peace that comes to us as we repent of our sins and follow the Savior by keeping His commandments.

How do we make this change? How do we engrain this love of Christ into our hearts? There is one simple daily practice that can make a difference for every member of the Church, including you boys and girls, you young men and you young women, you single adults, and you fathers and mothers.

That simple practice is: In your morning prayer each new day, ask

Heavenly Father to guide you to recognize an opportunity to serve one of His precious children. Then go throughout the day with your heart full of faith and love, looking for someone to help. Stay focused, just like the honeybees focus on the flowers from which to gather nectar and pollen. If you do this, your spiritual sensitivities will be enlarged and you will discover opportunities to serve that you never before realized were possible.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught that in many instances Heavenly Father answers another person's prayers through us—through you and me—through our kind words and deeds, through our simple acts of service and love.

And President Spencer W. Kimball said: “God does notice us, and he

watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 82).

I know that if you do this—at home, at school, at work, and at church—the Spirit will guide you, and you will be able to discern those in need of a particular service that only you may be able to give. You will be prompted by the Spirit and magnificently motivated to help pollinate the world with the pure love of Christ and His gospel.

And remember, like the little honeybee's one-twelfth teaspoon of honey provided to the hive, if we multiply our efforts by tens of thousands, even millions of prayerful efforts to share God's love for His children through Christian service, there will be a compounding effect of good that will bring the Light of Christ to this ever-darkening world. Bound together, we will bring love and compassion to our own family and to the lonely, the poor, the broken, and to those of our Heavenly Father's children who are searching for truth and peace.

It is my humble prayer, brothers and sisters, that we will ask in our daily prayers for the inspiration to find someone for whom we can provide some meaningful service, including the service of sharing the gospel truths and our testimonies. At the end of each day, may we be able to say yes to the questions: “Have I done any good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need?” (*Hymns*, no. 223).

This is God's work. May we be about it as faithfully as the dedicated little honeybees go about theirs, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Mexico City, Mexico



By Elder Larry Echo Hawk
Of the Seventy

“Come unto Me, O Ye House of Israel”

As we come unto our Savior, Jesus Christ, and purify our hearts, we will all be instruments in fulfilling the mighty promises of the Book of Mormon.

I volunteered for service in the United States Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. Soon after my arrival in Quantico, Virginia, for basic training, I found myself standing at attention in front of my barrack's bunk along with 54 other Marine Corps recruits. I met my drill instructor, a battle-hardened veteran, when he kicked open the door to the barracks and entered while screaming words laced with profanity.

After this terrifying introduction, he started at one end of the barracks and confronted each recruit with questions. Without exception, the drill instructor methodically found something about each recruit to ridicule with loud, vulgar language. Down the row he came, with each marine shouting back his answer as commanded: “Yes” or “No, Sergeant Instructor.” I could not see exactly what he was doing, because we had been ordered to stand at attention with our eyes looking straight ahead. When it was my turn, I could tell he grabbed my duffel bag and emptied the contents onto my mattress behind me. He looked through my belongings, then

walked back to face me. I braced myself for his attack. In his hand was my Book of Mormon. I expected that he would yell at me; instead, he moved close to me and whispered, “Are you a Mormon?”

As commanded, I yelled, “Yes, Sergeant Instructor.”

Again I expected the worst. Instead, he paused and raised his hand that held my Book of Mormon and in a very quiet voice said, “Do you believe in this book?”

Again I shouted, “Yes, Sergeant Instructor.”

At this point I was sure he would scream disparaging words about Mormons and the Book of Mormon, but he just stood there in silence. After a moment he walked back to my bunk and carefully laid down my Book of Mormon. He then proceeded to walk by me without stopping and went on to ridicule and disparage with profane language all remaining recruits.

I have often wondered why that tough Marine Corps sergeant spared me that day. But I am grateful I was able to say without hesitation, “Yes, I am a member of The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints” and “Yes, I know the Book of Mormon is true.” This testimony is a precious gift given to me through the Holy Ghost with the help of two missionaries and a priests quorum adviser.

When I was 14 years old, two missionaries, Lee Pearson and Boyd Camphuysen, taught my family the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, and I was baptized. Two years later my priests quorum adviser, Richard Boren, challenged me to read the Book of Mormon. I accepted that challenge, and I read at least 10 pages every night until I finished.

On the title page I read that it is “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile.” In the introduction to the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, it says that the Lamanites “are among the ancestors of the American Indians.” As I read the Book of Mormon, it seemed to me that it was about my American Indian ancestors. It tells the story of a people, a part of which were later described as “Lamanites,” who migrated from Jerusalem to a “land of promise” (1 Nephi 2:20) about 600 B.C. It is an account of God's dealings with these ancient inhabitants located somewhere on the American continents. It includes an account of the ministry of Jesus Christ among them following His Resurrection. Passages in the Book of Mormon suggest that over time they were dispersed throughout the American continents and islands of the nearby seas (see Alma 63:9–10). Their prophets foretold that many multitudes of Gentiles would eventually come to this land of promise and the wrath of God would be upon the Lamanites and they would be scattered, smitten, and nearly destroyed (see 1 Nephi 13:10–14).



My great-grandfather Echo Hawk, a Pawnee Indian, was born in the mid-1800s in what is now called Nebraska. When he was 19 years of age, the Pawnee people were forced to give up their 23-million-acre (9.3 million ha) homeland to make room for settlers. In 1874 the Pawnee people were marched several hundred miles south to a small reservation located in the Oklahoma Indian Territory. The population of Pawnee people had declined from over 12,000 to less than 700 upon their arrival in Oklahoma. The Pawnee, like other tribes, had been scattered, smitten, and nearly destroyed.

The Book of Mormon has a special message for descendants of the Lamanites, a remnant of the house of Israel. Nephi expressed this message while interpreting his father's vision of these latter days: "And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel,

and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved" (1 Nephi 15:14).

The Book of Mormon is sacred scripture. It contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote that "the Book of Mormon [is] the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 64). Thus, it has a message for all people of the world.

As a 17-year-old boy reading the Book of Mormon for the first time, I

focused on Moroni's promise: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).

As I knelt in prayer, I received a powerful spiritual witness that the Book of Mormon is true. That witness has helped me chart my course through life.

I exhort all people to read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

I especially ask the remnant of the house of Israel, the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon, wherever you may be, to read and reread the Book of Mormon. Learn of the promises contained in the Book of Mormon. Follow the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. Make and keep covenants with the Lord. Seek for and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I close with the words spoken by Amaleki, another Book of Mormon prophet: "And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved" (Omni 1:26).

As we come unto our Savior, Jesus Christ, and purify our hearts, we will all be instruments in fulfilling the mighty promises of the Book of Mormon. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By **Elder Robert C. Gay**
Of the Seventy

What Shall a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?

We are to give up all our sins, big or small, for the Father's reward of eternal life.

The Savior once asked His disciples the following question: “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”¹

This is a question that my father taught me to carefully consider years ago. As I was growing up, my parents assigned me chores around the house and paid me an allowance for that work. I often used that money, a little over 50 cents a week, to go to the movies. Back then a movie ticket cost 25 cents for an 11-year-old. This left me with 25 cents to spend on candy bars, which cost 5 cents apiece. A movie with five candy bars! It couldn't get much better than that.

All was well until I turned 12. Standing in line one afternoon, I realized that the ticket price for a 12-year-old was 35 cents, and that meant two less candy bars. Not quite prepared to make that sacrifice, I reasoned to myself, “You look the same as you did a week ago.” I then stepped up and asked for the 25-cent ticket. The cashier did not blink, and I bought

my regular five candy bars instead of three.

Elated by my accomplishment, I later rushed home to tell my dad about my big coup. As I poured out the details, he said nothing. When I finished, he simply looked at me and said, “Son, would you sell your soul for a nickel?” His words pierced my 12-year-old heart. It is a lesson I have never forgotten.

Years later I found myself asking this same question to a less-active Melchizedek Priesthood holder. He was a wonderful man who loved his family. He, however, had not been to church for many years. He had a talented son who played on an elite travel sports team that practiced and played games on Sunday. That team had won multiple major championships. As we met, I reminded him that, as a priesthood holder, he was promised that if he magnified his oath and covenant, he would receive “all that [our] Father hath.”² I then asked him, “Is a national championship

worth more than all the Father has?” He gently said, “I see your point” and made an appointment to visit with his bishop.

Today it is so easy to get caught up in the noise of the world—despite our good intentions. The world presses us to “[look] beyond the mark.”³ Someone recently asked me, “Does one drink really matter?” Can you see that is the adversary's question? Cain asked, “Who is the Lord that I should know him?”⁴ and then lost his soul. With self-justification of petty sins, Satan triumphs. For a bottle of milk,⁵ a misspelled name,⁶ a mess of pottage,⁷ birthrights and inheritances have been traded.

As we consider the nickel or national-championship exchanges in our lives, we can either self-justify our actions, like Cain, or look to submit to the will of God. The question before us is not whether we are doing things which need correcting, because we always are. Rather, the question is, will we “shrink” or “finish” the call upon our soul to do the will of the Father?⁸

The Lord loves our righteousness but asks of us continued repentance and submission. In the Bible we read that it was a commandment-keeping, wealthy young man who knelt before the Savior and asked what he needed to do to have eternal life. He turned away grieved when the Savior said, “One thing thou lackest: . . . sell whatsoever thou hast.”⁹

Yet, it was another wealthy but worldly man, the chief Lamanite king, the father of Lamoni, who also asked the same question about eternal life, saying: “What shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit[?] . . . I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”¹⁰



Do you remember the response the Lord gave the king through His servant Aaron? "If thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest."¹¹

When the king understood the sacrifice required, he humbled and prostrated himself and then prayed, "O God, . . . I will give away all my sins to know thee."¹²

This is the exchange the Savior is asking of us: we are to give up all our sins, big or small, for the Father's reward of eternal life. We are to forget self-justifying stories, excuses, rationalizations, defense mechanisms, procrastinations, appearances, personal pride, judgmental thoughts, and doing things our way. We are to separate ourselves from all worldliness and take upon us the image of God in our countenances.¹³

Brothers and sisters, remember that this charge is more than just not doing bad things. With an engaged enemy we must also act and not sit in "thoughtless stupor."¹⁴ Taking upon the countenance of God means serving each other. There are sins of commission and sins of omission, and we are to rise above both.

While serving as a mission president in Africa, I was forever taught this great truth. I was on my way to a meeting when I saw a young boy alone, crying hysterically on the side of the road. A voice within me said, "Stop and help that boy." As quick as I heard this voice, in a split second, I rationalized: "You can't stop. You will be late. You're the presiding officer and can't walk in late."

When I arrived at the meeting-house, I heard the same voice say again: "Go help that boy." I then gave my car keys to a Church member named Afasi and asked him to bring

the boy to me. About 20 minutes later, I felt a tap on my shoulder. The young boy was outside.

He was about 10 years of age. We found out his father was dead and his mother was in jail. He lived in the slums of Accra with a caretaker, who gave him food and a place to sleep. To earn his board, he sold dried fish on the streets. But after this day of hawking, when he reached in his pocket, he found a hole in it. He had lost all his earnings. Afasi and I knew immediately that if he returned without the money, he would be called a liar, most likely beaten, and then cast out onto the street. It was in that moment of alarm when I first saw him. We calmed his fears, replaced his loss, and took him back home to his caretaker.

As I went home that evening, I realized 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



directs it through His chosen prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 16:26.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
3. Jacob 4:14.
4. Moses 5:16.
5. A bottle of milk and its strippings (rich in cream) was at the center of a dispute between Thomas B. Marsh's wife and Mrs. Harris, who had agreed to combine resources and make cheese. When Mrs. Harris found that Mrs. Marsh didn't include the strippings with the milk but kept them for herself, Mrs. Harris complained, and the women quarreled. Thomas Marsh took the matter to the bishop, who sided with Mrs. Harris. It went from the bishop to the high council to the First Presidency, all of whom agreed that Mrs. Marsh was in the wrong. This drove a wedge between Thomas Marsh and the Brethren. Soon after that, Thomas Marsh testified before a Missourian magistrate that the Mormons were hostile toward the state of Missouri. (See George A. Smith, "Discourse," *Deseret News*, Apr. 16, 1856, 44.)
6. When the Prophet Joseph Smith issued a call to Simonds Ryder to serve as a missionary, Ryder discovered that his name was spelled "Rider" in the printed revelation. He became offended, and this led to his apostasy and eventual participation in tarring and feathering the Prophet. Ryder didn't know that Joseph Smith usually dictated revelations to his scribes and had no part in the spelling. (See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* [1983], 93–94; Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* [1983], 286.)
7. In Genesis 25 we learn that Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for "bread and pottage of lentiles" (verse 34).
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19.
9. See Mark 10:21–22.
10. Alma 22:15.
11. Alma 22:16.
12. Alma 22:18.
13. See Alma 5:14–19.
14. Alma 60:7.
15. Mark 1:18.
16. Matthew 18:11.
17. Jacob 1:8.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.
19. See Luke 15:11–32.
20. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16.
21. Neal A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* (1976), 88.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:38.

always hearken to the voice of the Spirit within us and go "straightway"¹⁵ wherever it takes us, regardless of our fears or any inconvenience.

One day the disciples asked the Savior who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He told them to be converted, humble, and submissive as little children. He then said, "The Son of man is come to save that which [is] lost."¹⁶ With that one sentence, He defined our mission. We are to go to the rescue—to the lost, the last, and the least. It is not enough to avoid evil; we must "suffer his cross"¹⁷ and "be anxiously engaged,"¹⁸ helping others to conversion. With compassion and love we embrace the prodigal,¹⁹ answer the cries of orphans in hysteria, the pleas of those in darkness and despair,²⁰ and the distress calls of family in need. "Satan need not get everyone to be like Cain or Judas . . ." said Elder Neal A. Maxwell. "He needs only to get able men . . . to see themselves as sophisticated neutrals."²¹

After a recent stake conference, a teenage boy approached me and asked, "Does God love me?" May our lives of service always affirm that God forsakes no one.

To the question, "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Satan would have us sell our lives for the candy bars and championships of this world. The Savior, however, calls us, without price, to exchange our sins, to take upon us His countenance, and to take that into the hearts of those within our reach. For this we may receive all that God has, which we are told is greater than all the combined treasures of this earth.²² Can you even imagine?

On a recent trip to Nicaragua, I noticed a plaque in the modest home of a family we visited. It read, "My testimony is my most precious possession." So it is with me. My testimony is my soul's treasure, and in the integrity of my heart, I leave you my witness that this church is God's true Church, that our Savior stands at its head and



By **Elder Scott D. Whiting**
Of the Seventy

Temple Standard

The high standards of temple building employed by this Church are a type and even a symbol of how we should be living our own lives.

While recently touring the beautiful Brigham City Utah Temple, I was reminded of an experience that I had while serving as the coordinator of the open house, rededication, and cultural celebration of the historic Laie Hawaii Temple.

A few months prior to the completion of the extensive renovation work, I was invited to tour the temple with the Executive Director of the Temple Department, Elder William R. Walker, and his Temple Department associates. In addition, various members of the general contracting firm were in attendance. The purpose of the tour, in part, was to review the progress and quality of the work performed. At the time of this tour, the work was about 85 percent completed.

As we moved through the temple, I watched and listened to Elder Walker and his associates as they inspected the work and conversed with the general contractor. On occasion I observed one man running his hand along the walls as we moved from room to room. A few times after doing this, he would rub his fingers together and then approach the general contractor and say, “I feel grit on this wall. Grit is not temple standard. You will

need to re-sand and buff this wall.” The contractor dutifully took notes of each observation.

As we approached an area in the temple that few eyes would ever see, the same man stopped us and directed our attention to a newly installed, beautiful leaded-glass window. This window measured about two feet (0.6 m) wide by six feet (1.8 m) tall and contained an embedded, small stained-glass geometric pattern. He pointed to a small two-inch (5 cm) colored-glass square that was part of the simple pattern and said, “That square is crooked.” I looked at the square, and to my eyes it looked evenly placed. However, upon closer inspection with a measuring device in hand, I could see there was a flaw and that this little square was indeed one-eighth of an inch (3 mm) crooked. Direction was then given to the contractor that this window would need to be replaced because it was not temple standard.

I admit that I was surprised that an entire window would need to be replaced because of such a small, barely noticeable defect. Surely, it was unlikely that anyone would ever know or even notice this window given its remote location in the temple.

As I drove home from the temple that day, I reflected on what I learned from this experience—or, rather, what I thought I learned. It wasn’t until several weeks later when I was invited to tour the now completed temple that my understanding of the prior tour experience became clearer.

As I entered the completely renovated Laie Hawaii Temple, I was overwhelmed by its beauty and quality of finish. You can appreciate my anticipation as I approached the “gritty” walls and the “flawed” window. Did the contractor re-sand and buff the walls? Was the window really replaced? As I approached the gritty walls, I was surprised to see that beautiful wallpaper now hung on all the walls. My first thought was, “So this is how the contractor addressed the grit—he covered it.” But, no, I learned that it had always been the plan to hang wallpaper on these walls. I wondered why a little hardly detectable grit mattered if wallpaper was to cover it. I then eagerly approached the area where the flawed window was located and was surprised to see a beautiful floor-to-ceiling potted plant sitting directly in front of the window. Again I thought, “So this is how the contractor addressed the crooked little square—he hid it.” As I moved closer, I pushed the plant’s leaves aside and smiled as I saw that the window had indeed been replaced. The formerly crooked little square now stood neatly and evenly in the pattern. I learned that it had always been part of the interior design to have a plant in front of this window.

Why would walls with a little grit and a window with a little asymmetry require additional work and even replacement when few human hands or eyes would ever know? Why was a contractor held to such high standards?



As I exited the temple deep in thought, I found my answer as I looked up at the refinished exterior and saw these words: “Holiness to the Lord, the House of the Lord.”

The temples of this Church are precisely as proclaimed. These sacred buildings are built for our use, and within their walls sacred and saving ordinances are performed. But there should be no doubt as to whose house it really is. By requiring exacting standards of construction down to the smallest of details, we not only show our love and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, but we also hold out to all observers that we honor and worship Him whose house it is.

In the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith to build a temple in Nauvoo, the Lord instructed:

“Come ye, with all your gold, and your silver, and your precious stones,

and with all your antiquities; and with all who have knowledge of antiquities, . . . and bring . . . the precious trees of the earth;

“. . . And build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein.”¹

This follows a pattern established by King Solomon in the Old Testament when he built a temple unto the Lord using only the finest materials and workmanship.² Today we continue to follow this pattern, with appropriate moderation, as we build the temples of the Church.

I learned that even though mortal eyes and hands may never see or feel a defect, the Lord knows the level of our efforts and whether we have done our very best. The same is true of our own personal efforts to live a life worthy of the blessings of the temple. The Lord has counseled:

“And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it;

“Yea, and my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God.

“But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples.”³

Like the contractor, when we become aware of elements in our own lives that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Lord, when our efforts have been less than our very best, we should move quickly to correct anything that is amiss, recognizing that we cannot hide our sins from the Lord. We need to remember that “when we undertake to cover our sins,

... behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved.”⁴

I also learned that the high standards of temple building employed by this Church are a type and even a symbol of how we should be living our own lives. We can apply, individually, the teachings of the Apostle Paul given to the early Church when he said:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”⁵

We are each made of the finest materials, and we are the miraculous result of divine craftsmanship. However, as we move past the age of accountability and step onto the battlefield of sin and temptation, our own temple can become in need of renovation and repair work. Perhaps there are walls within us that are gritty and need buffing or windows of our souls that need replacement in order that we can stand in holy places. Gratefully, the temple standard that we are asked to meet is not that of perfection, although we are striving for it, but rather that we are keeping the commandments and doing our best to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that we will all endeavor to live a life worthy of the blessings of the temple by doing our best, by making the necessary improvements and eliminating flaws and imperfections so that the Spirit of God may always dwell in us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 124:26–27.

2. See 1 Kings 6–7.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 97:15–17.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.

5. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; see also verse 19.



By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Trial of Your Faith

Like the intense fire that transforms iron into steel, as we remain faithful during the fiery trial of our faith, we are spiritually refined and strengthened.

Ten years ago as my wife, Kathy, and I were living in São Paulo, Brazil, President David Marriott was presiding over the Brazil São Paulo Interlagos Mission. He and his wife, Neill, and their sons Will, Wesley, and Trace lived near us. They had left their home, their business, and many in their family to respond to a call from the prophet to serve a mission.

President Marriott called me one afternoon. Their precious, righteous 21-year-old daughter, Georgia, a senior in violin performance at Indiana University, had been hit by a truck while riding her bicycle home after a Church meeting. On first report, Georgia was doing well. Hours later her condition dramatically worsened.

Family and friends began fasting and praying for a miracle for Georgia. Her mother flew through the night from Brazil. Arriving in Indiana the next day, she was met by her older children, who tearfully explained that they had been with Georgia as she passed away.

I watched the Marriott family at the time of this experience and in the months and years that followed. They wept, they prayed, they spoke of Georgia, they felt immense pain and sadness, but their faith did not falter.

In this morning's session, we heard of similar faith in the beautiful lives of the Bowen and Wilberger families.¹

The gift of faith is a priceless spiritual endowment. “This is life eternal,” Jesus prayed, “that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”²

Our faith is centered in God, our Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It is bolstered by our knowledge that the fullness of the gospel has been restored to the earth, that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and that prophets and apostles today hold the keys of the priesthood. We treasure our faith, work to strengthen our faith, pray for increased faith, and do all within our power to protect and defend our faith.

The Apostle Peter identified something he called a “trial of your faith.”³ He had experienced it. Remember Jesus's words:

“Simon, . . . Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”⁴

Peter later encouraged others: “Think it *not* strange,” he said, “concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”⁵



These fiery trials are designed to make you stronger, but they have the potential to diminish or even destroy your trust in the Son of God and to weaken your resolve to keep your promises to Him. These trials are often camouflaged, making them difficult to identify. They take root in our weaknesses, our vulnerabilities, our sensitivities, or in those things that matter most to us. A real but manageable test for one can be a fiery trial for another.

How do you remain “steadfast and immovable”⁶ during a trial of faith? You immerse yourself in the very things that helped build your core of faith: you exercise faith in Christ, you pray, you ponder the scriptures, you repent, you keep the commandments, and you serve others.

When faced with a trial of faith—whatever you do, you don’t step away from the Church! Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view.

The Apostle Paul said, “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”⁷ It is within the sanctuary of the Church that we protect our faith. Meeting together with others who believe, we pray and find answers to our prayers; we worship through music, share testimony of the Savior, serve one another, and feel the Spirit of the Lord. We partake of the

sacrament, receive the blessings of the priesthood, and attend the temple. The Lord declared, “In the ordinances . . . , the power of godliness is manifest.”⁸ When you are faced with a test of faith, stay within the safety and security of the household of God. There is always a place for you here. No trial is so large we can’t overcome it together.⁹

President Thomas S. Monson said: “The moral compass of society [has been evolving at a rapid rate]. Behaviors . . . once . . . considered inappropriate and immoral are now . . . viewed by . . . many as acceptable.”¹⁰

There are many single adults in the Church well beyond their early adult years. While finding their present life different than they had anticipated, they keep the law of chastity.¹¹ It can be a trial of their faith. I express my deep respect and admiration for these disciples of Christ.

“God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”¹² In the New Testament the Savior lifted the moral standard for His followers when He declared, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”¹³ He taught us not to condemn others, but He was unafraid to speak directly: “Go,” He said, “and sin no more.”¹⁴

Our family has a friend. You probably know someone like her, or perhaps you are like her. Always faithful, serves nobly in the Church, admired professionally, adored by her family, and while she anticipated marriage and children, she is single. “I made the decision,” she said, “to put my . . . trust in Jesus Christ. Going to the temple frequently helps me keep a more eternal focus. It reminds me I am never alone. I have faith . . . that no . . . blessing will be withheld . . . as I . . . remain faithful to my covenants, including the law of chastity.”¹⁵

Another friend served an outstanding mission, followed by rigorous academic training. He hoped to have a family. His trial of faith: feelings of same-sex attraction. He wrote me recently: “I am promised in my patriarchal blessing that I will have my own family someday. Whether that will occur in this life or the next, I do not know. But what I do know is that I don’t want to do anything that will jeopardize the blessings God has promised both me and my future posterity. . . . Living [the law of chastity] is a challenge, but did we not come to earth to confront challenges and to show God our love and respect for Him by keeping His commandments? I am blessed with good health, the gospel, a loving family, and loyal friends. I am grateful for my many blessings.”¹⁶

The world protests, how can you ask so much? The Lord responds:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . .

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”¹⁷

These two followers of Christ and tens of thousands like them have felt the Savior’s promise: “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.”¹⁸

Here is another trial. There have always been a few who want to discredit the Church and to destroy faith. Today they use the Internet.

Some of the information about the Church, no matter how convincing, is just not true. In 1985, I remember a colleague walking into my business office in Florida. He had a *Time* magazine article entitled “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots.” It spoke of a recently discovered letter, supposedly written by Martin Harris, that conflicted with Joseph Smith’s account of finding the Book of Mormon plates.¹⁹

My colleague asked if this new information would destroy the Mormon Church. The article quoted a man who said he was leaving the Church over the document. Later, others reportedly left the Church.²⁰ I’m sure it was a trial of their faith.

A few months later, experts discovered (and the forger confessed) that the letter was a complete fraud. I remember really hoping that those who had left the Church because of this deception would find their way back.

A few question their faith when they find a statement made by a Church leader decades ago that seems incongruent with our doctrine. There is an important principle that governs the doctrine of the Church. The doctrine is taught by all 15 members of the

First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk. True principles are taught frequently and by many. Our doctrine is not difficult to find.

The leaders of the Church are honest but imperfect men. Remember the words of Moroni: “Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father . . . ; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.”²¹

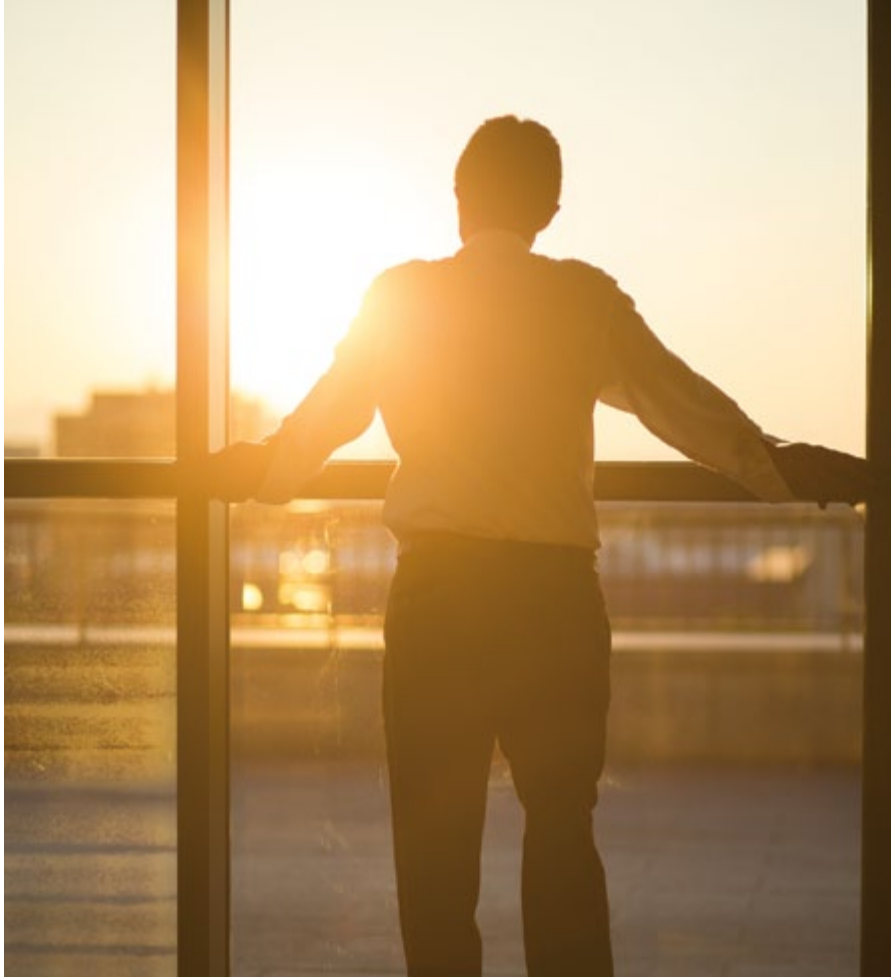
Joseph Smith said, “I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations.”²² The miracle of God’s hand in the history and destiny of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is understood only through the lens of spiritual inquiry. President Ezra Taft Benson said, “Every [person]

eventually is backed up to the wall of faith, and there . . . must make his stand.”²³ Don’t be surprised when it happens to you!

By definition, trials will be trying. There may be anguish, confusion, sleepless nights, and pillows wet with tears. But our trials need not be spiritually fatal. They need not take us from our covenants or from the household of God.

“Remember, . . . it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a





sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”²⁴

Like the intense fire that transforms iron into steel, as we remain faithful during the fiery trial of *our* faith, we are spiritually refined and strengthened.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson explained what he learned from a personal trial: “Though I suffered then, as I look back now, I am grateful that there was not a quick solution to my problem. The fact that I was forced to turn to God for help almost daily over an extended period of years taught me truly how to pray and get answers to prayer and taught me in a very practical way to have faith in God. I came to know my Savior and my Heavenly Father in a way and to a degree that might not have happened otherwise or that might have taken me much longer to achieve. . . . I learned to trust in the Lord with all my heart. I learned to walk with Him day by day.”²⁵

Peter described these experiences as “much more precious than . . .

gold.”²⁶ Moroni added that a witness follows “the trial of your faith.”²⁷

I began with the story of the Marriott family. Last week Kathy and I joined them at Georgia’s grave. Ten years have passed. Family and friends spoke of the love and memories they have of Georgia. There were white helium balloons to celebrate her life. Amid tears, Georgia’s mother tenderly spoke of the increased faith and understanding she has received, and Georgia’s father quietly told me of the promised witness that has come to him.

With faith come trials of faith, bringing increased faith. The Lord’s comforting assurance to the Prophet Joseph Smith is the very same promise He makes to you in your trial of faith: “Hold on . . . , fear not . . . , for God shall be with you forever and ever.”²⁸ Of this I bear my sacred witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Shayne M. Bowen, “Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also,” and Ann M. Dibb, “I Know It. I Live It. I Love It,” in the Saturday morning session of the October 2012 general conference.

2. John 17:3.
3. 1 Peter 1:7.
4. Luke 22:31–32.
5. 1 Peter 4:12; emphasis added.
6. Alma 1:25.
7. Ephesians 2:19.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
9. See Mosiah 18:8–10.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Stand in Holy Places,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 82.
11. See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Law of Chastity,” *New Era*, Jan. 1988, 4–7; “The Law of Chastity” in *Brigham Young University 1987–88 Speeches* (1988), 1–5, speeches.byu.edu; see also *Gospel Principles* (2009), 224–32.
12. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
13. Matthew 5:28.
14. John 8:11.
15. Personal correspondence, 2012.
16. Personal correspondence, 2012.
17. Isaiah 55:8–9.
18. John 14:27.
19. See Richard N. Ostling, “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots,” *Time*, May 20, 1985, 44.
20. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Lord, Increase Our Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 52.
21. Mormon 9:31.
22. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522.
23. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Tambuli*, May 1988, 6; *Ensign*, May 1975, 65.
24. Helaman 5:12.
25. D. Todd Christofferson, “Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread” (Church Educational System fireside, Jan. 9, 2011), lds.org/broadcasts.
26. 1 Peter 1:7; see also 1 Peter 4:13.
27. Ether 12:6.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9; President George Q. Cannon said: “No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character. He is an unchangeable being; the same yesterday, the same today, and He will be the same throughout the eternal ages to come. We have found that God. We have made Him our friend, by obeying His Gospel; and He will stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them, if we only trust in our God and keep His commandments” (“Remarks,” *Deseret Evening News*, Mar. 7, 1891, 4); see also Jeffrey R. Holland, “Come unto Me,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1998, 16–23.



By **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Protect the Children

None should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.

We can all remember our feelings when a little child cried out and reached up to us for help. A loving Heavenly Father gives us those feelings to impel us to help His children. Please recall those feelings as I speak about our responsibility to protect and act for the well-being of children.

I speak from the perspective of the gospel of Jesus Christ, including His plan of salvation. That is my calling. Local Church leaders have responsibility for a single jurisdiction, like a ward or stake, but an Apostle is responsible to witness to the entire world. In every nation, of every race and creed, all children are children of God.

Although I do not speak in terms of politics or public policy, like other Church leaders, I cannot speak for the welfare of children without implications for the choices being made by citizens, public officials, and workers in private organizations. We are all under the Savior's command to love and care for each other and especially for the weak and defenseless.

Children are highly vulnerable. They have little or no power to protect or provide for themselves and little influence on so much that is vital to their well-being. Children need others

to speak for them, and they need decision makers who put their well-being ahead of selfish adult interests.

I.

Worldwide, we are shocked at the millions of children victimized by evil adult crimes and selfishness.

In some war-torn countries, children are abducted to serve as soldiers in contending armies.

A United Nations report estimates that over two million children are victimized each year through prostitution and pornography.¹

From the perspective of the plan of salvation, one of the most serious abuses of children is to deny them birth. This is a worldwide trend. The national birthrate in the United States is the lowest in 25 years,² and the birthrates in most European and Asian countries have been below replacement levels for many years. This is not just a religious issue. As rising generations diminish in numbers, cultures and even nations are hollowed out and eventually disappear.

One cause of the diminishing birthrate is the practice of abortion. Worldwide, there are estimated to be more than 40 million abortions per year.³ Many laws permit or even

promote abortion, but to us this is a great evil. Other abuses of children that occur during pregnancy are the fetal impairments that result from the mother's inadequate nutrition or drug use.

There is a tragic irony in the multitude of children eliminated or injured before birth while throngs of infertile couples long for and seek babies to adopt.

Childhood abuses or neglect of children that occur after birth are more publicly visible. Worldwide, almost eight million children die before their fifth birthday, mostly from diseases both treatable and preventable.⁴ And the World Health Organization reports that one in four children have stunted growth, mentally and physically, because of inadequate nutrition.⁵

Living and traveling internationally, we Church leaders see much of this. The general presidency of the Primary report children living in conditions "beyond our imaginations." A mother in the Philippines said: "Sometimes we do not have enough money for food, but that is all right because it gives me the opportunity to teach my children about faith. We gather and pray for relief, and the children see the Lord bless us."⁶ In South Africa, a Primary worker met a little girl, lonely and sad. In faint responses to loving questions, she said she had no mother, no father, and no grandmother—only a grandfather to care for her.⁷ Such tragedies are common on a continent where many caregivers have died of AIDS.

Even in rich nations little children and youth are impaired by neglect. Children growing up in poverty have inferior health care and inadequate educational opportunities. They are also exposed to dangerous environments in their physical and cultural surroundings and even from the neglect of their parents. Elder

Jeffrey R. Holland recently shared the experience of an LDS police officer. In an investigation he found five young children huddled together and trying to sleep without bedding on a filthy floor in a dwelling where their mother and others were drinking and partying. The apartment had no food to relieve their hunger. After tucking the children into a makeshift bed, the officer knelt and prayed for their protection. As he walked toward the door, one of them, about six, pursued him, grabbed him by the hand, and pleaded, “Will you please adopt me?”⁸

We remember our Savior’s teaching as He placed a little child before His followers and declared:

“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5–6).

When we consider the dangers from which children should be protected, we should also include psychological abuse. Parents or other caregivers or teachers or peers who demean, bully, or humiliate children or youth can inflict harm more permanent than physical injury. Making a child or youth feel worthless, unloved, or unwanted can inflict serious and long-lasting injury on his or her emotional well-being and development.⁹ Young people struggling with any exceptional condition, including same-gender attraction, are particularly vulnerable and need loving understanding—not bullying or ostracism.¹⁰

With the help of the Lord, we can repent and change and be more loving and helpful to children—our own and those around us.

II.

There are few examples of physical or emotional threats to children as important as those arising out of their relationships with their parents or guardians. President Thomas S. Monson has spoken of what he called the “vile deeds” of child abuse, where a parent has broken or disfigured a child, physically or emotionally.¹¹ I grieved as I had to study the shocking evidence of such cases during my service on the Utah Supreme Court.

Of utmost importance to the well-being of children is whether their parents were married, the nature and duration of the marriage, and, more broadly, the culture and expectations of marriage and child care where they live. Two scholars of the family explain: “Throughout history, marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children. Yet in recent times, children have increasingly been pushed from center stage.”¹²

A Harvard law professor describes the current law and attitude toward marriage and divorce: “The [current] American story about marriage, as told in the law and in much popular

literature, goes something like this: marriage is a relationship that exists primarily for the fulfillment of the individual spouses. If it ceases to perform this function, no one is to blame and either spouse may terminate it at will. . . . Children hardly appear in the story; at most they are rather shadowy characters in the background.”¹³

Our Church leaders have taught that looking “upon marriage as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure . . . and severed at the first difficulty . . . is an evil meriting severe condemnation,” especially where “children are made to suffer.”¹⁴ And children are impacted by divorces. Over half of the divorces in a recent year involved couples with minor children.¹⁵

Many children would have had the blessing of being raised by both of their parents if only their parents had followed this inspired teaching in the family proclamation: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . 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.”¹⁶ The most powerful teaching of children is by the example





of their parents. Divorcing parents inevitably teach a negative lesson.

There are surely cases when a divorce is necessary for the good of the children, but those circumstances are exceptional.¹⁷ In most marital contests the contending parents should give much greater weight to the interests of the children. With the help of the Lord, they can do so. Children need the emotional and personal strength that come from being raised by two parents who are united in their marriage and their goals. As one who was raised by a widowed mother, I know firsthand that this cannot always be achieved, but it is the ideal to be sought whenever possible.

Children are the first victims of current laws permitting so-called “no-fault divorce.” From the standpoint of children, divorce is too easy. Summarizing decades of social science research, a careful scholar concluded that “the family structure that produces the best outcomes for children, on average, are two biological parents who remain married.”¹⁸ A *New York Times* writer noted “the striking fact that even as traditional marriage has declined in

the United States . . . the evidence has mounted for the institution’s importance to the well-being of children.”¹⁹ That reality should give important guidance to parents and parents-to-be in their decisions involving marriage and divorce. We also need politicians, policy makers, and officials to increase their attention to what is best for children in contrast to the selfish interests of voters and vocal advocates of adult interests.

Children are also victimized by marriages that do not occur. Few measures of the welfare of our rising generation are more disturbing than the recent report that 41 percent of all births in the United States were to women who were not married.²⁰ Unmarried mothers have massive challenges, and the evidence is clear that their children are at a significant disadvantage when compared with children raised by married parents.²¹

Most of the children born to unmarried mothers—58 percent—were born to couples who were cohabitating.²² Whatever we may say about these couples’ forgoing marriage, studies show that their children

suffer significant comparative disadvantages.²³ For children, the relative stability of marriage matters.

We should assume the same disadvantages for children raised by couples of the same gender. The social science literature is controversial and politically charged on the long-term effect of this on children, principally because, as a *New York Times* writer observed, “same-sex marriage is a social experiment, and like most experiments it will take time to understand its consequences.”²⁴

III.

I have spoken for children—children everywhere. Some may reject some of these examples, but none should resist the plea that we unite to increase our concern for the welfare and future of our children—the rising generation.

We are speaking of the children of God, and with His powerful help, we can do more to help them. In this plea I address not only Latter-day Saints but also all persons of religious faith and others who have a value system that causes them to subordinate their own



needs to those of others, especially to the welfare of children.²⁵

Religious persons are also conscious of the Savior's New Testament teaching that pure little children are our role models of humility and teachableness:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3–4).

In the Book of Mormon we read of the risen Lord teaching the Nephites that they must repent and be baptized "and become as a little child" or they could not inherit the kingdom of God (3 Nephi 11:38; see also Moroni 8:10).

I pray that we will humble ourselves as little children and reach out to protect our little children, for they are the future for us, for our Church,

and for our nations. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2005: Childhood under Threat* (2004), 26.
2. See Haya El Nasser, "National Birthrate Lowest in 25 Years," *USA Today*, July 26, 2012, A1.
3. See Gilda Sedgh and others, "Induced Abortion: Incidence and Trends Worldwide from 1995 to 2008," *The Lancet*, vol. 379, no. 9816 (Feb. 18, 2012), 625–32.
4. See UNICEF, "Young Child Survival and Development," <http://www.unicef.org/childsurvival/index.html>.
5. See World Health Organization, *World Health Statistics 2012* (2012), 109, 118.
6. Report of Primary general presidency, Sept. 13, 2012.
7. Report of Primary general presidency.
8. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling" (Church Educational System devotional for young adults, Sept. 9, 2012), lds.org/broadcasts; see also R. Scott Lloyd, "Zion Not Only Where, but How We Live, Says Elder Holland," *Deseret News*, Sept. 10, 2012, B2.
9. See Kim Painter, "Parents Can Inflict Deep Emotional Harm," *USA Today*, July 30, 2012, B8; Rachel Lowry, "Mental Abuse

as Injurious as Other Forms of Child Abuse, Study Shows," *Deseret News*, Aug. 5, 2012, A3.

10. See "End the Abuses," *Deseret News*, June 12, 2012, A10.
11. Thomas S. Monson, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them," *Liahona*, June 2002, 2; *Ensign*, May 1990, 53.
12. W. Bradford Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt, eds., *The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America* (2011), 82.
13. Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law: American Failures, European Challenges* (1987), 108.
14. David O. McKay, "Structure of the Home Threatened by Irresponsibility and Divorce," *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 5.
15. See Diana B. Elliott and Tavia Simmons, "Marital Events of Americans: 2009," *American Community Survey Reports*, Aug. 2011.
16. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
17. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Divorce," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 71.
18. Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (2012), 158.
19. Ross Douthat, "Gay Parents and the Marriage Debate," *New York Times*, June 11, 2012, <http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/gay-parents-and-the-marriage-debate>.
20. See Joyce A. Martin and others, "Births: Final Data for 2010," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 61, no. 1 (Aug. 2012), 10.
21. See William J. Doherty and others, *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (2002); W. Bradford Wilcox and others, *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (2011).
22. See Martin, "Births: Final Data for 2010," 10–11.
23. See Wilcox, *Why Marriage Matters*.
24. Douthat, "Gay Parents and the Marriage Debate." The latest and most thorough study finds significant disadvantages reported by young adults with a parent who had same-sex relationships prior to the child's turning age 18 (see Mark Regnerus, "How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study," *Social Science Research*, vol. 41 [2012], 752–70).
25. Latter-day Saints are especially committed to parenthood as one of the most important goals in life (see Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Mormons in America: Certain in Their Beliefs, Uncertain of Their Place in Society*, Jan. 12, 2012, 10, 16, 51).



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

Brethren, We Have Work to Do

As men of the priesthood, we have an essential role to play in society, at home, and in the Church.

Brethren, much has been said and written in recent years about the challenges of men and boys. A sampling of book titles, for example, includes *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, *The Demise of Guys*, *The End of Men*, *Why Boys Fail*, and *Manning Up*. Interestingly, most of these seem to have been written by women. In any case, a common thread running through these analyses is that in many societies today men and boys get conflicting and demeaning signals about their roles and value in society.

The author of *Manning Up* characterized it this way: “It’s been an almost universal rule of civilization that whereas girls became women simply by reaching physical maturity, boys had to pass a test. They needed to demonstrate courage, physical prowess, or mastery of the necessary skills. The goal was to prove their competence as protectors of women and children; this was always their primary social role. Today, however, with women moving ahead in an advanced economy, provider husbands and fathers are now optional, and the

character qualities men had needed to play their role—fortitude, stoicism, courage, fidelity—are obsolete and even a little embarrassing.”¹

In their zeal to promote opportunity for women, something we applaud, there are those who denigrate men and their contributions. They seem to think of life as a competition between male and female—that one must dominate the other, and now it’s the women’s turn. Some argue that a career is everything and marriage and children should be entirely optional—therefore, why do we need men?² In too many Hollywood films, TV and cable shows, and even commercials, men are portrayed as incompetent, immature, or self-absorbed. This cultural emasculation of males is having a damaging effect.

In the United States, for example, it is reported: “Girls outperform boys now at every level, from elementary school through graduate school. By eighth grade, for instance, only 20 percent of boys are proficient in writing and 24 percent proficient in reading. Young men’s SAT scores, meanwhile,

in 2011 were the worst they’ve been in 40 years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), boys are 30 percent more likely than girls to drop out of both high school and college. . . . It is predicted that women will earn 60 percent of bachelor’s, 63 percent of master’s and 54 percent of doctorate degrees by 2016. Two-thirds of students in special education remedial programs are guys.”³

Some men and young men have taken the negative signals as an excuse to avoid responsibility and never really grow up. In an observation that is too often accurate, one university professor remarked, “The men come into class with their backward baseball caps and [their lame] the ‘word processor ate my homework’ excuses. Meanwhile, the women are checking their day planners and asking for recommendations for law school.”⁴ One female movie reviewer expressed the rather cynical view that “what we can count on men for, if we’re lucky and we choose to have a partner, is to be just that—a partner. Someone who stands in his own space even as he respects our standing in our own.”⁵

Brethren, it cannot be this way with us. As men of the priesthood, we have an essential role to play in society, at home, and in the Church. But we must be men that women can trust, that children can trust, and that God can trust. In the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days, we cannot afford to have boys and men who are drifting. We cannot afford young men who lack self-discipline and live only to be entertained. We cannot afford young adult men who are going nowhere in life, who are not serious about forming families and making a real contribution in this world. We cannot afford husbands and



fathers who fail to provide spiritual leadership in the home. We cannot afford to have those who exercise the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God, waste their strength in pornography or spend their lives in cyberspace (ironically being *of* the world while not being *in* the world).

Brethren, we have work to do.

Young men, you need to do well in school and then continue your education beyond high school. Some of you will want to pursue university studies and careers in business, agriculture, government, or other professions. Some will excel in the arts, music, or teaching. Others will choose a military career or learn a trade. Over the years, I have had a number of craftsmen work on projects and repairs at my home, and I have admired the hard work and skill of these men. In whatever you choose, it is essential that you become proficient so that you can support a family and make a contribution for good in your community and your country.

I recently saw a video showing a day in the life of a 14-year-old young man in India named Amar. He gets up early and works two jobs, before and after school, six and a half days a week. His income provides a substantial part of his family's livelihood. He hurries home on his worn bicycle from his second job after dark and somehow squeezes in a few hours of homework before dropping onto his bed on the floor between sleeping siblings around eleven o'clock at night. Although I've never met him, I feel proud of him for his diligence and courage. He is doing the very best he can with his limited resources and opportunities, and he is a blessing to his family.

You adult men—fathers, single adults, leaders, home teachers—be worthy models and help the rising generation of boys become men. Teach them social and other skills: how to participate in a conversation, how to get acquainted and interact with others, how to relate to women and girls, how to serve, how to be

active and enjoy recreation, how to pursue hobbies without becoming addicted, how to correct mistakes and make better choices.

And so to all who are listening, wherever this message may reach you, I say as Jehovah said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6). Take heart and prepare the best you can, whatever your circumstances. Prepare to be a good husband and father; prepare to be a good and productive citizen; prepare to serve the Lord, whose priesthood you hold. Wherever you are, your Heavenly Father is mindful of you. You are not alone, and you have the priesthood and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Of the many places you are needed, one of the very most important is your priesthood quorum. We need quorums that provide spiritual nourishment to members on Sunday and that also serve. We need leaders of quorums who focus on doing the Lord's work and on supporting quorum members and their families.

Consider missionary work. Young men, you have no time to waste. You can't wait to get serious about preparing until you are 17 or 18. Aaronic Priesthood quorums can help their members understand the oath and covenant of the priesthood and get ready for ordination as elders, they can help them understand and prepare for the ordinances of the temple, and they can help them get ready for successful missions. Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and the Relief Society can help parents prepare missionaries who know the Book of Mormon and who will go into the field fully committed. And in each ward and branch, these same quorums can lead out in an effective collaboration with the full-time missionaries who are serving there.

A related work that rests primarily on priesthood shoulders is the Savior's call, echoed by President Thomas S. Monson, to rescue those who have drifted from the gospel or who have become disaffected for any reason. We have had wonderful success in this effort, including excellent work by young men. An Aaronic Priesthood quorum in the Rio Grande (Spanish) Ward in Albuquerque, New Mexico, counseled together about whom they could bring back and then as a group went to visit each of them. One said, "When they came to my door, I felt important," and another confided, "I feel happy inside that someone actually wants me to go to church; it makes me want to go to church now." When the quorum members invited one young man to come back, they asked him to come with them on the next visit, and he did. They were not just inviting him to attend church; they were immediately making him a part of the quorum.

Another challenging but stimulating priesthood work is that of family

history and the temple. Watch for a First Presidency letter arriving shortly that will offer a renewed call and a higher vision of this vital part of the work we have to do.

Our quorums also form a brotherhood of mutual support. President Gordon B. Hinckley once said: "It will be a marvelous day, my brethren—it will be a day of fulfillment of the purposes of the Lord—when our priesthood quorums become an anchor of strength to every man belonging thereto, when each such man may appropriately be able to say, 'I am a member of a priesthood quorum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I stand ready to assist my brethren in all of their needs, as I am confident they stand ready to assist me in mine. . . . Working together, we can stand, without embarrassment and without fear, against every wind of adversity that might blow, be it economic, social, or spiritual.'"⁶

Despite our best efforts, things don't always work out as we have planned, and a particular "wind of adversity" that can come into a man's life is unemployment. An early Church welfare pamphlet stated: "A man out of work is of special moment to the Church because, deprived of his inheritance, he is on trial as Job was on trial—for his integrity. As days lengthen into weeks and months and even years of adversity, the hurt grows deeper. . . . The Church cannot hope to save a man on Sunday if during the week it is a complacent witness to the crucifixion of his soul."⁷

In April 2009 former Presiding Bishopric counselor Richard C. Edgley told the story of an exemplary quorum that mobilized to assist a fellow member who had lost his job:

"Phil's Auto of Centerville, Utah, is a testament of what priesthood

leadership and a quorum can accomplish. Phil was a member of an elders quorum and worked as a mechanic at a local automobile repair shop. Unfortunately, the repair shop where Phil worked experienced economic trouble and had to let Phil go from his job. He was devastated by this turn of events.

"On hearing about Phil's job loss, his bishop, Leon Olson, and his elders quorum presidency prayerfully considered ways they could help Phil get back on his feet. After all, he was a fellow quorum member, a brother, and he needed help. They concluded that Phil had the skills to run his own business. One of the quorum members offered that he had an old barn that perhaps could be used as a repair shop. Other quorum members could help gather needed tools and supplies to equip the new shop. Almost everyone in the quorum could at least help clean the old barn.

"They shared their ideas with Phil; then they shared their plan with the members of their quorum. The barn was cleaned and renovated, the tools gathered, and all was put in order. Phil's Auto was a success and eventually moved to better and more permanent quarters—all because his quorum brothers offered help in a time of crisis."⁸

Of course, as has been repeated by prophets over the years, "The most important of the Lord's work you will ever do will be within the walls of your own homes."⁹ We have much to do to strengthen marriage in societies that increasingly trivialize its importance and purpose. We have much to do to teach our children "to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (D&C 68:28). Our task is nothing less than to help our children experience the mighty change

of heart or conversion to the Lord spoken of so eloquently in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 5:1–12; Alma 26). Together with the Relief Society, priesthood quorums can build up parents and marriages, and quorums can provide the blessings of the priesthood to single-parent families.

Yes, brethren, we have work to do. Thank you for the sacrifices you make and the good you do. Keep going, and the Lord will help you. At times you may not know quite what to do or what to say—just move forward. Begin to act, and the Lord assures that “an effectual door shall be opened for [you]” (D&C 118:3). Begin to speak, and He promises, “You shall not be confounded before men; for it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:5–6). It is true that we are in many ways ordinary and imperfect, but we have a perfect Master who wrought a perfect Atonement, and we have call upon His grace and His priesthood. As we repent and purge our souls, we are promised that we will be taught and

endowed with power from on high (see D&C 43:16).

The Church and the world and women are crying for men, men who are developing their capacity and talents, who are willing to work and make sacrifices, who will help others achieve happiness and salvation. They are crying, “Rise up, O men of God!”¹⁰ God help us to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Kay S. Hymowitz, *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men into Boys* (2011), 16.
2. “When you ask young people today what will make them adults, almost no one mentions marriage. They are far more likely to see issues around work—completing education, financial independence, a full-time job—as the signs that they have arrived. Work, career, independence: these are the primary sources of identity today” (Hymowitz, *Manning Up*, 45). The pressure on women to adopt this antimarriage ethic is especially intense. A *Times* of London contributor wrote: “No one, not my family or my teachers, ever said, ‘Oh yes, and by the way you might want to be a wife and mother too.’ They were so determined we would follow a new, egalitarian,

modern path that the historic ambitions of generations of women—to get married and raise a family—were intentionally airbrushed from their vision of our future” (Eleanor Mills, “Learning to Be Left on the Shelf,” *Sunday Times*, Apr. 18, 2010, www.thetimes.co.uk; in Hymowitz, *Manning Up*, 72). Another writer in her 40s quoted some responses to an article she wrote about her regrets over not marrying: “I am totally appalled by your need for a man,” “Get some self-esteem!” “You have taken codependency to a whole new low,” and “If my daughter grows up to want a man half as much as you do, I will know that I’ve done something wrong in raising her” (Lori Gottlieb, *Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough* [2010], 55).

The good news is that most people, including educated young adults, aren’t buying the antimarriage, antifamily message. “According to a study by a University of Pennsylvania economist, in the United States in 2008, 86 percent of college-educated white women were married by age 40, compared with 88 percent of those with less than a four-year degree. The numbers for white, college-educated men are similar: 84 percent of them were married by 40 in 2008. The conventional wisdom, not borne out by research, by the way, may have it that marriage is a raw deal for women. But college-educated white women don’t seem to believe it. They are the most likely of any group to think that ‘married people are generally happier than unmarried people.’ . . . The large majority—70 percent—of first-year college students think raising a family is ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ to their futures” (Hymowitz, *Manning Up*, 173–74).

3. Philip G. Zimbardo and Nikita Duncan, *The Demise of Guys: Why Boys Are Struggling and What We Can Do about It* (2012), e-book; see the chapter “Behind the Headlines.”
4. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman* (2003), 67.
5. Amanda Dickson, “‘Hunger Games’ Main Character a Heroine for Our Day,” *Deseret News*, Apr. 2, 2012, www.deseretnews.com.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 86.
7. *Helping Others to Help Themselves: The Story of the Mormon Church Welfare Program* (1945), 4.
8. Richard C. Edgley, “This Is Your Phone Call,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 54.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 134.
10. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 323.





By Bishop Gary E. Stevenson
Presiding Bishop

Be Valiant in Courage, Strength, and Activity

Qualify yourselves as did the 2,000 stripling soldiers by being valiant in courage as worthy priesthood holders.

Tonight I feel especially blessed to speak as a bishop to the young men, holders of the Atonic Priesthood, gathered from around the world for this general priesthood meeting. I share with you narrative from the Book of Mormon describing Helaman and his 2,000 stripling soldiers. This scripture will provide insight into the character of those ancient young men—and inspiration for you, latter-day young men. I quote a favorite scripture: “And they were all young men, and they were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times.”¹ Courage, strength, activity, and truth—what admirable traits!

I would like to focus on the first trait that describes them: “valiant for courage.” To me, this describes the conviction of these young men to courageously do what is right, or as Alma describes, “to stand as witnesses of God at all times . . . and in all places.”² The 2,000 stripling soldiers had countless moments to demonstrate their courage. Each of you will also have defining moments in your life requiring courage. A friend of mine, John,

shared with me one of those moments in his life.

Some years ago, John was accepted at a prestigious Japanese university. He would be part of the international student program with many other top students from around the world. Some enrolled with a hope to deepen their understanding of the culture and language, others viewed it as a stepping-stone to an eventual profession and employment in Japan, but all had left home to study in a foreign country.

Soon after John’s arrival, word of a party to be held on the rooftop of a private residence spread among the foreign student population. That evening, John and two friends made their way to the advertised address.

Following an elevator ride to the top floor of the building, John and his friends navigated the single narrow stairway leading to the rooftop and began mingling with the others. As the night wore on, the atmosphere changed. The noise, music volume, and alcohol amplified, as did John’s uneasiness. Then suddenly someone began organizing the students into a large circle with the intent of sharing marijuana cigarettes. John grimaced

and quickly informed his two friends that it was time to leave. Almost in ridicule, one of them replied, “John, this is easy—we’ll just stand in the circle, and when it is our turn, we’ll just pass it along rather than smoke it. That way we won’t have to embarrass ourselves in front of everyone by leaving.” This sounded easy to John, but it did not sound right. He knew he had to announce his intention and act. In a moment he mustered his courage and told them that they could do as they wished, but he was leaving. One friend decided to stay and joined the circle; the other reluctantly followed John down the stairs to board the elevator. Much to their surprise, when the elevator doors opened, Japanese police officers poured out and hurried to ascend the stairs to the rooftop. John and his friend boarded the elevator and departed.

When the police appeared at the top of the stairs, the students quickly threw the illegal drugs off the roof so they wouldn’t be caught. After securing the stairway, however, the officers lined up everyone on the roof and asked each student to extend both hands. The officers then walked down the line, carefully smelling each student’s thumbs and index fingers. All who had held the marijuana, whether they had smoked it or not, were presumed guilty, and there were huge consequences. Almost without exception, the students who had remained on the rooftop were expelled from their respective universities, and those convicted of a crime were likely deported from Japan. Dreams of an education, years of preparation, and the possibility of future employment in Japan were dashed in a moment.

Now let me tell you what happened to these three friends. The friend who

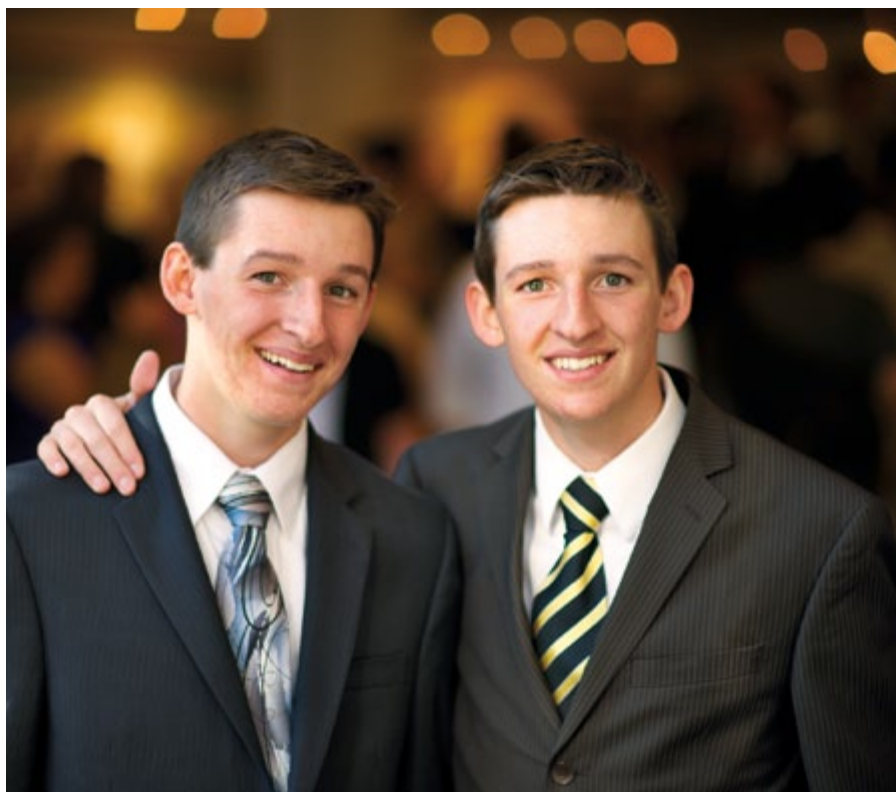
stayed on the roof was expelled from the university in Japan to which he had worked so hard to be accepted and was required to return home. The friend who left the party that night with John finished school in Japan and went on to earn degrees from two top-tier universities in the United States. His career took him back to Asia, where he has enjoyed immense professional success. He remains grateful to this day for John's courageous example. As for John, the consequences in his life have been immeasurable. His time in Japan that year led him to a happy marriage and the subsequent birth of two sons. He has been a very successful businessman and recently became a professor at a Japanese university. Imagine how different his life would have been had he not had the courage to leave the party on that important evening in Japan.³

Young men, there will be times when you, like John, will have to demonstrate your righteous courage in plain view of your peers, the consequence of which may be ridicule and embarrassment. Additionally, in your world, skirmishes with the adversary will also be fought on a silent, solitary battlefield in front of a screen. Technology with its substantial benefits also brings challenges not faced by generations before you. A recent national survey found that today's teens are tempted at alarming levels each day not only in schools but also in cyberspace. It revealed that teens who were exposed to images of drinking or drug use on social networking sites were three to four times more likely to use alcohol or drugs. Commenting on the survey, a former U.S. cabinet

secretary stated: "This year's survey reveals a new kind of potent peer pressure—digital peer pressure. Digital peer pressure moves beyond a child's friends and the kids they hang out with. It invades the home and a child's bedroom via the Internet."⁴ The demonstration of righteous courage will often be as subtle as to click or not to click. Missionaries are taught from *Preach My Gospel*, "What you choose to think and do when you are alone and you believe no one is watching is a strong measure of your virtue."⁵ Be courageous! Be strong! "Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved."⁶

Young men, I promise the Lord will empower you. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power."⁷ He will reward you for your courage and righteous behavior—with happiness and joy. Such courage will be a byproduct of your faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, your prayers, and your obedience to commandments.

President N. Eldon Tanner stated: "One young boy on the school ground can wield a mighty influence for good. One young man on the football team, or the campus, or among his fellow workers can, by living the gospel, honoring his priesthood, and taking a stand for the right, do untold good. Often you will experience much criticism and ridicule even by those who believe as you do, even though they may respect you for doing right. But remember that the Savior himself was tormented, ridiculed, spat upon, and finally crucified because he would not waver in his conviction. Have you ever stopped to think what would have happened had he weakened and said, 'Oh, what's the use?' and abandoned his mission? Do we want to be quitters,





or do we want to be valiant servants in spite of all the opposition and evil in the world? Let us have the courage to stand up and be counted as true, devoted followers of Christ.”⁸

I invite you to qualify yourselves as did the 2,000 stripling soldiers by being valiant in courage as worthy priesthood holders. Remember, what you do, where you go, and what you see will shape who you become. Who do you want to become? Become a worthy deacon, a worthy teacher, a worthy priest. Set a goal to be worthy to enter the temple now and to be worthy to receive your next ordinance at the proper age and ultimately to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is a pathway of righteousness which invites divine assistance. The Lord stated, “In the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”⁹

Parents, priesthood leaders, and prophetic priorities found in your *Duty to God* and *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets will guide you along the way.

President Thomas S. Monson recently counseled:

“To make [decisions] wisely, courage is needed—the courage to say no, the courage to say yes. . . .

“I plead with you to make a determination . . . right now, not to deviate from the path which will lead to our goal: eternal life with our Father in Heaven.”¹⁰

Just as the 2,000 soldiers responded to the battle cry of their leader, Helaman, and marshaled their valiant courage, you too can do the same by following your prophet-leader, President Thomas S. Monson.

My young Aaronic Priesthood holders, in closing I offer my

testimony of God the Father and Jesus Christ and the words of Joseph Smith: “Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!”¹¹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Alma 53:20.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. Personal story told to author.
4. Joseph A. Califano Jr., founder and chairman emeritus of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, in a press release regarding the research, casacolumbia.org.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 118.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
7. 2 Timothy 1:7.
8. N. Eldon Tanner, “For They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74–75.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “The Three Rs of Choice,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 68.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.



By **Elder Anthony D. Perkins**
Of the Seventy

Beware Concerning Yourselves

Stay on the priesthood path by deepening your conversion and strengthening your family. . . . Avoid tragedy by heeding spiritual “Beware” signs placed along our way by God and prophets.

When I was a young man, our family would drive over America’s Rocky Mountains to visit grandparents. The road began in sagebrush flatlands, ascended through steep, pine-covered slopes, and ultimately emerged into aspen groves and mountaintop meadows, where we could see almost forever.

But this beautiful road was not perfectly safe. Much of the highway was carved into the steep mountainside. To protect travelers, road builders constructed guardrails and placed signs that read, “Beware: Falling Rocks.” We observed ample reason for these warnings. Rocks and boulders were strewn along the riverbed far below the road. Occasionally we could see crumpled cars on the canyon bottom, a tragic record of drivers who failed to beware.

Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

Brethren, each of you has entered, or will soon enter, into the oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood.¹ In that covenant is embedded a glorious journey that begins with receiving both the lesser

and higher priesthoods, progresses through magnifying our callings, and climbs ever upward to God’s grandest vistas, until we receive “all that [the] Father hath.”²

The wise designer of that celestial road has erected caution signs for our journey. The oath and covenant of the priesthood contains this soul-searching warning: “I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves.”³

Why would God command us to beware? He knows that Satan is an actual being⁴ who seeks to drag down our souls into the gulf of misery.⁵ God also knows that lurking within priesthood holders is a “natural man”⁶ “prone to wander.”⁷ Thus, prophets invite us to “put off the old man”⁸ and “put on Christ”⁹ through faith, repentance, saving ordinances, and daily gospel living.

Avoiding Tragedy

While ascending the priesthood path, any boy or man can be dragged down if he fails to beware. Have you been stunned and heartbroken by the unexpected fall of an outstanding young man, newly returned

missionary, respected priesthood leader, or beloved family member?

The Old Testament story of David is a tragic example of squandered priesthood power. Although he defeated Goliath while young and lived righteously for decades,¹⁰ this prophet-king was still spiritually vulnerable. In that crucial moment when from his rooftop he saw beautiful Bathsheba bathing, no moral life-guard stood near to shout, “Beware, David, you fool!” His failure to beware concerning himself¹¹ and to act on promptings of the Spirit¹² led to the loss of his eternal family.¹³

Brethren, if even mighty David can be swept off the road to exaltation, how can we avoid a similar fate?

The twin guardrails of deep personal conversion and strong family relations help keep us on the heavenly highway.

Knowing this, Satan dislodges conversion-crushing and family-fracturing boulders to cross our priesthood path. Thankfully, Jesus Christ and His prophets have placed “Beware” signs along the way. They consistently warn us of conversion-crushing pride¹⁴ and family-fracturing sins such as anger, greed, and lust.

Long ago, Moses counseled, “Beware lest thou forget the Lord.”¹⁵ In our fast-paced and entertainment-saturated world, men are still quick to “forget the Lord, . . . to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one.”¹⁶

Deepen Conversion and Strengthen Family

To stay safely on the priesthood path amid rock slides of temptation, I remind us of six fundamental principles that deepen conversion and strengthen family.

First, praying always opens the door for divine help to “conquer Satan.”¹⁷ Each time Jesus alerts priesthood



holders to “beware, for Satan desireth to sift [you],” He prescribes prayer as the temptation-countering action.¹⁸ President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. . . . A man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees.”¹⁹

Second, studying ancient and modern scripture connects us to God. The Lord cautioned Church members to “beware how they hold [the prophets] lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall.”²⁰ To avoid this sobering condemnation, we should diligently read the scriptures as well as Church magazines and websites that enable us to “be counseled in an intimate and personal way by [the Lord’s] chosen prophet.”²¹

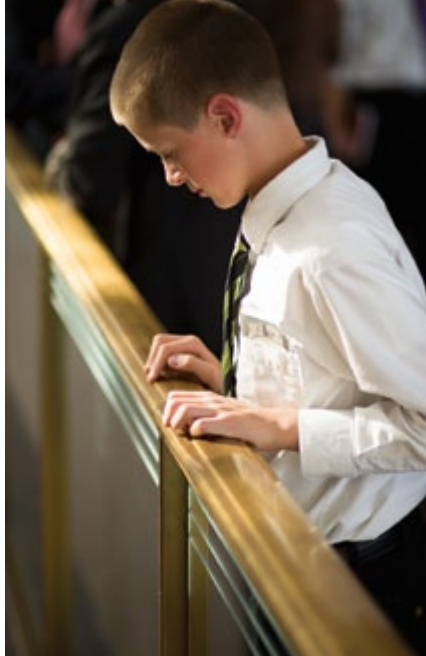
Third, worthily participating in ordinances prepares us to take “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide.”²² When the Savior warned, “Beware lest ye are deceived,” He promised we will not be if we “seek . . . earnestly the best gifts” of the Spirit.²³ Worthily partaking of the sacrament each week qualifies members to “always have his Spirit to be with them.”²⁴ In temple worship we may “receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost.”²⁵

Fourth, showing genuine love is at the heart of personal conversion and family relations. King Benjamin directed, “Beware lest there shall arise contentions among you.”²⁶ Never forget that Satan is the “father of contention”²⁷ and seeks that family members “fight and quarrel.”²⁸ Brethren, if we are emotionally, verbally, or physically abusive to any member of our

family, or bully any person, then we lose priesthood power.²⁹ Choose to control anger. Family members should hear blessings from our mouths, not cursings. We are to influence others only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and charity.³⁰

Fifth, obeying the law of tithing is an essential element of faith and family unity. Because Satan uses greed and the pursuit of possessions to sweep families off the celestial highway, Jesus advised, “Beware of covetousness.”³¹ Covetousness is restrained as we project our income, pay an honest tithe and generous fast offering, budget needed expenses, avoid unnecessary debt, save for future needs, and become temporally self-reliant. God’s promise to us is, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”³²

Sixth, fully living the law of chastity yields confidence to stand “in the presence of God” with the Holy Ghost as our “constant companion.”³³ Satan is assaulting virtue and marriage with an avalanche of obscenity. When the Lord warned adulterers to “beware and repent speedily,” His definition extended beyond the physical act of adultery to the lustful thoughts that precede it.³⁴ Modern prophets and apostles have spoken often and clearly about the plague of pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: “[Pornography] is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. . . . The time has come for any one of us who is so involved to pull himself out of the mire.”³⁵ If you are tempted to violate the law of chastity in any form, follow Joseph of Egypt’s example, who “fled, and got him out.”³⁶



These six fundamental principles help priesthood holders continue up the heavenly highway safely between the spiritual guardrails of personal conversion and family relationships. Young men, obeying these principles will prepare you for temple covenants, full-time missionary service, and eternal marriage. Husbands and fathers, living these principles will qualify you to preside over the home in righteousness, serving as your family's spiritual leader, with your wife as an equal partner.³⁷ The priesthood path is a journey filled with joy.

Staying on the Priesthood Path

Returning to my experiences as a young man, I remember one crossing of the Rocky Mountains. After passing a "Beware: Falling Rocks" sign, my father noticed pebbles and small stones landing on the pavement in front of us. He quickly slowed the car to a near stop just as a basketball-sized boulder whizzed by us. Dad waited for the rock slide to cease before continuing. My father's constant attention and immediate action ensured that our family safely reached our final destination.

Brethren, Satan seeks "to destroy the souls of men."³⁸ If your soul is drifting to the edge of a spiritual cliff, stop now before you fall and steer back on course.³⁹ If you feel your soul lies wrecked at the bottom of a canyon rather than high on the priesthood path because you neglected "Beware" signs and sinned, I testify that through sincere repentance and the power of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, you can be lifted up and restored to God's heavenly highway.⁴⁰

Jesus taught, "Beware ye of . . . hypocrisy."⁴¹ If you are unworthy to exercise the priesthood, please meet with your bishop, who can help you repent. Take courage that although

the Savior affirms, "Beware . . . , and refrain from sin,"⁴² He also promises: "I, the Lord, forgive you. . . . Go your ways and sin no more."⁴³

I invite every boy and man to stay on the priesthood path by deepening your conversion and strengthening your family. Prayers, scriptures, and ordinances deepen conversion. Love, tithing, and chastity strengthen family. Avoid tragedy by heeding spiritual "Beware" signs placed along our way by God and prophets. Strive to follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ, who "suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them."⁴⁴

I promise that if men keep the priesthood covenant to "beware concerning yourselves,"⁴⁵ we and our families can be assured of safely and joyfully reaching our exalted destination in the celestial kingdom. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43.
4. See Joseph Smith—History 1:16; see also Moses 1:12–22.
5. See Helaman 5:12; see also 2 Nephi 1:13; Helaman 7:16.
6. Mosiah 3:19; see also 1 Corinthians 2:14.
7. "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70.
8. See Colossians 3:8–10; see also Ephesians 4:22–24.
9. Galatians 3:27; see also Romans 13:14.
10. See 1 Samuel 13:14; 17:45–47.
11. See 2 Samuel 11:1–17.
12. "You will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Spirit" (Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Youth," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 18).

13. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:39; see also Bible Dictionary, "David."
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:1; 25:14; 38:39; see also Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–7.
15. Deuteronomy 6:12; see also Deuteronomy 8:11–19.
16. Alma 46:8.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 52:12–15; see also Luke 22:31–32; Alma 37:15–17; 3 Nephi 18:18–19.
19. Thomas S. Monson, "Come unto Him in Prayer and Faith," *Liahona*, Mar. 2009, 4; *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 6.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 90:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 41:1, 12.
21. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Faith: The Essence of True Religion," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 5.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 45:57.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8; see also Ephesians 4:14; Doctrine and Covenants 52:14–16; Colossians 2:8.
24. Moroni 4:3; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; see also 3 Nephi 18:1–11.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 109:15.
26. Mosiah 2:32.
27. See 3 Nephi 11:29–30.
28. Mosiah 4:14.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–37; see also Doctrine and Covenants 63:61–63.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–45.
31. Luke 12:15; see also Doctrine and Covenants 38:39.
32. Matthew 6:33; see also 3 Nephi 13:33.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46; see also Doctrine and Covenants 67:11; Moses 1:11.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 63:14–16; see also Matthew 5:27–28; 3 Nephi 12:27–30.
35. Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Tragic Evil among Us," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 59, 62; see also Dallin H. Oaks, "Pornography," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2005, 87–90; Jeffrey R. Holland, "Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul," *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2010, 44–46.
36. Genesis 39:12.
37. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.3.
38. Doctrine and Covenants 10:27; see also 1 Peter 5:8.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 3:9–10; 1 Corinthians 10:12–13; 2 Peter 3:17.
40. See Alma 13:27–29; Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.
41. Luke 12:1; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:6–9.
42. Doctrine and Covenants 82:2.
43. Doctrine and Covenants 82:1, 7.
44. Doctrine and Covenants 20:22; see also Hebrews 2:17–18; 4:14–16.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43; see also Deuteronomy 4:9; Mosiah 4:29–30.



By President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The Joy of the Priesthood

Let us embrace and understand the wonder and privilege of the priesthood. Let us accept and love the responsibilities we are asked to fulfill.

The Joy of Flying

Many years ago a couple of fellow airline captains and I decided to fulfill a boyhood dream of restoring an antique airplane. Together we purchased a worn-down 1938 Piper Cub and started the work of returning it to its original form. The project was a labor of love. It had special meaning for me because I had learned to fly in a similar airplane when I was a young man.

This airplane was first built only 35 years after the Wright brothers made their famous first flight. Just thinking of that makes me feel very old.

The engine did not have an electric starter; as you were priming the engine from the cockpit, someone else on the ground would grab hold of the propeller and hurl it with might until the engine would run on its own. Each engine start was a moment of excitement and bravery.

Once the plane was airborne, it became clear the Piper Cub was not built for speed. As a matter of fact, when there was a strong headwind, it seemed as though we were not moving at all. I remember flying together with my teenage son, Guido, above

the autobahn in Germany, and sure enough, the cars below passed us comfortably!

But, oh, how I loved this little plane! It was the perfect way to experience the wonder and beauty of flight. You could hear, feel, smell, taste, and see what flying was all about. The Wright brothers expressed it this way: “There is [nothing] equal to that which aviators enjoy while being carried through the air on great white wings.”¹

In contrast, earlier this year I had the privilege to fly in a sophisticated F-18 fighter jet with the world-famous Blue Angels, the United States Navy’s flight demonstration team. It was like taking a flight above and along memory lane because exactly 50 years before, almost to the day, I had completed my training as an air force fighter pilot.

The F-18 flight experience, of course, was totally different from the one in the Piper Cub. It showed me a more dynamic beauty of flying. It was like applying the existing laws of aerodynamics in a more perfect way. However, flying with the Blue Angels also quickly reminded me that being a jet fighter pilot is a young man’s game.

To quote the Wright brothers again, “More than anything else the sensation [of flying] is one of perfect peace, mingled with an excitement that strains every nerve to the utmost.”² In addition, flying with the Blue Angels suggested a totally different way of having “angels” round about you and bearing you up.

If you were to ask me which of these two flying experiences I enjoyed more, I’m not sure I could tell you. In some obvious ways, they were very different, to say the least. And yet in other ways, they were very much the same.

In both the Piper Cub and the F-18, I felt the excitement, beauty, and joy of flight. In both I could feel the call of the poet to “[slip] the surly bonds of Earth and [dance] the skies on laughter-silvered wings.”³

The Same Priesthood Everywhere

Now, you might ask, what do these two totally different flying experiences have to do with our meeting today or with the priesthood we are privileged to bear or with the priesthood service we all love so much?

Brethren, isn’t it true that our individual experiences of service in the priesthood may all be quite different? We could say some of you are flying in F-18 jets, while others are flying in Piper Cubs. Some of you live in wards and stakes where every position, from assistant to the high priests group leader to the deacons quorum secretary, is filled with an active priesthood holder. Yours is the privilege to participate in a ward organization that is well staffed.

Others of you live in areas of the world where there is only a small handful of Church members and priesthood holders. You may feel alone and burdened with the weight of all that needs to be done. For you it may take a lot of personal hands-on involvement to get the engine of



priesthood service started. Sometimes it may even seem that your branch or ward is not moving forward at all.

However, no matter what your responsibilities or circumstances may be, you and I know there is always a special joy that comes from dedicated priesthood service.

I always loved flying, whether it was in a Piper Cub, an F-18, or any other plane. While in the Piper Cub, I did not complain about the lack of speed; while in the F-18, I did not grumble when the strain of the aerobatic maneuvers mercilessly revealed the realities of my advancing age.

Yes, there is always something imperfect in any situation. Yes, it is easy to find things to complain about.

But brethren, we are bearers of the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God! Each of us had hands laid upon our head, and we received the priesthood of God. We have been given authority and responsibility to act in His name as His servants on earth. Whether in a large ward or a small branch, we are called upon to serve, to bless, and to act in all things for the good of everyone and everything entrusted to our care. Could there be anything more exhilarating?

Let us understand, appreciate, and feel the joy of service in the priesthood.

The Joy of the Priesthood

My love for flying influenced the direction of my entire life. But as invigorating and blissful as my experiences as a pilot were, my experiences as a member of this Church have been much deeper, more joyful, and far more profound. As I have immersed myself in Church service, I have felt God's almighty power as well as His tender mercies.

As a pilot, I have touched the skies. As a Church member, I have felt heaven's embrace.

Every now and then, I miss sitting in a cockpit. But serving alongside my brothers and sisters in the Church easily makes up for it. Being able to feel the sublime peace and joy that grow from being a small part of this great cause and work, I would not want to miss for anything in the world.

Today we are assembled as a vast body of the priesthood. It is our sacred joy and privilege to serve the Lord and our fellowmen, to commit the best that is within us to the noble cause of lifting others and building the kingdom of God.

We know and understand that the priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God. We can easily recite this definition from memory. However, do we truly comprehend the significance of what we're saying? Let me repeat: *the priesthood is the eternal power and authority of God.*

Think of it. Through the priesthood, God created and governs the heavens and the earth.

Through this power, He redeems and exalts His children, bringing "to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."⁴

The priesthood, as the Prophet Joseph Smith explained, is "the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the . . . creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time."⁵

Our all-powerful Father in Heaven has entrusted priesthood authority to us—mortal beings who, by definition, are flawed and imperfect. He grants to us the authority to act in His name for the salvation of His children. By this great power we are authorized

to preach the gospel, administer the ordinances of salvation, help build the kingdom of God on the earth, and bless and serve our families and our fellowmen.

Available to All

This is the sacred priesthood we bear.

The priesthood, or any responsibility within it, cannot be purchased or commanded. The use of priesthood power cannot be influenced, swayed, or compelled by position, by wealth, or by influence. It is a spiritual power that operates on heavenly law. It originates in the great Heavenly Father of us all. Its power can be controlled and directed only through principles of righteousness,⁶ not self-righteousness.

Christ is the source of all true priesthood authority and power on earth.⁷ It is His work, in which we are privileged to assist. “And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care.”⁸

We do not act for personal gain, but rather we seek to serve and to lift up others. We lead not by force but through “persuasion, . . .

long-suffering, . . . gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”⁹

The priesthood of Almighty God is available to worthy men wherever they may be—no matter their ancestry, no matter how humble their circumstances, in the nearest or farthest reaches of the globe. It is available without money or any worldly price. To paraphrase the ancient prophet Isaiah, *everyone* who is thirsty can come to the waters, and no money is required to come and eat!¹⁰

And because of the eternal and unfathomable Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the priesthood of God can be available even if you have stumbled or have been unworthy in the past. Through the spiritually refining and cleansing process of repentance, you can “arise and shine forth!”¹¹ Because of the boundless, forgiving love of our Savior and Redeemer, you can lift up your eyes, become clean and worthy, and develop into righteous and noble sons of God—worthy bearers of the most sacred priesthood of Almighty God.

The Wonder and Privilege of the Priesthood

I feel a certain sadness for those who do not grasp and appreciate the

wonder and privilege of the priesthood. They are like passengers on an airplane who spend their time grumbling about the size of the packet of peanuts while they are soaring through the air, far above the clouds—something ancient kings would have given all they possessed to try and experience just once!

Brethren, we are blessed to be humble partakers of this great priesthood authority and power. Let us lift up our eyes and see, recognize, and accept this opportunity for what it really is.

Through righteous, loving, and dedicated priesthood service, we will be able to experience the true meaning of the revelation: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”¹²

Let us embrace and understand the wonder and privilege of the priesthood. Let us accept and love the responsibilities we are asked to fulfill—responsibilities in our homes and in our Church units, no matter how large or small they may be. Let us constantly increase in righteousness, dedication, and priesthood service. Let us find the joy of serving in the priesthood!

We can do this best by applying the principles of knowledge, obedience, and faith.

That means, first, we need to know and internalize the doctrine of the priesthood found in the revealed word of God. It is important for us to understand the covenants and commandments upon which the priesthood operates.¹³

Next, let us be wise and act upon this gained knowledge constantly and honorably. As we obey God’s laws, discipline our minds and bodies, and attune our actions to the patterns of righteousness taught by the prophets,

Sobral, Brazil



we will experience the joy of priesthood service.

And finally, let us deepen our faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ. Let us take upon ourselves His name and commit each single day to walk anew in the path of discipleship. Let our works make our faith perfect.¹⁴ Through discipleship we may be perfected one step at a time by serving our family, our fellowmen, and God.

When we serve in the priesthood with all our heart, might, mind, and strength, we have a promise of sublime knowledge, peace, and spiritual gifts. As we honor the holy priesthood, God will honor us, and we will “stand blameless before [Him] at the last day.”¹⁵

That we may always have eyes to see and a heart to feel the wonder and joy of the priesthood of our great and mighty God is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Wilbur Wright, in James Tobin, *To Conquer the Air: The Wright Brothers and the Great Race for Flight* (2003), 238.
2. Wright brothers, in Tobin, *To Conquer the Air*, 397.
3. John Gillespie Magee Jr., “High Flight,” in Diane Ravitch, ed., *The American Reader: Words That Moved a Nation* (1990), 486.
4. Moses 1:39.
5. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 108–9.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
7. See Hebrews 5:4–10; Doctrine and Covenants 107:3.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
10. See Isaiah 55:1.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 115:5.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; 121:34–46.
14. See James 2:22.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code to watch or share a short video clip (1–2 minutes) of this message.



By President Henry B. Eyring

First Counselor in the First Presidency

Help Them Aim High

With your guidance, those you lead will be able to see, want, and believe they can achieve their full potential for service in God’s kingdom.

I’m so grateful for this opportunity to be in this great priesthood meeting, to have heard such wonderful teaching and testimony. It made me think of my own experience. Almost everything that I’ve been able to accomplish as a priesthood bearer is because individuals who knew me saw things in me that I couldn’t see.

As a young father I prayed to know what contributions my children might make in the Lord’s kingdom. For the boys, I knew they could have priesthood opportunities. For the girls, I knew they would give service representing the Lord. All would be doing His work. I knew each was an individual, and therefore the Lord would have given them specific gifts for each to use in His service.

Now, I cannot tell every father and every leader of youth the details of what is best for you to do. But I can promise you that you will bless them to help them recognize the spiritual gifts with which they were born. Every person is different and has a different contribution to make. No one is destined to fail. As you seek revelation to see gifts God sees in those you lead in the priesthood—particularly the young—you will be blessed to lift their sights to the service they can perform.

With your guidance, those you lead will be able to see, want, and believe they can achieve their full potential for service in God’s kingdom.

With my own children, I prayed for revelation to know how I could help each of them individually prepare for specific opportunities to serve God. And then I tried to help them visualize, hope, and work for this future. I carved a board for each son with a quotation from scripture that described his special gifts and an image that represented this gift. Beneath the picture and the legend, I carved the dates of each boy’s baptism and ordination into priesthood offices, with his height marked at the date of each milestone.

I will describe the boards I carved for each son to help him see his spiritual gifts and what he might contribute in the Lord’s work. You can be inspired to recognize, as I did, specific gifts and unique opportunities for each of the youth you love and lead.

When my oldest son became a deacon and an Eagle Scout, a picture of an eagle came to my mind as I thought of him and his future. We were living in Idaho near the base of the South Teton mountain, where we hiked together and watched the eagles



soar. That picture in my mind gave me the feeling of Isaiah's words:

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."¹

In fact, with that oldest son, we had stopped hiking below the peak of the South Teton because my son grew

weary. He wanted to stop. He said, "Will I always be sorry that we didn't make it to the top? Dad, you go on—I don't want you to be disappointed."

I replied, "I'll never be disappointed, and you'll never be sorry. We'll always remember that we climbed here together." At the top of his height board, I carved an eagle and the inscription "On Eagles' Wings."

Over the years, my son soared higher as a missionary than I had imagined in my fondest hopes. In the challenges of the mission field, some of what he faced seemed to be above his reach. For the boy you lift,

it may be, as it was for my son, that the Lord lifted him higher in preaching the gospel in a difficult language than I had thought possible. If you will try with any young man to sense his priesthood possibilities, I promise you the Lord will tell you as much as you need. The boy may have potential even beyond what the Lord will reveal to you. Help him aim high.

The boy you are encouraging may seem too timid to be a powerful priesthood servant. Another one of my sons was so shy as a little boy that he wouldn't walk into a store and talk to a clerk. He was too afraid. I worried as I prayed over his priesthood future. I thought of him in the mission field—that didn't sound promising. I was led to a scripture in Proverbs: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."²

I carved "Bold as a Lion" on his board, beneath an image of a large lion's head roaring. On his mission and in the years that followed, he fulfilled the hope in my carving. My once-shy son preached the gospel with great conviction and faced dangers with bravery. He was magnified in his responsibilities to represent the Lord.

That can happen for the young man you are leading. You need to build his faith that the Lord can transform him into a servant braver than the timid boy you now see.

We know the Lord makes His servants bold. The young boy Joseph who saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a grove of trees was transformed into a spiritual giant. Parley P. Pratt saw that when the Prophet Joseph Smith rebuked the vile guards who held them captive. Elder Pratt recorded:

"On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:



“SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!”

Of that experience, Elder Pratt wrote, “Dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri.”³

The Lord will give His righteous servants opportunities to be bold as lions when they speak in His name and as witnesses in His priesthood.

Another son, even as a boy, had a large circle of friends who often sought his company. He forged bonds easily among people. As I prayed and tried to foresee his contribution in God’s kingdom, I felt that he would have the power to draw people together in love and unity.

That led me to the account in the Doctrine and Covenants that describes the efforts of priesthood elders to build Zion in Missouri to the acclaim of angels who saw their efforts and their contributions. That required great sacrifice. The revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants says, “Nevertheless, ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you.”⁴

On my son’s height board, I carved “Angels Rejoice over You.”

This son’s great ability to gather and influence people extended well beyond his school years. With fellow

priesthood holders, he organized stake activities that gave the youth in his area faith to endure and even triumph in difficult situations. As he built faith in these young men and women, he helped build outposts of Zion in the urban centers of America. In the carving, I had the angels blowing trumpets, which may not be exactly how they do it, but it was easier to carve a trumpet than a shout.

Angels rejoice as priesthood leaders across the world build Zion in their wards, stakes, and missions. And they will rejoice over the young men and women you help to build Zion wherever they are and in whatever circumstances they may be. Zion is the result of people bound by covenant and love. I invite you to help your youth to join.

For one of my sons, I was prompted to carve a sun—that is, the sun in the sky—and the words from the Savior’s Intercessory Prayer: “This Is Life Eternal.” Near the end of His mortal ministry, the Savior prayed to His Father:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”⁵

My son has given priesthood service across three continents but most importantly in his home and within his family. He has built his life around them. He works close to home, and he often returns to join his wife and younger children at the lunch hour. His family lives very near Sister Eyring

and me. They care for our yard as though it were their own. This son is living not only to qualify for eternal life but also to live surrounded eternally by grateful family members whom he is gathering around him.

Life eternal is to live in unity, in families, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Eternal life is only possible through the keys of the priesthood of God, which were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Holding that eternal goal before the youth you lead is as great a gift as you could give them. You will do it primarily by example in your own family. Those you lead may not have a family in the Church, but I challenge you to help them feel and want the love of family on both sides of the veil.

The height boards I have described are only one way to help young people glimpse the grandeur God sees in them and their futures and the unique service He has prepared them to give. He will help you see how to do it for your children or for other youth you lead. But as you prayerfully seek to glimpse this future for yourself and to communicate it to the young person one on one, you will come to know that God loves each of His children as individuals and sees great and unique gifts in each of them.

As a father I was blessed to see great futures in God’s kingdom for my daughters as well as my sons. When I prayerfully sought guidance, I was shown a way to help my daughters recognize the trust God had placed in them as servants who could build His kingdom.

When my daughters were young, I saw that we could help others feel the love of those beyond the veil, throughout the generations. I knew that love comes from service and inspires hope of life eternal.

So we carved breadboards on which we placed a loaf of homemade



General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

October 2012

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Claudio D. Zivic



W. Craig Zurich

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(in alphabetical order)



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Koichi Aoyagi



Randall K. Bennett



Bruce A. Carlson



J. Devin Cornish



Bradley D. Foster



O. Vincent Hildeck



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Per G. Mullin



James B. Martino



Jaro Mazzagardi



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Kent D. Watson



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Second Counselor



Thanks to what President Thomas S. Monson called “unprecedented coverage,” Latter-day Saints throughout the world enjoy the blessings of general conference. Pictured clockwise from top left are members and missionaries in Quelimane, Mozambique; Tallinn, Estonia; Warsaw, Poland; Mexico City, Mexico; Edinburgh, Scotland; Taipei, Taiwan; and Gaborone, Botswana.



bread and went together to deliver our offering to widows, widowers, and families. The legend I carved on each of those breadboards read, “J’aime et J’espere,” French for “I love and I hope.” The evidence of their unique spiritual gifts appeared not just on the boards I carved but more clearly as we distributed them to those who needed, in the midst of pain or loss, reassurance that the love of the Savior and His Atonement could produce a perfect brightness of hope. This is life eternal for my daughters and for each of us.

Now, you may be thinking, “Brother Eyring, are you saying that I have to learn how to carve?” The answer is no. I learned to carve only with the help of a kind and gifted mentor, then-Elder Boyd K. Packer. What little skill I achieved can be attributed to his great gift as a carver and his patience as a teacher. Only heaven can provide such a mentor as President Packer. But there are many ways you can shape children’s hearts without carving wooden boards or height boards for them.

For example, new communication technologies allow sharing messages of faith and hope across the miles that separate us, instantaneously and at little or no cost. My wife helps me do this. We begin by talking by telephone with grandchildren or children we can reach. We ask them to share stories of their personal successes and their service rendered. We also invite them to send photos of those activities. We use those photos to illustrate a few paragraphs of text. We add one or two verses from the Book of Mormon. Perhaps Nephi and Mormon wouldn’t be very impressed by the spiritual quality of our content or the limited effort required to create what we call “The Family Journal: The Small Plates.” But Sister Eyring and I are blessed by the effort. We feel inspired in selecting

the passages of scripture and the brief messages of testimony we write. And we see evidence in their lives of their hearts being turned toward us and to the Savior and upward.

There are other ways to reach out; you are already engaged in many of them. Your habits of family prayer and scripture reading will create more lasting memories and greater changes of heart than you may realize now. Even apparently temporal activities, such as attending an athletic event or watching a movie, can shape a child’s heart. What matters is not the activity but the feelings that come as you do it. I have discovered a good test for identifying activities with the potential to make a great difference in a young person’s life. It is that they suggest the activity out of an interest they feel has come to them as a gift from God. I know that is possible from my own experience.

When I became a deacon at the age of 12, I lived in New Jersey, 50 miles (80 km) from New York City. I dreamed of being a great baseball player. My father agreed to take me to see a game played in the old and storied Yankee Stadium, in the Bronx. I can still see the swing of the bat as Joe DiMaggio hit a home run into the center field stands with my father sitting beside me, the only time we ever went to a major league baseball game together.

But another day with my father shaped my life forever. He took me from New Jersey to the home of an ordained patriarch in Salt Lake City. I had never seen the man before. My father left me at the doorstep. The patriarch led me to a chair, placed his hands on my head, and pronounced a blessing as a gift from God that included a declaration of the great desire of my heart.

He said that I was one of those of whom it had been said, “Blessed are

the peacemakers.”⁶ I was so surprised that a perfect stranger could know my heart that I opened my eyes to see the room where such a miracle was happening. That blessing of my possibilities has shaped my life, my marriage, and my priesthood service.

From that experience and what has followed it, I can testify, “For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.”⁷

By the Lord revealing to me a gift, I have been able to recognize and prepare for opportunities to exercise it to the blessing of those I love and serve.

God knows our gifts. My challenge to you and to me is to pray to know the gifts we have been given, to know how to develop them, and to recognize the opportunities to serve others that God provides us. But most of all, I pray that you will be inspired to help others discover their special gifts from God to serve.

I promise you that if you ask, you will be blessed to help and lift others to their full potential in the service of those they lead and love. I testify to you that God lives, Jesus is the Christ, this is the priesthood of God, which we hold, and God has prepared us with special gifts to serve Him beyond our fondest hopes. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Isaiah 40:29–31.
2. Proverbs 28:1.
3. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 211.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 62:3.
5. John 17:3–4.
6. Matthew 5:9.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.



Short Video Highlight

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By President Thomas S. Monson

See Others as They May Become

We must develop the capacity to see men not as they are at present but as they may become.

My dear brethren, twice each year this magnificent Conference Center is filled to capacity with the priesthood of God as we gather to hear messages of inspiration. There is a marvelous spirit which permeates the general priesthood meeting of the Church. This spirit emanates from the Conference Center and enters every building where the sons of God assemble. We have surely felt that spirit tonight.

Some years ago, before this beautiful Conference Center was built, a visitor to Temple Square in Salt Lake City attended a general conference session in the Tabernacle. He listened to the messages of the Brethren. He paid attention to the prayers. He heard the beautiful music by the Tabernacle Choir. He marveled at the grandeur of the magnificent Tabernacle organ. When the meeting had ended he was heard to say, "I would give everything I possess if I knew that what those speakers said today was true." In essence he was saying, "I wish that I had a testimony of the gospel."

There is absolutely nothing in this world that will provide more comfort and happiness than a testimony of the

truth. Although to varying degrees, I believe every man or young man here tonight has a testimony. If you feel that you do not yet have the depth of testimony you would wish, I admonish you to work to achieve such a testimony. If it is strong and deep, labor to keep it that way. How blessed we are to have a knowledge of the truth.

My message tonight, brethren, is that there are countless individuals who have little or no testimony right now, those who could and would receive such a testimony if we would be willing to make the effort to share ours and to help them change. In some instances *we* can provide the incentive for change. I mention first those who are members but who are not at present fully committed to the gospel.

Many years ago, at an area conference held in Helsinki, Finland, I heard a powerful, memorable, and motivating message given in a mothers and daughters' session. I have not forgotten that message, though nearly 40 years have passed since I heard it. Among many truths the speaker discussed, she said that a woman needs to be told she is beautiful. She needs

to be told she is valued. She needs to be told she is worthwhile.

Brethren, I know that men are very much like women in this regard. We need to be told that we amount to something, that we are capable and worthwhile. We need to be given a chance to serve. For those members who have slipped from activity or who hold back and remain noncommittal, we can prayerfully seek for some way to reach them. Asking them to serve in some capacity may just be the incentive they need to return to full activity. But those leaders who could help in this regard are sometimes reluctant to do so. We need to bear in mind that people can change. They can put behind them bad habits. They can repent from transgressions. They can bear the priesthood worthily. And they can serve the Lord diligently. May I provide a few illustrations.

When I first became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I had the opportunity to accompany President N. Eldon Tanner, a counselor to President David O. McKay, to a stake conference in Alberta, Canada. During the meeting, the stake president read the names of four brethren who had qualified to be ordained elders. These were men whom President Tanner knew, for at one time he had lived in that area. But President Tanner knew and remembered them as they once were and did not know that they had turned their lives around and had fully qualified to become elders.

The stake president read the name of the first man and asked him to stand. President Tanner whispered to me, "Look at him. I never thought he would make it." The stake president read the name of the second man, and he stood. President Tanner nudged me again and reported his astonishment. And so it was with all four of the brethren.



After the meeting, President Tanner and I had the opportunity to congratulate these four brethren. They had demonstrated that men can change.

During the 1940s and 1950s, an American prison warden, Clinton Duffy, was well known for his efforts to rehabilitate the men in his prison. Said one critic, “You should know that leopards don’t change their spots!”

Replied Warden Duffy, “You should know I don’t work with leopards. I work with men, and men change every day.”¹

Many years ago it was my opportunity to serve as president of the Canadian Mission. There we had a branch with very limited priesthood. We always had a missionary presiding over the branch. I received a strong impression that we needed to have a member of the branch preside there.

We had one adult member in the branch who was a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood but who didn’t attend or participate enough to be advanced in the priesthood. I felt inspired to call him as the branch

president. I shall always remember the day that I had an interview with him. I told him that the Lord had inspired me to call him to be the president of the branch. After much protest on his part, and much encouragement on the part of his wife, he indicated that he would serve. I ordained him a priest.

It was the beginning of a new day for that man. His life was quickly put in order, and he assured me that he would live the commandments as he was expected to live them. In a few months he was ordained an elder. He and his wife and family eventually went to the temple and were sealed. Their children served missions and married in the house of the Lord.

Sometimes letting our brethren know they are needed and valued can help them take that step into commitment and full activity. This can be true of priesthood holders regardless of age. It is our responsibility to give them opportunities to live as they should. We can help them to overcome their shortcomings. We must develop the capacity to see men not

as they are at present but as they may become when they receive testimonies of the gospel of Christ.

I once attended a meeting in Leadville, Colorado. Leadville is situated at an altitude of over 10,000 feet (3,000 m). I remember that particular meeting because of the high altitude, but I also remember it for what took place that evening. There were just a small number of priesthood holders present. As with the branch in the Canadian Mission, that branch was presided over by a missionary and always had been.

That night we had a lovely meeting, but as we were singing the closing song, the inspiration came to me that there ought to be a local branch president presiding. I turned to the mission president and asked, “Isn’t there someone here who could preside—a local man?”

He replied, “I don’t know of one.”

During the singing of that song, I looked carefully at the men who were seated on the first three rows. My attention seemed to be focused on one of the brethren. I said to the

mission president, “Could he serve as the branch president?”

He replied, “I don’t know. Perhaps he could.”

I said, “President, I’ll take him into the other room and interview him. You speak after the closing song until we return.”

When the two of us walked back in the room, the mission president concluded his testimony. I presented the name of the brother to be the new branch president. From that day forward, Leadville, Colorado, had a local member leading the unit there.

The same principle, brethren, applies to those who are not yet members. We should develop the capacity to see men not as they are but as they can become when they are members of the Church, when they have a testimony of the gospel, and when their lives are in harmony with its teachings.

Back in the year 1961, a worldwide conference was held for mission presidents, and every mission president in the Church was brought to Salt Lake City for those meetings. I came to Salt Lake City from my mission in Toronto, Canada.

In one particular meeting, N. Eldon Tanner, who was then an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, had just returned from his initial experience of presiding over the missions in Great Britain and western Europe. He told of a missionary who had been the most successful missionary whom he had met in all of the interviews he had conducted. He said that as he interviewed that missionary, he said to him, “I suppose that all of the people whom you baptized came into the Church by way of referrals.”

The young man answered, “No, we found them all by tracting.”

Brother Tanner asked him what was different about his approach—why he

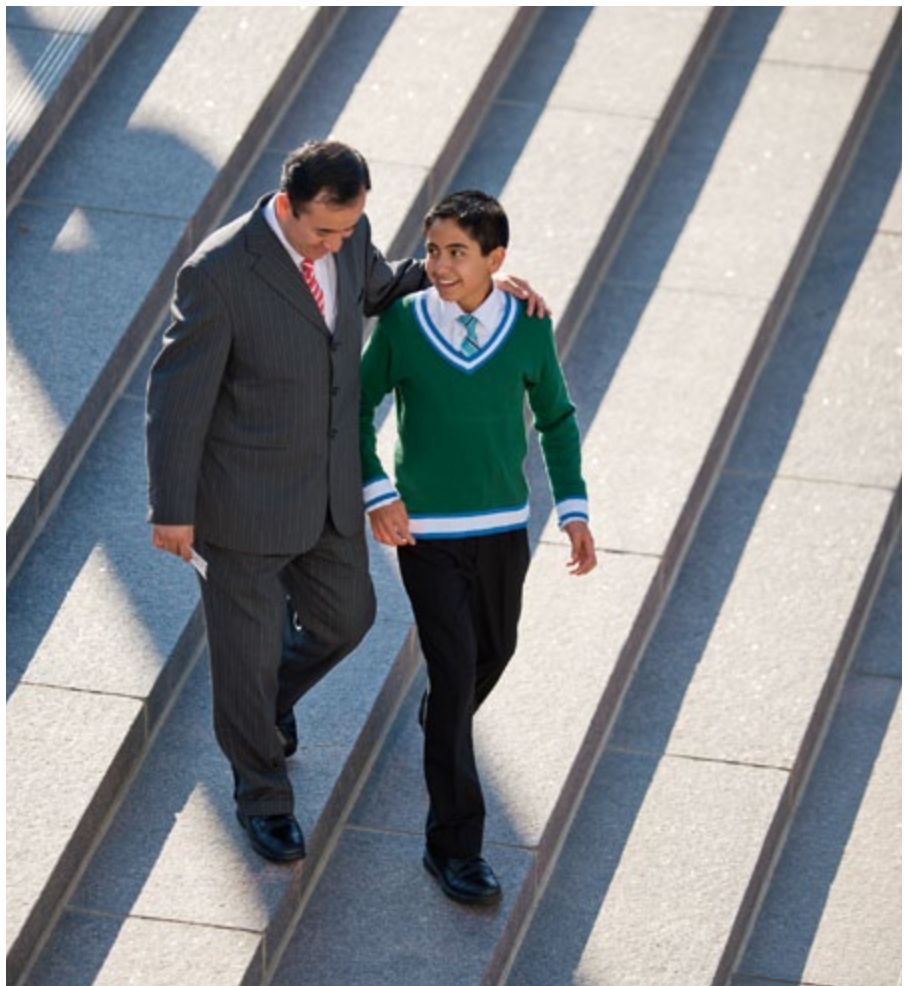
had such phenomenal success when others didn’t. The young man said that he attempted to baptize every person whom he met. He said that if he knocked on the door and saw a man smoking a cigar and dressed in old clothes and seemingly uninterested in anything—particularly religion—the missionary would picture in his own mind what that man would look like under a different set of circumstances. In his mind he would look at him as clean-shaven and wearing a white shirt and white trousers. And the missionary could see himself leading that man into the waters of baptism. He said, “When I look at someone that way, I have the capacity to bear my testimony to him in a way that can touch his heart.”

We have the responsibility to look

at our friends, our associates, our neighbors this way. Again, we have the responsibility to see individuals not as they are but rather as they can become. I would plead with you to think of them in this way.

Brethren, the Lord told us something about the importance of this priesthood that we hold. He told us that we receive it with an oath and a covenant. He gave unto us the instruction that we must be faithful and true in all that we receive, and that we have the responsibility to keep this covenant even unto the end. And then all that the Father has shall be given unto us.²

Courage is the word we need to hear and hold near our hearts—courage to turn our backs on temptation, courage to lift up our voices in testimony to all whom we meet,



remembering that everyone must have an opportunity to hear the message. It is not an easy thing for most to do this. But we can come to believe in the words of Paul to Timothy:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.”³

In May of 1974, I was with Brother John H. Groberg in the Tongan islands. We had an appointment to visit the king of Tonga, and we met with him in a formal session. We exchanged the normal pleasantries. However, before we left, John Groberg said something that was out of the ordinary. He said, “Your Majesty, you should really become a Mormon and your subjects as well, for then your problems and their problems would largely be solved.”

The king smiled broadly and answered, “John Groberg, perhaps you’re right.”

I thought of the Apostle Paul before Agrippa. I thought of Agrippa’s response to Paul’s testimony: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”⁴ Brother Groberg had the courage to bear his testimony to a king.

Tonight there are many thousands of our number who are serving the Lord full-time as His missionaries. In response to a call, they have left behind home, family, friends, and school and have gone forward to serve. Those who don’t understand ask the question, “Why do they respond so readily and willingly give so much?”

Our missionaries could well answer in the words of Paul, that peerless missionary of an earlier day: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”⁵

The holy scriptures contain no proclamation more relevant, no responsibility more binding, no instruction more direct than the injunction given by the resurrected Lord as He appeared in Galilee to the eleven disciples. Said He:

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”⁶

This divine command, coupled with its glorious promise, is our watchword today, as it was in the meridian of time. Missionary work is an identifying feature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Always has it been; ever shall it be. As the Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”⁷

Within two short years, all of the full-time missionaries currently serving in this royal army of God will have concluded their full-time labors and will have returned to their homes and loved ones. Their replacements are found tonight in the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood of the Church. Young men, are you ready to respond? Are you willing to work? Are you prepared to serve?

President John Taylor summed up the requirements: “The kind of men we want as bearers of this gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; . . . men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God[;] . . . men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity.”⁸

Brethren, to each of us comes the mandate to share the gospel of

Christ. When our lives comply with God’s own standard, those within our sphere of influence will never speak the lament, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”⁹

The perfect Shepherd of souls, the missionary who redeemed mankind, gave us His divine assurance:

“If it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!”¹⁰

Of Him who spoke these words, I declare my personal witness. He is the Son of God, our Redeemer, and our Savior.

I pray that we will have the courage to extend the hand of fellowship, the tenacity to try and try again, and the humility needed to seek guidance from our Father as we fulfill our mandate to share the gospel. The responsibility is upon us, brethren. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. In Bill Sands, *The Seventh Step* (1967), 9.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–39.
3. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.
4. Acts 26:28.
5. 1 Corinthians 9:16.
6. Matthew 28:18–20.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 73.
9. Jeremiah 8:20.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16.



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

Where Is the Pavilion?

The pavilion that seems to intercept divine aid does not cover God but occasionally covers us. God is never hidden, yet sometimes we are.

In the depths of his anguish in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith cried out: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”¹ Many of us, in moments of personal anguish, feel that God is far from us. The pavilion that seems to intercept divine aid does not cover God but occasionally covers us. God is never hidden, yet sometimes we are, covered by a pavilion of motivations that draw us away from God and make Him seem distant and inaccessible. Our own desires, rather than a feeling of “Thy will be done,”² create the feeling of a pavilion blocking God. God is not unable to see us or communicate with us, but we may be unwilling to listen or submit to His will and His time.

Our feelings of separation from God will diminish as we become more childlike before Him. That is not easy in a world where the opinions of other human beings can have such an effect on our motives. But it will help us recognize this truth: God is close to us and aware of us and never hides from His faithful children.

My three-year-old granddaughter illustrated the power of innocence and

humility to connect us with God. She went with her family to the open house of the Brigham City Temple in Utah. In one of the rooms of that beautiful building, she looked around and asked, “Mommy, where is Jesus?” Her mother explained that she would not see Jesus in the temple, but she would be able to feel His influence in her heart. Eliza carefully considered her mother’s response and then seemed satisfied and said, “Oh, Jesus is gone helping someone,” she concluded.

No pavilion obscured Eliza’s understanding or obstructed her view of reality. God is close to her, and she feels close to Him. She knew that the temple is the house of the Lord but also understood that the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ has a body and can only be in one place at a time.³ If He was not at His house, she recognized that He must be in another place. And from what she knows of the Savior, she knew that He would be somewhere doing good for His Father’s children. It was clear that she had hoped to see Jesus, not for a confirming miracle of His existence but simply because she loved Him.

The Spirit could reveal to her

childlike mind and heart the comfort all of us need and want. Jesus Christ lives, knows us, watches over us, and cares for us. In moments of pain, loneliness, or confusion, we do not need to see Jesus Christ to know that He is aware of our circumstances and that His mission is to bless.

I know from my own life that Eliza’s experience can be our own long after we leave childhood. In the early years of my career, I worked hard to secure a tenured professorship at Stanford University. I thought I had made a good life for myself and for my family. We lived close to my wife’s parents in very comfortable surroundings. By the world’s standards, I had achieved success. But I was given by the Church the chance to leave California and go to Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. My lifetime professional objectives might have been a pavilion dividing me from a loving Father who knew better than I did what my future could hold. But I was blessed to know that whatever success I had in my career and family life to that point was a gift from God. And so, like a child, I knelt in prayer to ask what I should do. I was able to hear a quiet voice in my mind that said, “It’s my school.” There was no pavilion shielding me from God. In faith and humility, I submitted my will to His and felt His care and closeness.

My years at Ricks College, during which I tried to seek God’s will and do it, kept the pavilion from covering me or obscuring God’s active role in my life. As I sought to do His work, I felt close to Him and felt assurance that He knew of my affairs and cared deeply for my happiness. But as they had at Stanford, worldly motivations began to present themselves to me. One was an attractive job offer, extended just as I was finishing my fifth year as



president of Ricks College. I considered the offer and prayed about it and even discussed it with the First Presidency. They responded with warmth and a little humor but certainly not with any direction. President Spencer W. Kimball listened to me describe the offer I had received from a large corporation and said: “Well, Hal, that sounds like a wonderful opportunity! And if we ever needed you, we’d know where to find you.” They would have known where to find me, but my desires for professional success might have created a pavilion that would make it hard for me to find God and harder for me to listen to and follow His invitations.

My wife, sensing this, had a strong impression that we were not to leave Ricks College. I said, “That’s good enough for me.” But she insisted, wisely, that I must get my own revelation. And so I prayed again. This time I did receive direction, in the form of a voice in my mind that said, “I’ll let you stay at Ricks College a little longer.” My personal ambitions might have

clouded my view of reality and made it hard for me to receive revelation.

Thirty days after I was blessed with the inspired decision to turn down the job offer and stay at Ricks College, the Teton Dam burst nearby. God knew that dam would burst and that hundreds of people would need help. He let me seek counsel and gain His permission to stay at Ricks College. He knew all the reasons that my service might still be valuable at the college and in Rexburg. So I was there to ask Heavenly Father frequently in prayer that He would have me do those things that would help the people whose property and lives had been damaged. I spent hours working with other people to clear mud and water from homes. My desire to know and do His will gave me a soul-stretching opportunity.

That incident illustrates another way we can create a barrier to knowing God’s will or feeling His love for us: we can’t insist on *our* timetable when the Lord has His own. I thought I had spent enough time in my service

in Rexburg and was in a hurry to move on. Sometimes our insistence on acting according to our own timetable can obscure His will for us.

In Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph asked the Lord to punish those who persecuted the members of the Church in Missouri. His prayer was for sure and swift retribution. But the Lord responded that in “not many years hence,”⁴ He would deal with those enemies of the Church. In the 24th and 25th verses of the 121st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, He says:

“Behold, mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgment in the season thereof, for them all;

“For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his works shall be.”⁵

We remove the pavilion when we feel and pray, “Thy will be done” and “in Thine own time.” His time should be soon enough for us since we know that He wants only what is best.

One of my daughters-in-law spent many years feeling that God had placed a pavilion over her. She was a young mother of three who longed for more children. After two miscarriages, her prayers of pleading grew anguished. As more barren years passed, she felt tempted to anger. When her youngest went off to school, the emptiness of her house seemed to mock her focus on motherhood—so did the unplanned and even unwanted pregnancies of acquaintances. She felt as committed and consecrated as Mary, who declared, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”⁶ But although she spoke these words in her heart, she could hear nothing in reply.

Hoping to lift her spirits, her husband invited her to join him on a business trip to California. While he attended meetings, she walked along the beautiful, empty beach. Her heart

ready to burst, she prayed aloud. For the first time, she asked not for another child but for a divine errand. “Heavenly Father,” she cried, “I will give you all of my time; please show me how to fill it.” She expressed her willingness to take her family wherever they might be required to go. That prayer produced an unexpected feeling of peace. It did not satisfy her mind’s craving for certainty, but for the first time in years, it calmed her heart.

The prayer removed the pavilion and opened the windows of heaven. Within two weeks she learned that she was expecting a child. The new baby was just one year old when a mission call came to my son and my daughter-in-law. Having promised to go and do anything, anywhere, she put fear aside and took her children overseas. In the mission field she had another child—on a missionary transfer day.

Submitting fully to heaven’s will, as this young mother did, is essential to removing the spiritual pavilions we sometimes put over our heads. But it does not guarantee immediate answers to our prayers.

Abraham’s heart seems to have been right long before Sarah conceived Isaac and before they received their promised land. Heaven had other purposes to fulfill first. Those purposes included not only building Abraham and Sarah’s faith but also teaching them eternal truths that they shared with others on their long, circuitous route to the land prepared for them. The Lord’s delays often seem long; some last a lifetime. But they are always calculated to bless. They need never be times of loneliness or sorrow or impatience.

Although His time is not always our time, we can be sure that the Lord keeps His promises. For any of you who now feel that He is hard to reach, I testify that the day will come that we

all will see Him face to face. Just as there is nothing now to obscure His view of us, there will be nothing to obscure our view of Him. We will all stand before Him, in person. Like my granddaughter, we want to see Jesus Christ now, but our certain reunion with Him at the judgment bar will be more pleasing if we first do the things that make Him as familiar to us as we are to Him. As we serve Him, we become like Him, and we feel closer to Him as we approach that day when nothing will hide our view.

The movement toward God can be ongoing. “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,”⁷ the Savior teaches. And then He tells us how:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁸

As we do what He would have us do for His Father’s children, the Lord considers it kindness to Him, and we will feel closer to Him as we feel His love and His approval. In time we will become like Him and will think of the Judgment Day with happy anticipation.

The pavilion that seems to be hiding you from God may be fear of man rather than this desire to serve others. The Savior’s only motivation was to help people. Many of you, as I have, have felt fear in approaching someone you have offended or who has hurt you. And yet I have seen the Lord melt hearts time after time, including my own. And so I challenge you to go for the Lord to someone, despite any fear you may have, to extend love and forgiveness. I promise you that as you do, you will feel the love of the Savior



for that person and His love for you, and it will not seem to come from a great distance. For you, that challenge may be in a family, it may be in a community, or it may be across a nation.

But if you go for the Lord to bless others, He will see and reward it. If you do this often enough and long enough, you will feel a change in your very nature through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Not only will you feel closer to Him, but you will also feel more and more that you are becoming like Him. Then, when you do see Him, as we all will, it will be for you as it was for Moroni when he said: “And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.”⁹

If we serve with faith, humility, and a desire to do God’s will, I testify that the judgment bar of the great Jehovah will be pleasing. We will see our loving Father and His Son as They see us now—with perfect clarity and with perfect love. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
2. See Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2; 3 Nephi 13:10; Ether 12:29; Doctrine and Covenants 109:44; Moses 4:2.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:15.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:24–25.
6. Luke 1:38.
7. Matthew 25:34.
8. Matthew 25:35–40.
9. Moroni 10:34.



Short Video Highlight

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By President Boyd K. Packer

President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Atonement

Wherever our members and missionaries may go, our message is one of faith and hope in the Savior Jesus Christ.

My message is directed to those among us who are suffering, burdened down with guilt and weakness and failure, sorrow, and despair.

In 1971, I was assigned to stake conferences in Western Samoa, including the organization of a new stake on Upolu island. After interviews we chartered a small plane to Savai’i island to hold a stake conference there. The plane landed on a grassy field at Faala and was to return the next afternoon to take us back to Upolu island.

The day we were to return from Savai’i, it was raining. Knowing the plane could not land on the wet field, we drove to the west end of the island, where there was a runway of sorts atop a coral break. We waited until dark, but no plane arrived. Finally, we learned by radio that there was a storm, and the plane could not take off. We radioed back that we would come by boat. Someone was to meet us at Mulifanua.

As we pulled out of port on Savai’i, the captain of the 40-foot (12 m) boat asked the mission president if he had a flashlight. Fortunately, he did and made a present of it to the captain. We made the 13-mile (21 km) crossing to Upolu island on very rough seas.

None of us realized that a ferocious tropical storm had hit the island, and we were heading straight into it.

We arrived in the harbor at Mulifanua. There was one narrow passage we were to go through along the reef. A light on the hill above the beach and a second lower light marked the narrow passage. When a boat was maneuvered so that the two lights were one above the other, the boat would be lined up properly to pass through the dangerous rocks that lined the passage.

But that night there was only one light. Two elders were waiting on the landing to meet us, but the crossing took much longer than usual. After watching for hours for signs of our boat, the elders tired and fell asleep, neglecting to turn on the second light, the lower light. As a result, the passage through the reef was not clear.

The captain maneuvered the boat as best he could toward the one upper light on shore while a crewman held the borrowed flashlight over the bow, searching for rocks ahead. We could hear the breakers crashing over the reef. When we were close enough to see them with the flashlight, the captain frantically shouted reverse and backed away to try again to locate the passage.



After many attempts, he knew it would be impossible to find the passage. All we could do was try to reach the harbor at Apia 40 miles (64 km) away. We were helpless against the ferocious power of the elements. I do not remember ever being where it was so dark.

We made no progress for the first hour, even though the engine was at full throttle. The boat would struggle up a mountainous wave and then pause in exhaustion at the top of the crest with the propellers out of the water. The vibration of the propellers would shake the boat almost to pieces before it slid down the other side.

We were lying spread-eagled on the cover of the cargo hold, holding on with our hands on one side and with our toes locked on the other to keep from being washed overboard. Brother Mark Littleford lost hold and was thrown against the low iron rail. His head was cut, but the rail kept him from being washed away.

Eventually, we moved ahead and near daylight finally pulled into the harbor at Apia. Boats were lashed to one another for safety. They were

several deep at the pier. We crawled across them, trying not to disturb those sleeping on deck. We made our way to Pesega, dried our clothing, and headed for Vailuutai to organize the new stake.

I do not know who had been waiting for us at the beach at Mulifanua. I refused to let them tell me. But it is true that without that lower light, we all might have been lost.

There is in our hymnbook a very old and seldom-sung hymn that has very special meaning to me.

*Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From his lighthouse evermore,
But to us he gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.
Let the lower lights be burning;
Send a gleam across the wave.
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.*

*Dark the night of sin has settled;
Loud the angry billows roar.
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.*

*Trim your feeble lamp, my brother;
Some poor sailor, tempest-tossed,*

*Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.¹*

I speak today to those who may be lost and are searching for that lower light to help guide them back.

It was understood from the beginning that in mortality we would fall short of being perfect. It was not expected that we would live without transgressing one law or another.

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.”²

From the Pearl of Great Price, we understand that “no unclean thing can dwell [in the kingdom of God],”³ and so a way was provided for all who sin to repent and become worthy of the presence of our Father in Heaven once more.

A Mediator, a Redeemer, was chosen, one who would live His life perfectly, commit no sin, and offer “himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a

contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”⁴

Concerning the importance of the Atonement, in Alma we learn, “For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; . . . or else all mankind must unavoidably perish.”⁵

If you have made no mistakes, then you do not need the Atonement. If you have made mistakes, and all of us have, whether minor or serious, then you have an enormous need to find out how they can be erased so that you are no longer in darkness.

“[Jesus Christ] is the light and the life of the world.”⁶ As we fix our gaze on His teachings, we will be guided to the harbor of spiritual safety.

The third article of faith states, “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”⁷

President Joseph F. Smith taught: “Men cannot forgive their own sins; they cannot cleanse themselves from the consequences of their sins. Men can stop sinning and can do right in the future, and so far [as] their acts are acceptable before the Lord [become] worthy of consideration. But who shall repair the wrongs they have done to themselves and to others, which it seems impossible for them to repair themselves? By the atonement of Jesus Christ the sins of the repentant shall be washed away; though they be crimson they shall be made white as wool [see Isaiah 1:18]. This is the promise given to you.”⁸

We do not know exactly how the Lord accomplished the Atonement. But we do know that the cruel torture of crucifixion was only part of the horrific pain which began in Gethsemane—that sacred site of suffering—and was completed on Golgotha.



Luke records:

“He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”⁹

So far as I have been able to tell, there is only one account in the Savior’s own words that describes what He endured in the Garden of Gethsemane. The revelation records:

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore.”¹⁰

Throughout your life there may be times when you have gone places you never should have gone and done things you never should have done. If

you will turn away from sin, you will be able one day to know the peace that comes from following the pathway of complete repentance.

No matter what our transgressions have been, no matter how much our actions may have hurt others, that guilt can all be wiped out. To me, perhaps the most beautiful phrase in all scripture is when the Lord said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”¹¹

That is the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Atonement: to take anyone who comes, anyone who will join, and put them through an experience so that at the end of their life, they can go through the veil having repented of their sins and having been washed clean through the blood of Christ.¹²

That is what Latter-day Saints do around the world. That is the Light we offer to those who are in darkness and have lost their way. Wherever our members and missionaries may go, our message is one of faith and hope in the Savior Jesus Christ.

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the lyrics to the hymn “Does the Journey Seem Long?” He was a dear

friend of mine. It contains encouragement and a promise to those who seek to follow the teachings of the Savior:

*Does the journey seem long,
The path rugged and steep?
Are there briars and thorns on the way?
Do sharp stones cut your feet
As you struggle to rise
To the heights thru the heat of the day?*

*Is your heart faint and sad,
Your soul weary within,
As you toil 'neath your burden of care?
Does the load heavy seem
You are forced now to lift?
Is there no one your burden to share?*

*Let your heart be not faint
Now the journey's begun;
There is One who still beckons to you.
So look upward in joy
And take hold of his hand;
He will lead you to heights that are
new—*

*A land holy and pure,
Where all trouble doth end,
And your life shall be free from all sin,
Where no tears shall be shed,
For no sorrows remain.
Take his hand and with him enter in.¹³*

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy," *Hymns*, no. 335.
2. Mosiah 3:19.
3. Moses 6:57.
4. 2 Nephi 2:7.
5. Alma 34:9.
6. Mosiah 16:9.
7. Articles of Faith 1:3.
8. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 99–100.
9. Luke 22:41–44.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–18.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
12. See Revelation 1:5.
13. "Does the Journey Seem Long?" *Hymns*, no. 127.



By Linda K. Burton
Relief Society General President

First Observe, Then Serve

*With practice, each of us can become more like
the Savior as we serve God's children.*

One of the greatest evidences we have that our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is the Lord's chosen servant is that he has learned to follow the Savior's example—serving individually, one by one. Those of us who have entered the waters of baptism have covenanted to do the same. We have covenanted to “always remember [the Savior] and keep his commandments,”¹ and He has said, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”²

Notice how the following words from President Monson include the same invitation: “We are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness. . . . We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”³

Did you hear it—the invitation to love one another? For some, serving or ministering one by one, following the Savior's example, doesn't come easily. But with practice, each of us can become more like the Savior as we serve God's children. To help us

better love one another, I would like to suggest four words to remember: “First observe, then serve.”

Almost 40 years ago my husband and I went to the temple for our Friday night date. We had been married only a short time, and I was nervous because this was only my second time as a newlywed. A sister sitting next to me must have noticed. She leaned over and whispered reverently, “Don't worry. I'll help you.” My fears were calmed, and I was able to enjoy the rest of the temple session. She first observed, then served.

We are all invited to follow Jesus's teachings and to minister to others. This invitation is not limited to angelic sisters. As I share a few everyday examples of members who have learned to first observe and then serve, listen for the teachings of Jesus they illustrate.

A six-year-old Primary child said: “When I was chosen to be a class helper, I could choose a friend to work with me. I picked [a boy in my class who bullied me] because he never gets chosen by others. I wanted to make him feel good.”⁴



What did this child observe? He noticed that the class bully never got chosen. What did he do to serve? He simply chose him to be his friend as a class helper. Jesus taught, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.”⁵

In one ward, Aaronic Priesthood holders first observed and now serve in a meaningful way. Every week the young men arrive early and stand outside the meetinghouse in rain, snow, or blistering heat, awaiting the arrival of the many elderly members in their ward. They lift wheelchairs and walkers out of cars, provide sturdy arms to grasp, and patiently escort the silver-haired seniors into the building. They are truly doing their duty to God. As they observe and then serve, they are living examples of the Savior’s teaching: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”⁶ As the new youth curriculum is implemented, the eyes of these young men will undoubtedly be opened to even more opportunities to serve in a Christlike way.

Observing and serving sometimes requires great effort. An inspired young woman named Alexandria noticed that her cousin Madison was unable to complete her own Personal Progress requirements because she suffered from severe autism. Alexandria rallied the young women in her ward, counseled with her leaders, and determined to do something for Maddy that she could not do herself. Each of the young women completed a portion of the Personal Progress activities and projects vicariously to enable Maddy to receive her own medallion.⁷

These young women will progress well into roles of motherhood and Relief Society sisterhood because they are learning to first observe, then serve in charitable ways.

President Monson has reminded us that charity, “the pure love of Christ”⁸—or in other words, observing and serving—“is evident when an elderly widow is remembered and taken to ward functions” and “when the sister sitting alone in Relief Society receives the invitation, ‘Come—sit by

us.’”⁹ The golden rule is applicable here: “Whatsoever ye would that men [or women] should do to you, do ye even so to them.”¹⁰

An observant husband served in two important ways. He relates:

“I was assisting my wife one Sunday with her Primary class full of energetic seven-year-olds. As Primary sharing time started, I noticed one of the class members huddled on her chair and obviously not feeling well. The Spirit whispered to me that she needed comfort, so I sat by her and quietly asked what was wrong. She didn’t answer . . . , so I began to sing softly to her.

“The Primary was learning a new song, and when we sang, ‘If I listen with my heart I hear the Savior’s voice,’ I began to feel the most incredible light and warmth fill my soul. . . . I received a personal testimony of our Savior’s love for her . . . and for me. . . . I learned that we are [the Savior’s] hands when we serve the one.”¹¹

Not only did this Christlike brother notice the need to help his wife with a class full of energetic seven-year-olds;

he also gave individual service to a child in need. He followed the Savior, who taught, “The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do.”¹²

Recently a flood opened many opportunities for disciples of Jesus Christ to first observe and then serve. Men, women, teenagers, and children saw businesses and homes destroyed and dropped everything to help clean and repair damaged structures. Some observed the need to help with the overwhelming task of doing laundry. Others painstakingly wiped down photographs, legal documents, letters, and other important papers and then carefully hung them out to dry to preserve whatever they could. Observing and then serving is not always convenient and doesn’t always fit our own timetable.

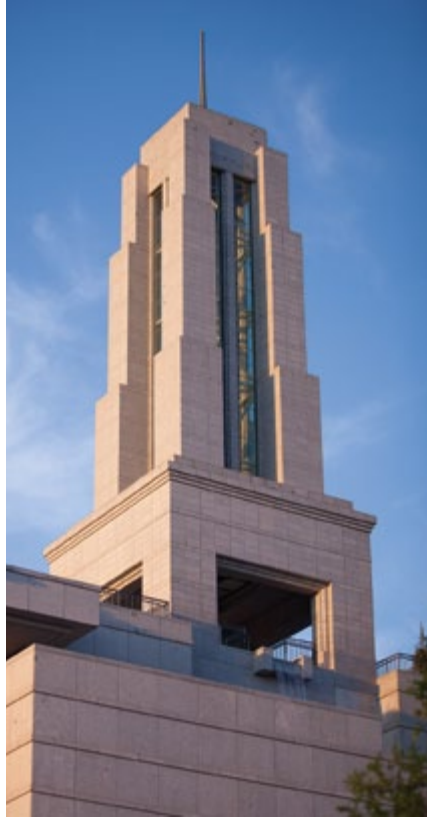
What better place to first observe and then serve than in the home? An example from the life of Elder Richard G. Scott illustrates:

“One night our little son Richard, who had a heart problem, awoke crying. . . . Normally my wife always got up to take care of a crying baby, but this time I said, ‘I’ll take care of him.’

“Because of his problem, when he began to cry, his little heart would pound very rapidly. He would throw up and soil the bed clothing. That night I held him very close to try to calm his racing heart and stop his crying as I changed his clothes and put on new bedsheets. I held him until he went to sleep. I didn’t know then that just a few months later he would pass away. I will always remember holding him in my arms in the middle of that night.”¹³

Jesus said, “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.”¹⁴

Sometimes we are tempted to serve in a way that we want to serve and not



necessarily in the way that is needed at the moment. When Elder Robert D. Hales taught the principle of provident living, he shared the example of buying a gift for his wife. She asked, “Are you buying this for me or for you?”¹⁵ If we adapt that question to ourselves as we serve and ask, “Am I doing this for the Savior, or am I doing this for me?” our service will more likely resemble the ministry of the Savior. The Savior asked, and so should we, “What will ye that I shall do unto you?”¹⁶

A few weeks ago, I was hurried and frazzled, with too many to-dos on my list. I had hoped to go to the temple that day but felt I was just too busy. As soon as that thought of being too busy for temple service crossed my mind, it awakened me to what I most needed to do. I left my office to walk over to the Salt Lake Temple, wondering when I was going to recapture the time I was losing. Thankfully, the Lord is patient and merciful and taught me a beautiful lesson that day.

As I sat down in the session room, a young sister leaned over and reverently whispered, “I’m really nervous. This is only my second time in the temple. Could you please help me?” How could she ever have known that those words were exactly what

I needed to hear? She didn’t know, but Heavenly Father knew. He had observed my greatest need. I needed to serve. He prompted this humble young sister to serve me by inviting me to serve her. I assure you that I was the one who benefited most.

I acknowledge with deep gratitude the many Christlike people who have served our family throughout the years. I express heartfelt appreciation to my beloved husband and family, who serve selflessly and with great love.

May we all seek to first observe, then serve. As we do so, we are keeping covenants, and our service, like President Monson’s, will be evidence of our discipleship. I know the Savior lives. His Atonement enables us to live His teachings. I know President Monson is our prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
2. John 15:12.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.
4. Canyon H., “A Good Choice,” *Friend*, Jan. 2012, 31.
5. Matthew 5:44.
6. Matthew 25:40.
7. See “For Madison,” lds.org/youth/video/for-madison.
8. Moroni 7:47.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Charity Never Faileth,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 125; see also *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 101.
10. 3 Nephi 14:12.
11. Al VanLeeuwen, “Serving the One,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2012, 19; *Ensign*, Aug. 2012, 15; see also Sally DeFord, “If I Listen with My Heart,” *2011 Outline for Sharing Time*, 28.
12. 3 Nephi 27:21.
13. Richard G. Scott, “The Eternal Blessings of Marriage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 96.
14. Matthew 20:26.
15. Robert D. Hales, “Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 9.
16. Matthew 20:32.



By Elder Walter F. González
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Learning with Our Hearts

One way to come unto Christ is by seeking to learn essential truths with our hearts.

“Come unto me, that ye might feel and see.”¹ This was a commandment that the Savior extended to the inhabitants of ancient America. They felt with their hands and saw with their eyes that Jesus was the Christ. This commandment is just as important for us today as it was for them in their day. As we come unto Christ, we can feel and “know of a surety”²—not with our hands and eyes but with all our heart and mind—that Jesus is the Christ.

One way to come unto Christ is by seeking to learn essential truths with our hearts. As we do so, impressions that come from God will give us knowledge that we cannot get by any other means. The Apostle Peter knew of a surety that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Savior explained that the source for Peter’s knowledge was not “flesh and blood . . . but [the] Father which is in heaven.”³

The prophet Abinadi explained the role of the feelings that come from God to our hearts. He taught that we cannot understand the scriptures completely unless we apply our heart to understanding.⁴

This truth was well stated in a children’s book, *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. In the story, the little prince became friends with a fox. Upon parting, the fox shared a secret with the little prince. He said, “Here is my secret . . . : It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”⁵

Eighty-eight-year-old Brother Thomas Coelho is a good example of one who saw with his heart essential things. He was a faithful member of our high council in Paysandú, Uruguay. Prior to joining the Church, he had an accident while riding his motorcycle. While he was lying on the ground unable to stand, two of our missionaries helped him stand up and return to his home. He said that he felt something special when the missionaries came to his rescue. Later he experienced strong feelings again when the missionaries taught him. The impact of those feelings was such that he read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover in just a few days. He was baptized and served tirelessly from that day forward. I remember him riding his

motorcycle up and down the streets of our city, even in the cold and rainy winters, to bring others to church so they could feel, see, and know of a surety as he did.

Today, surrounded by so much information, we might think that navigating millions of web pages will give us all that we need to know. We can find good and bad information on the web, but information alone is not enough. God has given us another source for greater knowledge,⁶ even knowledge sent from heaven. Our Heavenly Father can give us such knowledge when we navigate the celestial web in our hearts and minds. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that he had “the oldest book in [his] heart, even the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁷

We access this celestial source when we do things such as reading the scriptures, hearkening to the living prophet, and praying. It is also important to take time to be still⁸ and feel and follow the celestial promptings. When we do this, we will “feel and see” things that cannot be learned with modern technology. Once we have some experience in navigating this celestial web, we will discern the truth, even when reading secular history or other topics. The honest seekers of truth will know the truth of all things by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁹

Now, a word of caution: access to this celestial web is marred by iniquity and forgetting the Lord. Nephi told his brothers that they “could not feel [the Lord’s] words” because they were “swift to do iniquity [and] slow to remember the Lord.”¹⁰ Iniquity hampers our ability to see, feel, and love others. Being quick to remember the Lord by praying “with all the energy of heart”¹¹ and bringing to mind our spiritual experiences



Barcelona, Spain

expands our ability to see and feel the things of Christ. Now I ask you:

- Do you remember the peace you felt when, after much tribulation, you cried out unto the Father in mighty prayer?
- Do you remember changing your to-do list to follow a prompting in your heart?

The great men in the Book of Mormon fostered access to a greater knowledge by bringing to mind their key spiritual experiences. Alma fortified and strengthened his children by reminding them about his conversion experience.¹² Helaman taught Nephi and Lehi to remember—to remember that it was upon the rock of Christ that they had to build their foundation so the devil would have no power over them.¹³ We must do the same. Remembering God helps us to feel and live. This gives deeper meaning to the words of King Benjamin, who said, “And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”¹⁴

One of the most sacred memories I cherish is the feeling I had when I came to know the Book of Mormon was the word of God. I learned that we can experience a joy that words fall short to express. That very day, on my knees, I felt and knew of a surety the things that I could not have learned

in any other way. Such a memory is reason for everlasting gratitude and strengthens me in hard times.

Those who receive knowledge not from flesh and blood but from our Heavenly Father do know of a surety that Jesus is the Christ and this is His Church. That very knowledge provides strength to make necessary changes to come unto Christ. For this reason, we invite every soul to be baptized, repent, and turn unto Him now.¹⁵

By coming unto Christ, every soul can see, feel, and know of a surety that Christ suffered and atoned for our sins that we may have eternal life. If we repent, we will not suffer needlessly.¹⁶ Thanks to Him, wounded souls may be healed and broken hearts may be mended. There is no burden that He cannot ease or remove. He knows about our infirmities and sicknesses. I promise and testify to you that when all doors seem to be closed, when everything else seems to fail, He will not fail you. Christ will help and is the way out, whether the struggle is with an addiction, depression, or something else. He knows “how to succor his people.”¹⁷ Marriages and families that are struggling for whatever reason—economic challenges, bad media influences, or family dynamics—will feel a calming influence from heaven. It is comforting to “feel and see” that

He rose from the dead “with healing in his wings,”¹⁸ that because of Him, we will meet and embrace again those beloved ones who have passed away. Verily our conversion unto Him is rewarded with our healing.¹⁹

I know of a surety that all of this is true. For this reason I join my voice with that of the early inhabitants of ancient America, exclaiming: “Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!”²⁰ He gives us salvation. I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the holy Messiah. He is the Lord of Hosts, our Savior and Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 18:25.
2. 3 Nephi 11:15.
3. See Matthew 16:16–17.
4. See Mosiah 12:27.
5. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (1971), 87.
6. See Ether 4:13.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
9. See Moroni 10:3–5.
10. 1 Nephi 17:45.
11. Moroni 7:48.
12. See Alma 36:5–24; 38:6–9.
13. See Helaman 5:12.
14. Mosiah 4:30.
15. See 3 Nephi 9:13.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
17. Alma 7:12.
18. 2 Nephi 25:13; see also 3 Nephi 25:2.
19. See 2 Nephi 16:10; 3 Nephi 9:13.
20. See 3 Nephi 11:15–17.





By **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The First Great Commandment

We have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord.

There is almost no group in history for whom I have more sympathy than I have for the eleven remaining Apostles immediately following the death of the Savior of the world. I think we sometimes forget just how inexperienced they still were and how totally dependent upon Jesus they had of necessity been. To them He had said, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me . . . ?”¹

But, of course, to them He hadn’t been with them nearly long enough. Three years isn’t long to call an entire Quorum of Twelve Apostles from a handful of new converts, purge from them the error of old ways, teach them the wonders of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then leave them to carry on the work until they too were killed. Quite a staggering prospect for a group of newly ordained elders.

Especially the part about being left alone. Repeatedly Jesus had tried to tell them He was *not* going to remain physically present with them, but they either could not or would not comprehend such a wrenching thought. Mark writes:

“He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is

delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

“But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.”²

Then, after such a short time to learn and even less time to prepare, the unthinkable happened, the unbelievable was true. Their Lord and Master, their Counselor and King, was crucified. His mortal ministry was over, and the struggling little Church He had established seemed doomed to scorn and destined for extinction. His Apostles did witness Him in His resurrected state, but that only added to their bewilderment. As they surely must have wondered, “What do we do now?” they turned for an answer to Peter, the senior Apostle.

Here I ask your indulgence as I take some nonscriptural liberty in my portrayal of this exchange. In effect, Peter said to his associates: “Brethren, it has been a glorious three years. None of us could have imagined such a few short months ago the miracles we have seen and the divinity we have enjoyed. We have talked with, prayed with, and labored with the very Son of God Himself. We have walked with Him

and wept with Him, and on the night of that horrible ending, no one wept more bitterly than I. But that is over. He has finished His work, and He has risen from the tomb. He has worked out His salvation and ours. So you ask, ‘What do we do now?’ I don’t know more to tell you than to return to your former life, rejoicing. I intend to ‘go a fishing.’” And at least six of the ten other remaining Apostles said in agreement, “We also go with thee.” John, who was one of them, writes, “They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately.”³

But, alas, the fishing wasn’t very good. Their first night back on the lake, they caught nothing—not a single fish. With the first rays of dawn, they disappointedly turned toward the shore, where they saw in the distance a figure who called out to them, “Children, have you caught anything?” Glumly these Apostles-turned-again-fishermen gave the answer no fisherman wants to give. “We have caught nothing,” they muttered, and to add insult to injury, they were being called “children.”⁴

“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find,”⁵ the stranger calls out—and with those simple words, recognition begins to flood over them. Just three years earlier these very men had been fishing on this very sea. On that occasion too they had “toiled all the night, and [had] taken nothing,”⁶ the scripture says. But a fellow Galilean on the shore had called out to them to let down their nets, and they drew “a great multitude of fishes,”⁷ enough that their nets broke, the catch filling two boats so heavily they had begun to sink.

Now it was happening again. These “children,” as they were rightly called, eagerly lowered their net, and “they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”⁸ John said the obvious: “It is the Lord.”⁹ And over

the edge of the boat, the irrepressible Peter leaped.

After a joyful reunion with the resurrected Jesus, Peter had an exchange with the Savior that I consider the crucial turning point of the apostolic ministry generally and certainly for Peter personally, moving this great rock of a man to a majestic life of devoted service and leadership. Looking at their battered little boats, their frayed nets, and a stunning pile of 153 fish, Jesus said to His senior Apostle, “Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?” Peter said, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”¹⁰

The Savior responds to that reply but continues to look into the eyes of His disciple and says again, “Peter, do you love me?” Undoubtedly confused a bit by the repetition of the question, the great fisherman answers a second time, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”¹¹

The Savior again gives a brief response, but with relentless scrutiny He asks for the third time, “Peter, do you love me?” By now surely Peter is feeling truly uncomfortable. Perhaps there is in his heart the memory of only a few days earlier when he had been asked another question three times and he had answered equally emphatically—but in the negative. Or perhaps he began to wonder if he misunderstood the Master Teacher’s question. Or perhaps he was searching his heart, seeking honest confirmation of the answer he had given so readily, almost automatically. Whatever his feelings, Peter said for the third time, “Lord, . . . thou knowest that I love thee.”¹²

To which Jesus responded (and here again I acknowledge my nonscriptural elaboration), perhaps saying something like: “Then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore,

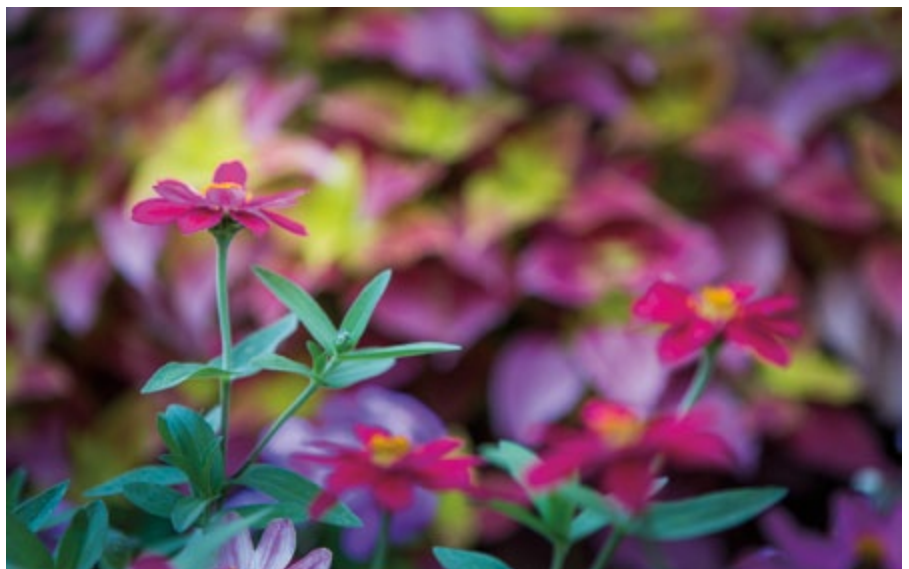
by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn’t it obvious then and isn’t it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me, and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do. Ours is not a feeble message. It is not a fleeting task. It is not hapless; it is not hopeless; it is not to be consigned to the ash heap of history. It is the work of Almighty God, and it is to change the world. So, Peter, for the second and presumably the last time, I am asking you to leave all this and to go teach and testify, labor and serve loyally until the day in which they will do to you exactly what they did to me.”

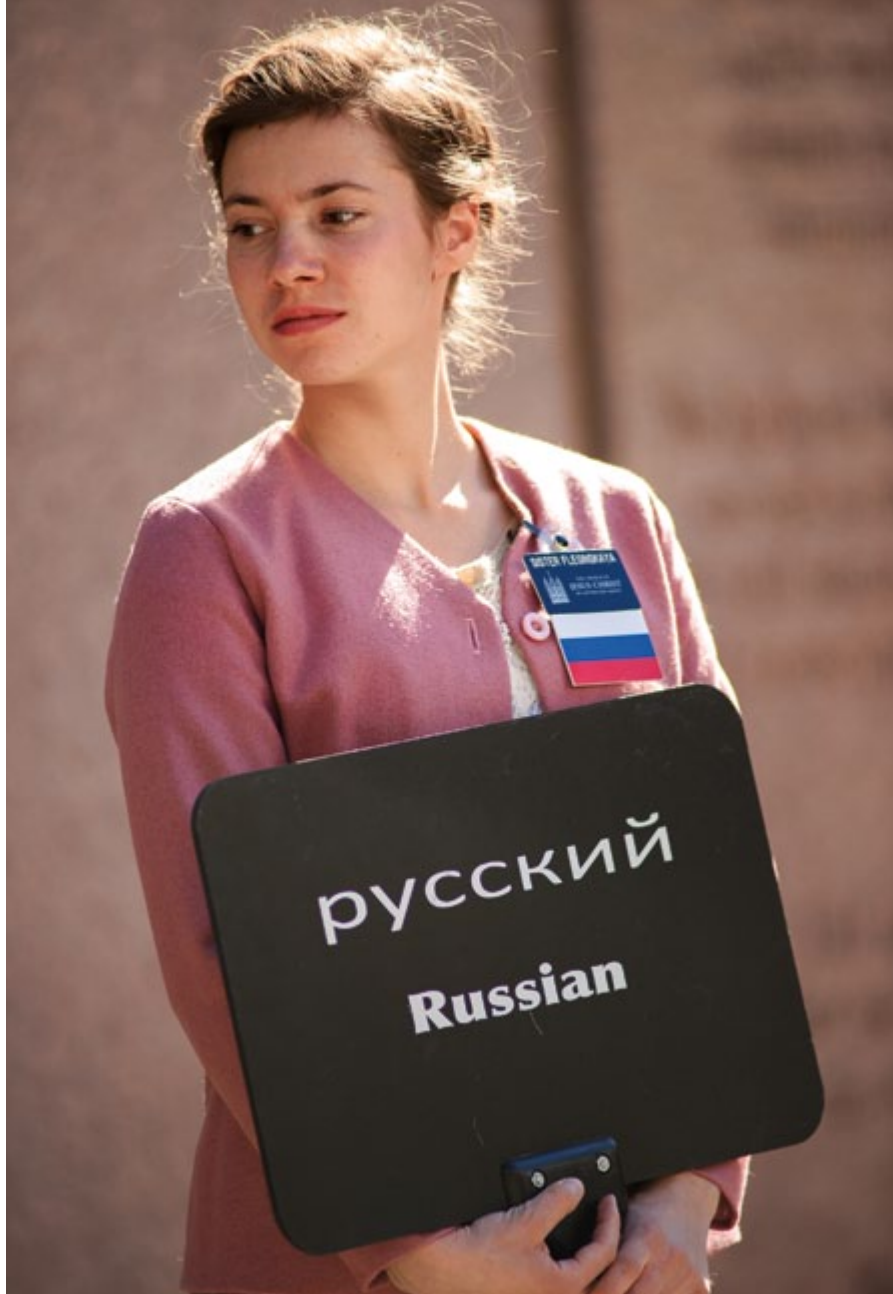
Then, turning to all the Apostles, He might well have said something like: “Were you as foolhardy as the scribes and Pharisees? As Herod and Pilate? Did you, like they, think that this work could be killed simply by killing me? Did you, like they, think

the cross and the nails and the tomb were the end of it all and each could blissfully go back to being whatever you were before? Children, did not my life and my love touch your hearts more deeply than this?”

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am not certain just what our experience will be on Judgment Day, but I will be very surprised if at some point in that conversation, God does not ask us exactly what Christ asked Peter: “Did you love me?” I think He will want to know if in our very mortal, very inadequate, and sometimes childish grasp of things, did we at least understand *one* commandment, the first and greatest commandment of them all—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.”¹³ And if at such a moment we can stammer out, “Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,” then He may remind us that the crowning characteristic of love is always loyalty.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments,”¹⁴ Jesus said. So we have neighbors to bless, children to protect, the





poor to lift up, and the truth to defend. We have wrongs to make right, truths to share, and good to do. In short, we have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord. We can't quit and we can't go back. After an encounter with the living Son of the living God, nothing is ever again to be as it was before. The Crucifixion, Atonement, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ mark the beginning of a Christian life, not the end of it. It was this truth, this reality, that allowed a handful of Galilean fishermen-turned-again-Apostles without "a single synagogue or sword"¹⁵ to leave those nets a second time and go on to shape the history of the world in which we now live.

I testify from the bottom of my heart, with the intensity of my soul, to all who can hear my voice that those apostolic keys have been restored to the earth, and they are found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To those who have not yet joined with us in this great final cause of Christ, we say, "Please come." To those who were once with us but have retreated, preferring to pick and choose a few cultural hors d'oeuvres from the smorgasbord of the Restoration and leave the rest of the feast, I say that I fear you face a lot of long nights and empty nets. The call is to come back, to stay true, to love God, and to lend a hand. I include in that call to fixed

faithfulness every returned missionary who ever stood in a baptismal font and with arm to the square said, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ."¹⁶ That commission was to have changed your convert forever, but it was surely supposed to have changed you forever as well. To the youth of the Church rising up to missions and temples and marriage, we say: "Love God and remain clean from the blood and sins of this generation. You have a monumental work to do, underscored by that marvelous announcement President Thomas S. Monson made yesterday morning. Your Father in Heaven expects your loyalty and your love at every stage of your life."

To all within the sound of my voice, the voice of Christ comes ringing down through the halls of time, asking each one of us while there is time, "Do you love me?" And for every one of us, I answer with my honor and my soul, "Yea, Lord, we do love thee." And having set our "hand to the plough,"¹⁷ we will never look back until this work is finished and love of God and neighbor rules the world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 14:9.
2. Mark 9:31–32.
3. John 21:3.
4. See John 21:5.
5. John 21:6.
6. Luke 5:5.
7. Luke 5:6.
8. John 21:6.
9. John 21:7.
10. John 21:15.
11. John 21:16.
12. John 21:17.
13. Luke 10:27; see also Matthew 22:37–38.
14. John 14:15.
15. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 656; see chapter 62 for more on the plight of this newly founded Church.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:73.
17. Luke 9:62.



By President Thomas S. Monson

Consider the Blessings

Our Heavenly Father is aware of our needs and will help us as we call upon Him for assistance.

My beloved brothers and sisters, this conference marks 49 years since I was sustained, on October 4, 1963, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Forty-nine years is a long time. In many ways, however, the time seems very short since I stood at the pulpit in the Tabernacle and gave my very first general conference address.

Much has changed since October 4, 1963. We live in a unique time in the world's history. We are blessed with so very much. And yet it is sometimes difficult to view the problems and permissiveness around us and not become discouraged. I have found that, rather than dwelling on the negative, if we will take a step back and consider the blessings in our lives, including seemingly small, sometimes overlooked blessings, we can find greater happiness.

As I have reviewed the past 49 years, I have made some discoveries. One is that countless experiences I have had were not necessarily those one would consider extraordinary. In fact, at the time they transpired, they often seemed unremarkable and even ordinary. And yet, in retrospect, they enriched and blessed lives—not the least of which was my own. I would recommend this same exercise to you—namely, that

you take an inventory of your life and look specifically for the blessings, large and small, you have received.

Reinforced constantly during my own review of the years has been my knowledge that our prayers are heard and answered. We are familiar with the truth found in 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon: “Men are, that they might have joy.”¹ I testify that much of that joy comes as we recognize that we can communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer and that those prayers will be heard and answered—perhaps not how and when we expected they would be answered, but they *will* be answered and by a Heavenly Father who knows and loves us perfectly and who desires our happiness. Hasn't He promised us, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers”?²

For the next few minutes allotted to me, I would like to share with you just a tiny sampling of the experiences I have had wherein prayers were heard and answered and which, in retrospect, brought blessings into my life as well as the lives of others. My daily journal, kept over all these years, has helped provide some specifics which I most likely would not otherwise be able to recount.

In early 1965, I was assigned to attend stake conferences and to hold other meetings throughout the South Pacific area. This was my first visit to that part of the world, and it was a time never to be forgotten. Much that was spiritual in nature occurred during this assignment as I met with leaders, members, and missionaries.

On the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, February 20 and 21, we were in Brisbane, Australia, to hold regular conference sessions of the Brisbane Stake. During meetings on Saturday, I was introduced to the district president from an adjoining area. As I shook his hand, I had a strong impression that I needed to speak with him and to provide counsel, and so I asked him if he would accompany me to the Sunday morning session the following day so that this could be accomplished.

Following the Sunday session, we had an opportunity to visit together. We talked of his many responsibilities as district president. As we did so, I felt impressed to offer him specific suggestions concerning missionary work and how he and his members could help the full-time missionaries in their labors in his area. I later learned that this man had been praying for guidance in this regard. To him our visit was a special witness that his prayers were heard and answered. This was a seemingly unremarkable meeting but one which I am convinced was guided by the Spirit and which made a difference in that district president's life and administration, in the lives of his members, and in the success of the missionaries there.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord's purposes are often accomplished as we pay heed to the guidance of the Spirit. I believe that the more we act upon the inspiration and impressions



which come to us, the more the Lord will entrust to us His errands.

I have learned, as I have mentioned in previous messages, never to postpone a prompting. On one occasion many years ago, I was swimming laps at the old Deseret Gym in Salt Lake City when I felt the inspiration to go to the University Hospital to visit a good friend of mine who had lost the use of his lower limbs because of a malignancy and the surgery which followed. I immediately left the pool,

dressed, and was soon on my way to see this good man.

When I arrived at his room, I found that it was empty. Upon inquiry I learned I would probably find him in the swimming pool area of the hospital, an area which was used for physical therapy. Such turned out to be the case. He had guided himself there in his wheelchair and was the only occupant of the room. He was on the far side of the pool, near the deep end. I called to him, and he maneuvered his

wheelchair over to greet me. We had an enjoyable visit, and I accompanied him back to his hospital room, where I gave him a blessing.

I learned later from my friend that he had been utterly despondent that day and had been contemplating taking his own life. He had prayed for relief but began to feel that his prayers had gone unanswered. He went to the pool with the thought that this would be a way to end his misery—by guiding his wheelchair into the deep end of the pool. I had arrived at a critical moment, in response to what I know was inspiration from on high.

My friend was able to live many more years—years filled with happiness and gratitude. How pleased I am to have been an instrument in the Lord's hands on that critical day at the swimming pool.

On another occasion, as Sister Monson and I were driving home after visiting friends, I felt impressed that we should go into town—a drive of many miles—to pay a visit to an elderly widow who had once lived in our ward. Her name was Zella Thomas. At the time, she was a resident in a care center. That early afternoon we found her to be extremely frail but lying peacefully on her bed.

Zella had long been blind, but she recognized our voices immediately. She asked if I might give her a blessing, adding that she was prepared to die if the Lord wanted her to return home. There was a sweet, peaceful spirit in the room, and all of us knew that her remaining time in mortality would be brief. Zella took me by the hand and said that she had prayed fervently that I would come to see her and provide her a blessing. I told her that we had come because of direct inspiration from our Heavenly Father. I kissed her on the forehead, knowing

that I perhaps would not again see her in mortality. Such proved to be the case, for she passed away the following day. To have been able to provide some comfort and peace to our sweet Zella was a blessing to her and to me.

The opportunity to be a blessing in the life of another often comes unexpectedly. On one extremely cold Saturday night during the winter of 1983–84, Sister Monson and I drove several miles to the mountain valley of Midway, Utah, where we have a home. The temperature that night was minus 24 degrees Fahrenheit (–31°C), and we wanted to make certain all was well at our home there. We checked and found that it was fine, so we left to return to Salt Lake City. We barely made it the few miles to the highway before our car stopped working. We were completely stranded. I have seldom, if ever, been as cold as we were that night.

Reluctantly we began walking toward the nearest town, the cars whizzing past us. Finally one car stopped, and a young man offered to help. We eventually found that the diesel fuel in our gas tank had thickened because of the cold, making it impossible for us to drive the car. This kind young man drove us back to our Midway home. I attempted to reimburse him for his services, but he graciously declined. He indicated that he was a Boy Scout and wanted to do a good turn. I identified myself to him, and he expressed his appreciation for the privilege to be of help. Assuming that he was about missionary age, I asked him if he had plans to serve a mission. He indicated he was not certain just what he wanted to do.

On the following Monday morning, I wrote a letter to this young man and thanked him for his kindness. In the letter I encouraged him to serve a full-time mission. I enclosed a copy of

one of my books and underscored the chapters on missionary service.

About a week later the young man's mother telephoned and advised that her son was an outstanding young man but that because of certain influences in his life, his long-held desire to serve a mission had diminished. She indicated she and his father had fasted and prayed that his heart would be changed. They had placed his name on the prayer roll of the Provo Utah Temple. They hoped that somehow, in some way, his heart would be touched for good and he would return to his desire to fill a mission and to serve the Lord faithfully. The mother wanted me to know that she looked upon the events of that cold evening as an answer to their prayers in his behalf. I said, "I agree with you."

After several months and more communication with this young man, Sister Monson and I were overjoyed to attend his missionary farewell prior to his departure for the Canada Vancouver Mission.

Was it chance that our paths crossed on that cold December night? I do not for one moment believe so. Rather, I believe our meeting was an answer to a mother's and father's heartfelt prayers for the son they cherished.

Again, my brothers and sisters, our Heavenly Father is aware of our needs and will help us as we call upon Him for assistance. I believe that no concern of ours is too small or insignificant. The Lord is in the details of our lives.

I should like to conclude by relating one recent experience which had an impact on hundreds. It occurred at the cultural celebration for the Kansas City Temple, just five months ago. As with so much that happens in our lives, at the time it seemed to be just another experience where everything worked out. However, as I learned of

the circumstances associated with the cultural celebration the evening before the temple was dedicated, I realized that the performance that night was not ordinary. Rather, it was quite remarkable.

As with all cultural events held in conjunction with temple dedications, the youth in the Kansas City Missouri Temple District had rehearsed the performance in separate groups in their own areas. The plan was that they would meet all together in the large rented municipal center on the Saturday morning of the performance so that they could learn when and where to enter, where they were to stand, how much space should be between them and the person next to them, how to exit the main floor, and so forth—many details which they would have to grasp during the day as those in charge put the various scenes together so that the final performance would be polished and professional.

There was just one major problem that day. The entire production was dependent on prerecorded segments that would be shown on the large screen known as a Jumbotron. These recorded segments were critical to the entire production. They not only tied it all together, but each televised segment would introduce the next performance. The video segments provided the framework on which the entire production depended. And the Jumbotron was not working.

Technicians worked frantically to solve the problem while the youth waited, hundreds of them, losing precious rehearsal time. The situation began to look impossible.

The writer and director of the celebration, Susan Cooper, later explained: "As we moved from plan A to B to Z, we knew that it wasn't working. . . . As we were looking at the schedule, we



center that evening, we had no idea of the difficulties of the day. Only later did we learn of them. What we witnessed, however, was a beautiful, polished performance—one of the best I have seen. The youth radiated a glorious, powerful spirit which was felt by all who were present. They seemed to know just where to enter, where to stand, and how to interact with all the other performers around them. When I learned that their rehearsals had been cut short and that many of the numbers had not been rehearsed by the entire group, I was astonished. No one would have known. The Lord had indeed made up the difference.

I never cease to be amazed by how the Lord can motivate and direct the length and breadth of His kingdom and yet have time to provide inspiration concerning one individual—or one cultural celebration or one Jumbotron. The fact that He can, that He does, is a testimony to me.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord is in all of our lives. He loves us. He wants to bless us. He wants us to seek His help. As He guides us and directs us and as He hears and answers our prayers, we will find the happiness here and now that He desires for us. May we be aware of His blessings in our lives, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
3. Susan Cooper, in Maurine Proctor, “Nothing’s Too Hard for the Lord: The Kansas City Cultural Celebration,” *Meridian Magazine*, May 9, 2012, ldsmag.com.
4. Proctor, *Meridian Magazine*, May 9, 2012.

knew that it was going to be beyond us, but we knew that we had one of the greatest strengths on the floor below—3,000 youth. We needed to go down and tell [them] what was happening and draw upon their faith.”³

Just an hour before the audience would begin to enter the center, 3,000 youth knelt on the floor and prayed together. They prayed that those working on the Jumbotron would be inspired to know what to do to repair it; they asked their Heavenly Father to make up

for what they themselves could not do because of the shortage of time.

Said one who wrote about it afterward, “It was a prayer the youth will never forget, not because the floor was hard, but because the Spirit melted their bones.”⁴

It was not long before one of the technicians came to tell them that the problem had been discovered and corrected. He attributed the solution to luck, but all those youth knew better.

When we entered the municipal



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code to watch or share a short video clip (1–2 minutes) of this message.



By Elder Robert D. Hales
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Being a More Christian Christian

This is the call of Christ to every Christian today: “Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep.”

What does it mean to be a Christian? A Christian has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the literal Son of God, sent by His Father to suffer for our sins in the supreme act of love we know as the Atonement.

A Christian believes that through the grace of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, we can repent, forgive others, keep the commandments, and inherit eternal life.

The word *Christian* denotes taking upon us the name of Christ. We do this by being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those holding His priesthood authority.

A Christian knows that throughout the ages, God’s prophets have always testified of Jesus Christ. This same Jesus, accompanied by Heavenly Father, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the year 1820 and restored the gospel and the organization of His original Church.

Through the scriptures and the witness of Joseph Smith, we know that God, our Heavenly Father, has a

glorified and perfected body of flesh and bone. Jesus Christ is His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit whose work is to testify of the Father and the Son. The Godhead is three separate and distinct beings, unified in purpose.

With these doctrines as the foundation of our faith, can there be any doubt or disputation that we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are Christian? Yet for every Christian, a simple question remains: what kind of Christians are we? In other words, how are we doing in our quest to follow Christ?

Consider with me the experience of two Christian disciples:

“Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

“And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”¹

As Christians today, we have the opportunity to act straightway,

immediately, and decisively, just as Peter and Andrew did: “they forsook their nets, and followed him.”² We too are called upon to leave our nets, to reject worldly habits, customs, and traditions. We are also called to forsake our sins. “When [Jesus] had called the people unto him . . . , he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”³ Denying ourselves of ungodly behavior is the beginning of repentance, which brings a mighty change of heart until “we have no more disposition to do evil.”⁴

This change, called conversion, is possible only through the Savior. Jesus promised: “If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. . . . And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will *I make weak things become strong unto them.*”⁵ As we are *made new* in Christ, our very natures change and we no longer want to go back to our old ways.

Even so, faithful Christians will always be blessed to experience difficulties and disappointments. When these refining challenges come, we may be tempted to return to our old ways. After the Savior’s Crucifixion, He appeared to the women and told them that the brethren would find Him in Galilee. When Peter, the senior Apostle, returned to Galilee, he also went back to what he knew—to what he felt comfortable doing. “I go a fishing,”⁶ he explained, and took several disciples with him.

Indeed, Peter and the others fished all night without catching any fish. The next morning Jesus appeared on the shore and called to them across the water, “Cast [your] net on the right side.” The disciples in the boat followed the Savior’s instructions and



quickly discovered their nets were miraculously filled to overflowing. John recognized the Savior's voice, and Peter instantly cast himself into the water and swam to the shore.⁷

To Christians who have returned to their old, less faithful ways, consider the faithful example of Peter. Do not delay. Come hear and recognize the Master's voice calling. Then straightway return to Him and receive His abundant blessings once again.

As the brethren returned to the shore, they discovered a feast of fish and bread. "Come and dine,"⁸ the Savior invited. As He fed them, He asked Peter three times, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" When Peter expressed his love, the Savior implored him, "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep."⁹

This is the call of Christ to every Christian today: "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep"—share my gospel with young and old, lifting, blessing, comforting, encouraging, and building them, especially those who think and believe differently than we do.

We feed His lambs in our homes by how we live the gospel: keeping the commandments, praying, studying the scriptures, and emulating His love. We feed His sheep in the Church as we serve in priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations. And we feed His sheep throughout the world by being good Christian neighbors, practicing the pure religion of visiting and serving the widows, the fatherless, the poor, and all who are in need.

For many, the call to be a Christian can seem demanding, even overwhelming. But we need not be afraid or feel inadequate. The Savior has promised that He will make us equal to His work. "Follow me," He said, "and I will make you fishers of men."¹⁰ As we follow Him, He blesses us with gifts, talents, and the strength to do His will, allowing us to go beyond our comfort zones and do things we've never before thought possible. This may mean sharing the gospel with neighbors, rescuing those who are spiritually lost, serving a full-time mission, working in the temple, raising

a child with special needs, loving the prodigal, serving an ailing companion, enduring misunderstandings, or suffering affliction. It means preparing ourselves to answer His call by saying, "I'll go where you want me to go; I'll say what you want me to say; I'll do what you want me to do; I'll be what you want me to be."¹¹

To be who Heavenly Father wants us to be, we follow Jesus Christ. I testify that He is continually calling us to follow Him. If you are just learning about the Christian commitment of Latter-day Saints or if you have not been fully participating in the Church and want to follow Him again—fear not! The Lord's first disciples were all new members of the Church, newly converted to His gospel. Jesus patiently taught each one. He helped them fulfill their responsibilities. He called them His friends and laid down His life for them. And He has already done the same for you and for me.

I testify that through His infinite love and grace, we can become more Christian Christians. Consider the



following Christlike qualities. How are we doing in strengthening them within ourselves?

Christian love. The Savior valued everyone. Kind and compassionate to all, He left the ninety and nine to find the one,¹² for “even the very hairs of [our] head are . . . numbered”¹³ to Him.

Christian faith. Despite temptations, trials, and persecutions, the Savior trusted our Heavenly Father and chose to be faithful and obedient to His commandments.

Christian sacrifice. Throughout His life the Savior gave of His time, His energy, and ultimately, through the Atonement, gave Himself so that all of God’s children could be resurrected and have the opportunity to inherit eternal life.

Christian caring. Like the good Samaritan, the Savior was continually

reaching out to rescue, love, and nurture people around Him, regardless of their culture, creed, or circumstances.

Christian service. Whether drawing water from a well, cooking a meal of fish, or washing dusty feet, the Savior spent His days serving others—lifting up the weary and strengthening the weak.

Christian patience. In His own sorrow and suffering, the Savior waited upon His Father. With patience for us, He waits upon us to come to ourselves and come home to Him.

Christian peace. Throughout His ministry He urged understanding and promoted peace. Especially among His disciples, He taught that Christians cannot contend with other Christians, notwithstanding their differences.

Christian forgiveness. He taught us to bless those who curse us. He

showed us the way by praying that those who crucified Him would be forgiven.

Christian conversion. Like Peter and Andrew, many recognize the truth of the gospel as soon as they hear it. They are instantly converted. For others it may take longer. In a revelation given through Joseph Smith, the Savior taught, “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day,”¹⁴ the perfect day of our conversion. Jesus Christ is “the light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth.”¹⁵

Christian endurance to the end. In all His days, the Savior never gave up doing His Father’s will but continued in righteousness, goodness, mercy, and truth to the end of His mortal life.

These are some of the characteristics of those who hear and heed the Savior’s voice. As one of His special witnesses on the earth, I give my Christian testimony that He is calling to you today, “Come, follow me.”¹⁶ Come walk the path that leads to eternal happiness, joy, and everlasting life in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 4:18–20.
2. Mark 1:18.
3. Mark 8:34.
4. Mosiah 5:2.
5. Ether 12:27; emphasis added.
6. John 21:3.
7. See John 21:3–8.
8. John 21:12.
9. See John 21:15–17.
10. Matthew 4:19; emphasis added.
11. See “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270.
12. See Matthew 18:12–14.
13. Luke 12:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 93:9.
16. Luke 18:22.



By Elder Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The Joy of Redeeming the Dead

“He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.”

The Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith sublime doctrine concerning the sacred ordinance of baptism. That light came when other Christian churches taught that death irrevocably, eternally, determined the destiny of the soul. They taught the baptized were rewarded with endless joy while all others faced eternal torment without hope of redemption.

The Lord’s revelation that through proper priesthood authority, baptism could be performed vicariously for the dead preserved the justice of His statement: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”¹ Vicarious baptism can mercifully provide this essential ordinance for all worthy deceased who did not receive it in mortality.

This glorious doctrine is another witness of the all-encompassing nature of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He made salvation available to every repentant soul. His Atonement conquered death, and He permits the worthy deceased to receive all ordinances of salvation vicariously.

In an epistle written over 150 years ago, Joseph Smith stated: “The Saints have the privilege of being baptized for . . . their relatives who are dead . . . who have received the Gospel in the spirit, through . . . those who have been commissioned to preach to them.”² Later he added, “Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation.”³

The prophet Elijah committed the keys for vicarious work to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple⁴ to fulfill the Lord’s promise that “he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to *their* fathers.”⁵

Through further revelation to Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets, there has come an understanding of and the provision for temple work and the family history effort that supports it. Every prophet since Joseph Smith has emphasized the imperative need to provide all ordinances for ourselves and our deceased ancestors.

Temple and family history work is one work divided into two parts. They are connected together like the

ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Some members may not be able to do both works because of health or distances to temples.

President Howard W. Hunter taught:

“We must accomplish the priesthood temple ordinance work necessary for our own exaltation; then we must do the necessary work for those who did not have the opportunity to accept the gospel in life. Doing work for others is accomplished in two steps: first, by family history research to ascertain our progenitors; and second, by performing the temple ordinances to give them the same opportunities afforded to the living.

“Yet there are many members of the Church who have only limited access to the temples. They do the best they can. They pursue family history research and have the temple ordinance work done by others. Conversely, there are some members who engage in temple work but fail to do family history research on their own family lines. Although they perform a divine service in assisting others, they lose a blessing by not seeking their own kindred dead as divinely directed by latter-day prophets. . . .

“I have learned that those who engage in family history research and then perform the temple ordinance work for those whose names they have found will know the additional joy of receiving both halves of the blessing.”⁶

Father in Heaven wants each of us to receive both parts of the blessing of this vital vicarious work. He has led others to show us how to qualify. It is up to you and me to claim those blessings.

Any work you do in the temple is time well spent, but receiving ordinances vicariously for one of your own ancestors will make the time in the temple more sacred, and even

greater blessings will be received. The First Presidency has declared, “Our preeminent obligation is to seek out and identify *our own* ancestors.”⁷

Do you young people want a sure way to eliminate the influence of the adversary in your life? Immerse yourself in searching for your ancestors, prepare their names for the sacred vicarious ordinances available in the temple, and then go to the temple to stand as proxy for them to receive the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. As you grow older, you will be able to participate in receiving the other ordinances as well. I can think of no greater protection from the influence of the adversary in your life.

In the Russia Rostov-na-Donu Mission the youth were invited to each index 2,000 names and then qualify at least one name from their own families for temple ordinances. Those who accomplished this goal were invited to go on a long journey to the new Kyiv Ukraine Temple. One young man shared his experience: “I was spending a lot of time playing computer games. When I started indexing, I didn’t have time to play games. At first I thought, ‘Oh no! How can that be!’ When this project was over, I even lost interest in gaming. . . . Genealogical work is something that we can do here on earth, and it will remain in heaven.”

Many faithful Saints have done the work of researching their family lines and are using the reserve feature of FamilySearch to hold the ordinances for their own family members to serve as proxy. The intent of reserving names is to allow a reasonable period of time for individuals to perform ordinances for ancestors and collateral lines. There are currently 12 million names and millions of corresponding ordinances that are reserved. Many names have been

reserved for years. Ancestors who have been found are no doubt anxious and thrilled when their names are cleared for ordinances. They, however, may not be very happy when they have to continue to wait for their ordinances to be performed.

We encourage those of you who have a large reservation of names to share them so that members of your extended family or ward and stake can help you in completing that work. You can do this by distributing temple cards to ward and stake members willing to help or by using the FamilySearch computer system to submit the names directly to the temple. This latter option is something Cindy Blevins of Casper, Wyoming, has been doing for years.

Sister Blevins was baptized as a teenager and has been the only member of her family to join the Church.

She has completed a vast amount of genealogical work. But there are far too many names for her and her immediate family to complete. Consequently, Sister Blevins has submitted the names to the temple, which, she reports, are often completed in a matter of weeks, usually at one of the two temples closest to her home. She says she likes to think that friends and neighbors in her own ward and stake may be among those helping to complete the work for her ancestors. She appreciates their doing so.

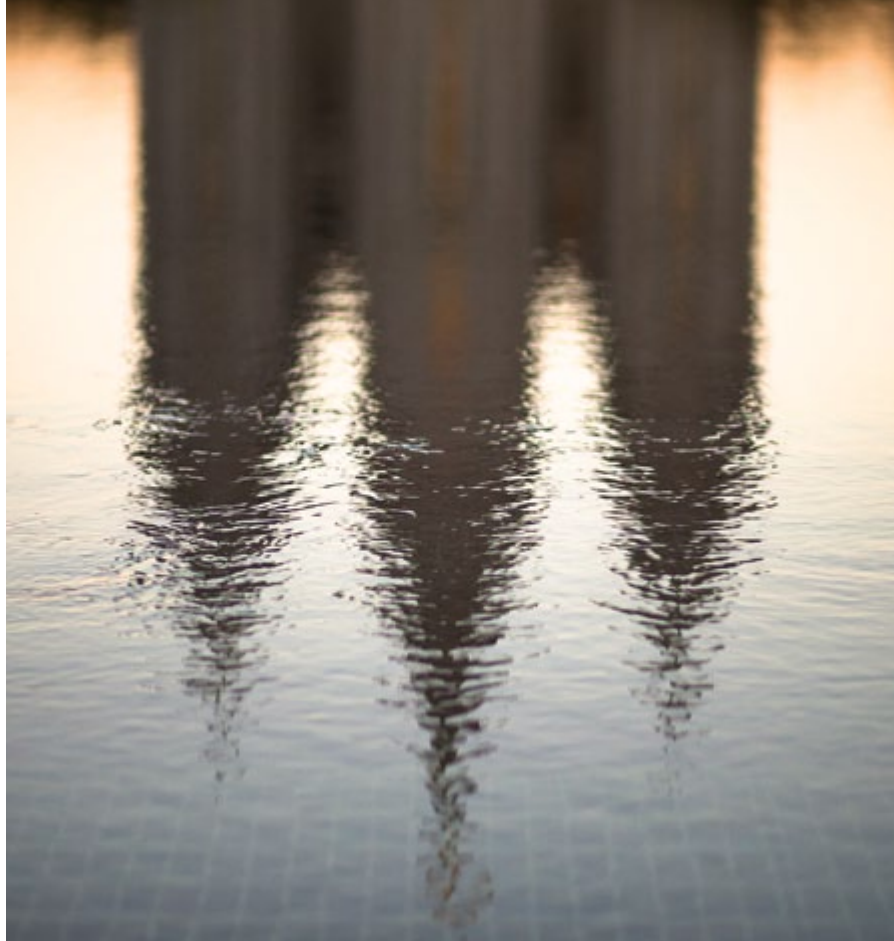
My beloved wife, Jeanene, loved doing family history research. When our children were young, she would trade babysitting time with friends so she could have a few hours every few weeks to work on researching our family lines. After our youngest child left home, she recorded in her



personal journal: "I have just made a decision and I want to stand up and shout about it. Mike's old bedroom has become my genealogy workroom. It is well equipped to organize the records and work in. My life will now focus on vital family research and temple name submissions. I am so excited and anxious to get going."⁸

Another journal entry reads: "The . . . miracle for me occurred in the Family History office of Mel Olsen who presented me with a printout of all my known ancestral pedigrees taken from the update of the Ancestral File computerized records sent into the genealogical society. They came mostly from the records of the four generation's program the Church called for many years ago. I had been overwhelmed with the thought of the huge task ahead of me to gather all my ancestors' research records from family organizations to get them all in the computer for the first computerized distribution of the Ancestral File. And there they all were, beautiful, organized and laser printed and sitting there on the desk before me. I was so thrilled and so overwhelmed I just sat there stunned and then began to cry I was so happy. . . . For one who has doggedly, painstakingly researched for thirty years, the computerization of all these records is truly exciting. And when I think of the hundreds of thousands of people who are now or soon will be computerizing huge blocks of censuses and private research disks . . . I am so excited. It is truly the Lord's work and He is directing it."⁹

I have tasted enough of the fruits of this sublime work to know that the keys Elijah restored to Joseph Smith permit our hearts to be bound and each of us linked to those of our ancestors who are waiting for our help. Through our efforts in



holy temples here on earth using the authority delegated by the Savior, our progenitors receive the saving ordinances that allow them to enjoy eternal happiness.

In the past, motivated by a deep conviction of the sanctity of the work, individuals have valiantly faced a challenge that seemed like single-handedly endeavoring to harvest all the grain in Nebraska. Now, many mighty combines are at work. Together we can and will accomplish the required work.

I testify that the Spirit of Elijah is touching the hearts of many of Father's children throughout the world, causing the work for the dead to accelerate at an unprecedented pace.

But what about you? Have you prayed about your own ancestors' work? Set aside those things in your life that don't really matter. Decide to do something that will have eternal consequences. Perhaps you have been prompted to look for ancestors but feel you are not a genealogist. Can you see that you don't have to be anymore? It all begins with love and a sincere desire to help those beyond the veil

who can't help themselves. Check around. There will be someone in your area who can help you have success.

This work is a spiritual work, a monumental effort of cooperation on both sides of the veil, where help is given in both directions. Anywhere you are in the world, with prayer, faith, determination, diligence, and some sacrifice, you can make a powerful contribution. Begin now. I promise you that the Lord will help you find a way. And it will make you feel wonderful. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 3:5.
2. *History of the Church*, 4:231.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 471-72.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13-16.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 2:2; emphasis added.
6. Howard W. Hunter, "A Temple-Motivated People," *Liahona*, May 1995, 5-6; *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 4-5.
7. First Presidency letter, Feb. 29, 2012; emphasis added.
8. Jeanene Watkins Scott, personal journal, Apr. 1988.
9. Jeanene Watkins Scott, personal journal, Sept. 23, 1989.



By **Russell T. Osguthorpe**
Sunday School General President

One Step Closer to the Savior

Conversion is the goal of all gospel learning and teaching. Conversion is not a onetime event. It is a lifelong quest to become more like the Savior.

This past summer a brief article I had written appeared in the *Liahona* and *Ensign*. My son emailed me saying, “Dad, maybe you could tell us when you have an article coming out.” I responded, “I just wanted to see if you were reading the Church magazines.” He wrote back explaining that his 10-year-old daughter had “passed the test. She got the *Ensign* from the mailbox, came into the house, and read it. Then she came up to our room and showed us your article.”

My granddaughter read the *Ensign* because she wanted to learn. She acted on her own by exercising her agency. The First Presidency recently approved new learning resources for youth that will support the innate desire of young people to learn, live, and share the gospel. These new resources are now available for review online. In January we will begin using them in classrooms. (Learn more about the new learning resources for youth at [lds.org/youth/learn](https://www.lds.org/youth/learn).)

When the Savior taught, the learner's agency was paramount. He showed us not only what to teach but also how to teach. He focused on the needs of the

learner. He helped individuals discover truth for themselves.¹ He always listened to their questions.²

These new learning resources will help us all learn and teach in the Savior's way in our homes and in our classrooms.³ As we do, we will be responding to His invitation to “come, follow me,”⁴ just as Elder Robert D. Hales so beautifully taught. While these new resources were being developed, I saw leaders and teachers in the auxiliaries and seminary counsel together with parents so that they could meet the needs of their learners. I've seen young women in their classes, young men in their Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and youth in Sunday School learn to exercise their agency and act for themselves.

One youth Sunday School teacher wondered how to help two young men with autism act for themselves. When she invited class members to share what they were learning, she worried that these two young men might refuse her invitation. But they didn't. One stood to teach what he had learned and then invited his classmate with autism to help him.

When the first began to struggle, his classmate stayed with him and whispered in his ear so that he could feel successful. They were both teaching that day. They were teaching *what* the Savior taught, but they were also teaching *how* the Savior taught. When the Savior taught, He acted out of love for the one He was teaching, just as this classmate did for his friend.⁵

When we learn and teach His word in His way, we accept His invitation to “come, follow me.” We follow Him one step at a time. With each step, we draw closer to the Savior. We change. The Lord knew that spiritual growth did not happen all at once. It comes gradually. Each time we accept His invitation and choose to follow Him, we progress along the pathway to full conversion.

Conversion is the goal of all gospel learning and teaching. Conversion is not a onetime event. It is a lifelong quest to become more like the Savior. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has reminded us that “to *know*” is not enough. “To be ‘converted’ . . . requires us to *do* and to *become*.”⁶ So learning for conversion is a continual process of knowing, doing, and becoming. Likewise, teaching for conversion requires key doctrine, invitations to action, and promised blessings.⁷ When we teach true doctrine, we help the learner to know. When we invite others to action, we help them to do or live the doctrine. And when the blessings come that the Lord has promised, we are changed. Like Alma, we can become new creatures.⁸

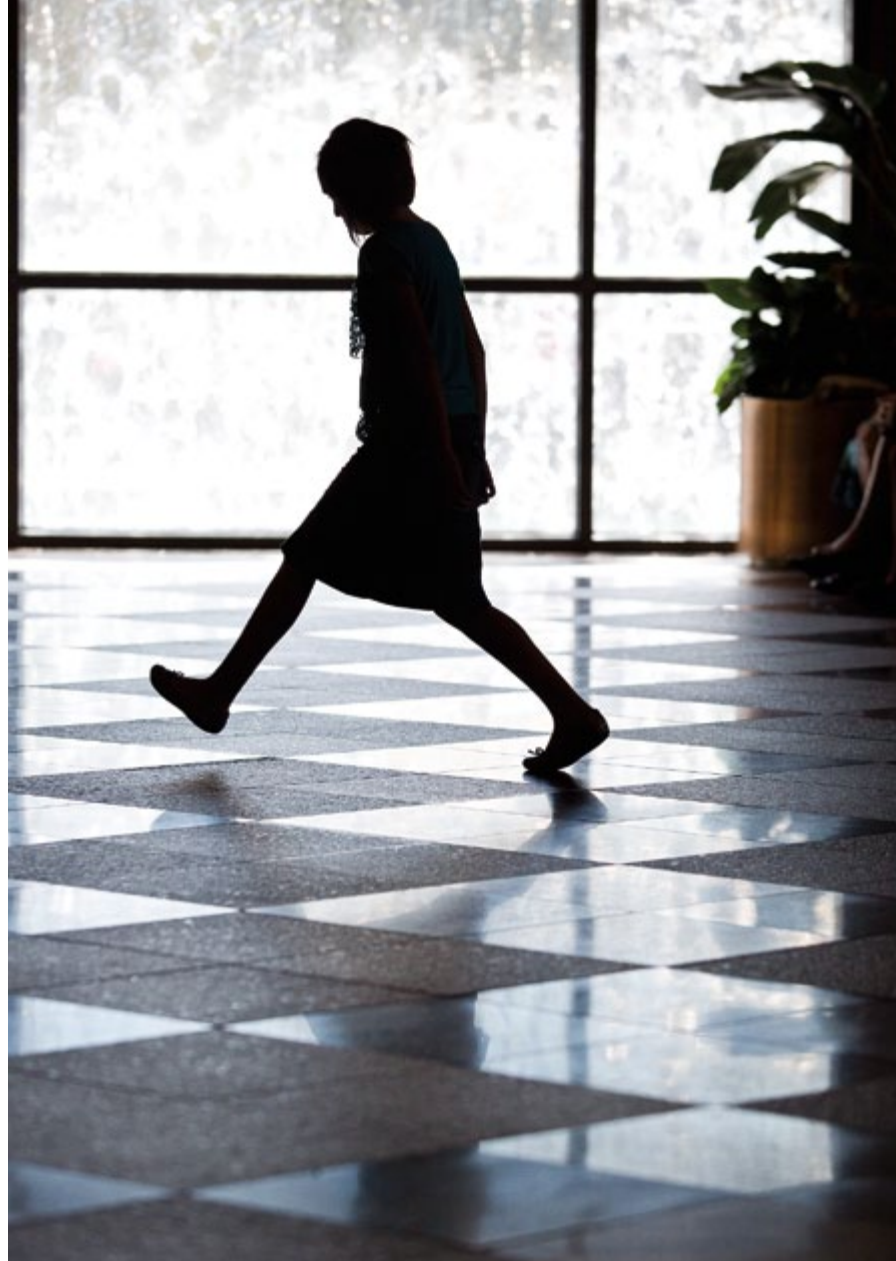
The new learning resources for youth have one central goal: to help youth become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I recently saw a young man in a youth Sunday School class discover truth for himself. When I noticed that he was having difficulty

relating the Atonement to his own life, I asked him if he had ever felt forgiveness. He responded: “Yeah, like that time I broke a guy’s nose when we were playing soccer. I felt bad about it. I wondered what I needed to do to feel better. So I went to his home and asked him to forgive me, but I knew I needed to do more, so I prayed, and then I felt that Heavenly Father forgave me too. This is what the Atonement means to me.”

When he shared this experience in class that day, he read from John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”—and then testified of the power of the Atonement. This doctrine was no longer an abstract concept to this young man. It became part of his life because he asked his own question and then exercised his agency to act.⁹

This young man was becoming more converted, and so were his classmates. They focused on a key doctrine by studying the scriptures. They related those sacred words to their own life and then testified of the blessings that had come to them as a result of living the doctrine. When we teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we focus on the scriptures and the words of modern prophets. We draw upon sacred text to help strengthen faith, build testimonies, and help everyone become fully converted. The new learning resources for youth will help all who use them to understand and live the word of God.

While teaching the Saints in Costa Rica, I held up a copy of *Teaching, No Greater Call* and asked, “So how many of you have a copy of this manual?” Nearly everyone raised a hand. With a smile, I said, “And I bet you’re reading it every single day.” To my surprise, a sister on the front row raised her hand, indicating that she



was reading it every day. I asked her to come to the podium and explain. She responded, “I read the Book of Mormon every morning. Then I read something in *Teaching, No Greater Call* so I can teach my children in the very best way what I’ve just learned.”

She wanted to learn and teach His word in His way, so she studied His word in the scriptures and then studied how to teach His word so that her children could be fully converted. Her pattern of gospel learning and teaching did not happen, I believe, all at once. She made a decision to do something. And the more she did what she knew she should do, the more the Lord strengthened her to walk in His way.

Sometimes the pathway to conversion can be long and hard. My brother-in-law was less active in the Church for 50 years. Not until he was in his 60s did he begin to accept the Savior’s invitation to come back. Many helped him along the way. One home teacher sent him a postcard every month for 22 years. But he had to decide he wanted to come back. He had to exercise his agency. He had to take that first step—and then another and another. Now he and his wife have been sealed together, and he is serving in a bishopric.

Recently we showed him the videos that have been developed to help leaders and teachers implement the new learning resources. After watching the videos, my brother-in-law



Athens, Greece

leaned back in his chair and said, somewhat emotionally, “Maybe if I had had that when I was young, I wouldn’t have fallen away.”

Several weeks ago I met a young man who was struggling. I asked if he was a member of the Church. He told me that he was agnostic but that earlier in his life he had been acquainted with the Church. When I told him about my calling in the Sunday School and that I would be speaking in general conference, he said, “Hey, if you’re speaking, I’ll watch that session.” I hope he’s watching today. I know that if he’s watching, he has learned something. This Conference Center is a unique place of learning and teaching for conversion.

When we live the principles taught by those we sustain as prophets,

seers, and revelators, we learn in the Savior’s way.¹⁰ We take one step closer to Him. As this conference draws to a close, I invite everyone in the sound of my voice to take that step. Like the Nephites of old, we can return to our “homes, and ponder upon the things which . . . have [been] said, and ask of the Father, in [Christ’s] name, that [we] may understand.”¹¹

We want every young person to understand. We want them to learn, teach, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ every day. This is what the Lord wants for all of His children. Whether you are a child, a youth, or an adult, I invite you to come and follow in His footsteps. With each step we take, I testify that the Lord will strengthen us. He will help us come the rest of the way. Then when

obstacles appear, we will keep going. When doubt comes, we will keep going. We will never turn back. We will never fall away.

I testify that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, live. I testify that the Savior continues to beckon us just as He did in former times to come unto Him. We can all accept His invitation. We can all learn, teach, and live His word in His way by taking one step closer to the Savior. As we do, we will become truly converted. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See John 3:1–7. In this passage the Savior answered the question that Nicodemus himself raised. He taught to the needs of Nicodemus. He permitted Nicodemus to exercise his agency to learn. He helped Nicodemus discover the answer for himself.
2. See John 3:4; Joseph Smith—History 1:18.
3. See *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior’s Way*, lds.org/youth/learn/guidebook/teaching.
4. See Luke 18:18–22.
5. See 1 John 4:19.
6. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 41; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33: “To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be ‘converted,’ which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be ‘converted.’ We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted.”
7. See Abraham 2:11.
8. See Mosiah 27:24–26; 2 Corinthians 5:17.
9. See David A. Bednar, “Watching with All Perseverance,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 43: “Are you and I helping our children become agents who act and seek learning by study and by faith, or have we trained our children to wait to be taught and acted upon? Are we as parents primarily giving our children the equivalent of spiritual fish to eat, or are we consistently helping them to act, to learn for themselves, and to stand steadfast and immovable? Are we helping our children become anxiously engaged in asking, seeking, and knocking?”
10. See Dennis B. Neuenschwander, “Living Prophets, Seers, and Revelators,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 49–51; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 40–42.
11. 3 Nephi 17:3.



By Elder Marcus B. Nash
Of the Seventy

By Faith All Things Are Fulfilled

Faith will help us to safely climb the gospel path, overcome every challenge of mortality, and return to the majestic presence of our Heavenly Father.

Not long ago several of us in the Nash family hiked to the top of Huayna Picchu, a tall peak adjoining the ancient Incan ruins of Machu Picchu in the mountains of Peru. It is a very steep climb with breathtaking views and precipitous drop-offs. Sadly, some hikers have lost their lives by falling off that narrow, steep trail. To avoid such tragedies, strong cables have since been secured to the solid rock along the mountain-side of Huayna Picchu. We held to those cables as we climbed, and they enabled us to safely reach the summit, where the view was majestic!

Like the path on Huayna Picchu, our mortal journey is a steep and difficult climb, one that requires our Heavenly Father's help to successfully complete. For this reason, He established the principles and ordinances of the gospel to bring us unto the Savior and His saving power.¹ The first of those principles, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,² is like the cables on Huayna Picchu: if strong and securely attached to "the rock of our Redeemer,"³ faith will help us to safely climb the gospel path, overcome every challenge of

mortality,⁴ and return to the majestic presence of our Heavenly Father. All things are fulfilled by faith.⁵

Faith is both a principle of action and of power.⁶ It "is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if [we] have faith [we] hope for things which are not seen, which are true."⁷ It is an assurance⁸ of the Spirit gained through our learning that moves us to act⁹ to follow the example of the Savior and prayerfully keep His commandments, even through times of sacrifice and trial.¹⁰ Faith brings us the power of the Lord, which—among other things—is manifested by a hope of good things to come,¹¹ miracles that confirm our faith,¹² and divine protection in spiritual and temporal matters.¹³

The life of Ann Rowley, a pioneer woman in the early days of the Church, demonstrates how exercising faith impacts our lives for good. A widow from England, Sister Rowley exercised her faith to answer the prophet's call to gather to Zion. She was a member of the Willie handcart company, which encountered deep snowdrifts along the trail in the fall of 1856. They had reached a point in the

trek where her seven children were literally starving. She wrote: "It hurt me to see my children go hungry. . . . Night was coming and there was no food for the evening meal. I asked God's help as I always did. I got on my knees, remembering two hard sea biscuits that . . . had been left over from the sea voyage. They were not large, and were so hard they couldn't be broken. Surely, that was not enough to feed 8 people, but 5 loaves and 2 fishes were not enough to feed 5,000 people either, but through a miracle, Jesus had done it. So, with God's help, nothing is impossible. I found the biscuits and put them in a dutch oven and covered them with water and asked for God's blessing. Then I put the lid on the pan and set it on the coals. When I took off the lid a little later, I found the pan filled with food. I kneeled with my family and thanked God for his goodness. That night my family had sufficient food."¹⁴

Ann Rowley was living the gospel at great personal sacrifice. She needed help and asked for it in prayer. Because of her faith, she was filled with hope and miraculously provided with food for her family. The Lord also blessed her with the eternally significant ability to "endure in faith to the end."¹⁵ Despite an uncertain future, she did not demand to know how she was going to feed her children the next day; instead, she patiently "wait[ed] upon the Lord"¹⁶ and pressed forward with hope—just as the beautiful hymn expresses:

*Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling
gloom; Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from
home; Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough
for me.¹⁷*



We too can exercise such faith in the Lord, believing and trusting that our kind and constant God¹⁸ will bless us with His miraculous power suited to our circumstance, according to His timing. As we do so, we too will see the hand of God manifest in our lives.

The Lord commands us to take “the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked.”¹⁹ Satan will use such things as doubt, fear, or sin to tempt us to let go of faith and lose the protection it offers. Let us briefly examine each of these challenges to faith in turn so that we can recognize and heed not the adversary’s temptations.²⁰

First, unbelief in the Lord or His gospel will cause us to resist the Spirit of God.²¹ The Lord’s antidote for doubt is simple. As King Benjamin declared, “Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.”²²

If, because of unbelief or doubt, you find your faith wavering, remember that even the ancient Apostles implored the Lord to “increase our faith.”²³ Bearing in mind that faith and reason are necessary companions, consider the following analogy: faith and reason are like the two wings of an aircraft. Both are essential to maintain flight. If, from your perspective, reason seems to contradict faith, pause and remember that our perspective is extremely limited compared with the Lord’s.²⁴ Do not discard faith any more than you would detach a wing from an aircraft in flight. Instead, nurture a particle of faith and permit the hope it produces to be an anchor to your soul—and to your reason.²⁵ That is why we are commanded to “seek learning . . . by study *and also* by faith.”²⁶ Remember, faith precedes and produces miracles for which we have no immediate explanation within our experience, such as a Dutch oven full of food from two small biscuits or simply enduring in faith against all odds.²⁷

Second, fear distracts from and undermines faith in the Savior. The Apostle Peter looked to the Lord one stormy night and walked on water—until he averted his gaze and “saw the wind boisterous [and] was afraid” and then sank into the stormy sea.²⁸ He could have continued walking if he had not feared! Rather than our focusing upon and fearing the boisterous wind and waves in our lives, the Lord invites us to “look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”²⁹

Third, sin diminishes the presence of the Spirit in our lives, and without the Holy Ghost, we will lack the spiritual stamina to hold onto and exercise faith. It is best to exercise our faith to “touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing”³⁰ and to “be diligent in keeping all [the] commandments, lest . . . your faith fail you, and your enemies triumph over you.”³¹ If sin has stained your life, I invite you to exercise “faith unto repentance,”³² and the Savior, through the Atonement, will purify and heal your life.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord will, according to our faith, fulfill His promises and work with us to overcome every challenge.³³ He did so for Ann Rowley and has done so for His people in all nations and in every age and generation. Because He is a “God of miracles” and “changeth not,” He will likewise bless each of us with hope, protection, and power according to our faith in Him.³⁴ Steadfast faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will—like the cables on the path of Huayna Picchu—anchor you and your loved ones to “the rock of our Redeemer”³⁵ and His matchless power to save.

President Thomas S. Monson has stated, “The future is as bright as your faith.”³⁶ I testify of that sublime, hopeful truth and invite each of us to

steadfastly press forward with faith in the Lord, “nothing wavering.”³⁷ I know that the Savior lives, is “the author and the finisher of [our] faith,”³⁸ and the “rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”³⁹ I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
2. See Articles of Faith 1:4.
3. Helaman 5:12.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:53.
5. See Ether 12:3.
6. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 3; see also Jacob 4:6; Ether 12:7–22; Hebrews 11:4–40.
7. Alma 32:21.
8. See Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1 (in Hebrews 11:1, footnote *b*).
9. See 2 Nephi 25:23; Alma 34:15–17; Ether 12:6; James 2:17–26.
10. See Ether 12:4–6; *Lectures on Faith*, 69.
11. See Moroni 7:40–42.
12. See Bible Dictionary, “Faith”; see also Mormon 9:8–21; Moroni 7:33–37.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:17; Alma 57:19–27; 58:10–13.
14. Ann Rowley, in Andrew D. Olsen, *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie and Martin Handcart Pioneers* (2006), 113.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 20:25.
16. Isaiah 40:31.
17. “Lead, Kindly Light,” *Hymns*, no. 97.
18. See Jacob 4:10; Mormon 9:9.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 27:17; emphasis added.
20. See 1 Nephi 8:33–34; Alma 37:33; Doctrine and Covenants 20:22.
21. See Alma 32:28.
22. Mosiah 4:9.
23. Luke 17:5.
24. See Mosiah 4:9–10; Proverbs 3:5–7; Isaiah 55:8–9.
25. See Ether 12:4.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118; emphasis added.
27. See Moroni 7:33–38; Ether 12:19.
28. See Matthew 14:25–31.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
30. Moroni 10:30.
31. Doctrine and Covenants 136:42.
32. See Alma 34:15–17; see also Ether 12:3.
33. See Ether 12:29; Alma 7:27.
34. See Mormon 9:18–21; see also Moroni 7:33–38; Alma 37:16–17.
35. Helaman 5:12.
36. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 92.
37. See James 1:6–8.
38. Moroni 6:4; see also Hebrews 12:2.
39. Hebrews 11:6; see also Ether 12:41.



By Elder Daniel L. Johnson
Of the Seventy

Becoming a True Disciple

*As we obey His commandments and serve our fellowmen,
we become better disciples of Jesus Christ.*

Those of us who have entered into the waters of baptism and received the gift of the Holy Ghost have covenanted that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, or in other words, we declare ourselves to be disciples of the Lord. We renew that covenant each week as we partake of the sacrament, and we demonstrate that discipleship by the way that we live. Such discipleship was beautifully demonstrated in recent events in Mexico.

It had been a beautiful spring for the fruit-growing communities in northern Mexico. The fruit trees were in full bloom, and expectations were high for a bounteous harvest. Plans were already being made to pay off loans, replace needed equipment and aging orchards, and meet personal commitments such as school tuition for family members. Plans were even being made for family vacations. There was a general air of optimism. Then, on a Monday afternoon in late March, a winter storm moved in, and it began to snow. It snowed until about three o'clock in the morning. Then, as the clouds moved out, the temperature plummeted. Throughout the night

and early morning, every effort was made to save at least a part of the fruit crop. It was all to no avail. It simply got too cold, and the crop was totally frozen. There would be no fruit to be harvested and sold this year. Tuesday dawned with the sickening and disheartening loss of all those wonderful plans, expectations, and dreams of just the day before.

I received an email regarding that terrible Tuesday morning from Sandra Hatch, the wife of John Hatch, then-first counselor in the presidency of the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Temple. I quote portions of that email: “John got up early—about 6:30—to run up to the temple to see if we should cancel the session this morning. He came back saying that the parking lot and road were clear, so we decided to go ahead. We figured that maybe some of the workers who didn’t have orchards would come, and we could put all the workers into the session. . . . It was so inspiring to see the men come in, one after another. There they were, after no sleep at all, and figuring their crops were lost. . . . I was watching them during our preparation meeting, and they were having a hard time

staying awake. But instead of figuring they had a good excuse to not come, they were there. And there were 38 people in the session (a full session)! It was an uplifting morning for us, and we thanked Heavenly Father for good people who do their duty, no matter what happens. I felt a special spirit there this morning. I am sure He was pleased to know that we love His house and felt that it was a good place to be on such a difficult morning.”

The story does not end there and in fact is still ongoing.

Most of those who lost their fruit crop had some land available on which to plant alternative crops for the season, such as chili peppers or beans. These crops could provide at least some cash flow sufficient to survive on until next year’s fruit crop. However, there was one good brother with a young family who did not have additional land and was facing a year with no revenue at all. Others in the community, seeing the dire situation of this brother and acting on their own initiative and expense, arranged for a piece of property, used their own equipment

to prepare the land, and provided the chili plants for him to plant.

I know the men about whom I have just spoken. Knowing them, I was not surprised at what they did. But those who do not know them will probably be asking two questions, both beginning with the word *why*. Why would they come to the temple to perform their duties and to serve after having been up all night long, only to realize that they had lost the greater part of their revenue for the whole year? Why would they use what were now scarce and very precious resources to help another in desperate need when they themselves were now in such dire financial straits?

If you understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, then you will know the answer to these two questions.

Making the covenant to be a disciple of Christ is the beginning of a lifelong process, and the path is not always easy. As we repent of our sins and strive to do what He would have us do and serve our fellowmen as He would serve them, we will inevitably

become more like Him. Becoming like Him and being one with Him is the ultimate goal and objective—and essentially the very definition of true discipleship.

As the Savior asked His disciples when He visited the American continent, “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?” And then, answering His own question, He said, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

Becoming as the Savior is not an easy task, especially in the world in which we live. We face obstacles and adversity virtually every day of our lives. There is a reason for this, and it is one of the primary purposes of mortality. As we read in Abraham 3:25, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”

These tests or trials vary in nature and intensity. But no one will leave this mortal existence without passing through them. Mostly, we picture trials as the loss of a crop or a job; the death of a loved one; illness; physical, mental, or emotional incapacitation; poverty; or loss of friends. However, even the attainment of seemingly worthwhile objectives can bring their own dangers of unhelpful pride, where we aspire more to the honors of men than the approbation of heaven. These may include worldly popularity, public recognition, physical prowess, artistic or athletic talent, prosperity, and riches. Regarding these latter trials, some of us may have feelings similar to those expressed by Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*: If riches are a curse, “may [God] smite me with it. And may I never recover!”¹

But these latter types of trials may be even more daunting and dangerous



and more difficult to overcome than the former. Our discipleship will be developed and proven not by the type of trials that we are faced with but how we endure them. As we have been taught by President Henry B. Eyring: “So, the great test of life is to see whether we will hearken to and obey God’s commands in the midst of the storms of life. It is not to endure storms, but to choose the right while they rage. And the tragedy of life is to fail in that test and so fail to qualify to return in glory to our heavenly home” (“Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38).

I am the proud grandfather of 23 grandchildren. They never cease to amaze me with their grasp of eternal truths, even in their very early and tender years. As I was preparing for this talk, I asked each of them to send me a very brief definition of what it meant to them to be a disciple or a follower of Jesus Christ. I received wonderful answers from all of them. But I would like to share with you this response from eight-year-old Benjamin: “Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means being an example. It means being a missionary and preparing to be a missionary. It means to serve others. It means you read the scriptures and say your prayers. It means you keep the Sabbath day holy. It means you listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. It means going to church and going to the temple.”

I agree with Benjamin. Discipleship is all about doing and becoming. As we obey His commandments and serve our fellowmen, we become better disciples of Jesus Christ. Obedience and submission to His will bring the companionship of the Holy Ghost, along with those blessings of peace, joy,



and security that always accompany this third member of the Godhead. And they can come in no other way. Ultimately, it is total submission to His will that helps us become as our Savior is. Again, becoming like Him and being one with Him is the ultimate goal and objective—and essentially the very definition of true discipleship.

Discipleship is what I saw being practiced in the Colonia Juárez Temple

and in its nearby fields as brothers and sisters in the faith reaffirmed their commitments to God and to each other despite heartrending adversity.

I testify that as we obey His commandments, serve others, and submit our will to His will, we will, indeed, become His true disciples. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTE

1. See Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), 61.



By Elder Don R. Clarke
Of the Seventy

Blessings of the Sacrament

We will be blessed as we feel gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, renew our baptismal covenants, feel forgiveness, and receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost.

I grew up in Rexburg, Idaho, where I was influenced and taught by a wonderful family, friends, teachers, and leaders. There are special experiences in the lives of all of us that touch our souls and make things different forever. One such experience happened in my youth. This experience transformed my life.

I was always active in the Church and progressed through the Aaronic Priesthood. When I was a teenager, Brother Jacob, my teacher, asked that I write down on a card what I had thought about during the sacrament. I took my card and began to write. First on the list was a basketball game we had won the night before. And then came a date after the game, and so went the list. Far removed and certainly not in bold letters was the name of Jesus Christ.

Each Sunday the card was filled out. For a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, the sacrament and sacrament meeting took on a new, expanded, and spiritual meaning. I anxiously looked forward to Sundays and to the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as understanding the Savior's

Atonement was changing me. Every Sunday to this day, as I partake of the sacrament, I can see my card and review my list. Always on my list now, first of all, is the Savior of mankind.

In the New Testament we read of the time that the Savior and His Apostles met in an upper room for the Feast of the Passover.

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me.*”

“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, *which is shed for you.*”¹

Jesus also instituted the ordinance of the sacrament during His visit to the Nephites.² I have come to know the importance of these two events.

President David O. McKay said, “I feel impressed to emphasize what the Lord has designated as the most important meeting in the Church, and that is the sacrament meeting.”³ If we properly prepare for the sacrament, we can transform our lives. I would like to suggest five principles that can bless our lives as we partake of the sacrament worthily.

I. Have a Feeling of Gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ

The first principle is to have a feeling of gratitude to Heavenly Father during the sacrament for the Atonement of His Son. The following story is told about passing the sacrament:

“The sacrament never really meant much to me until the Sunday I was ordained a deacon. That afternoon I passed the sacrament for the first time. Prior to the meeting, one of the deacons warned me, ‘Look out for Brother Schmidt. You may have to wake him up!’ Finally the time came for me to participate in the passing of the sacrament. I handled the first six rows quite well. Children and adults partook of the bread with no noticeable thought or problem. Then I got to row seven, the row where Brother Schmidt always sat. But I was surprised. Instead of being asleep he was wide awake. Unlike many of the others I had served, he took the bread with what seemed to be great thought and reverence.

“A few minutes later I found myself again approaching row seven with the water. This time my friend was right. Brother Schmidt sat with his head bowed and his big German eyes shut. He was evidently sound asleep. What could I do or say? I looked for a moment at his brow, wrinkled and worn from years of toil and hardship. He had joined the Church as a teenager and had experienced much persecution in his small German town. I had heard the story many times in testimony meeting. I decided finally to gently nudge his shoulder in hopes of waking him. As I reached to do so, his head slowly lifted. There were tears streaming down his cheeks and as I looked into his eyes I saw love and joy. He quietly reached up and took the water. Even though I was only twelve then, I can still remember vividly the



feeling I had as I watched this rugged old man partake of the sacrament. I knew without a doubt that he was feeling something about the sacrament that I had never felt. I determined then that I wanted to feel those same feelings.”⁴

Brother Schmidt had communicated with heaven, and heaven had communicated with him.

II. Remember That We Are Renewing Baptismal Covenants

The second principle is to remember that we are renewing our baptismal covenants as we partake of the sacrament. Some of the promises that we make, as recorded in the scriptures, include:

“Come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, . . . to bear one another’s burdens, . . . to mourn with those that mourn . . . , and to stand as witnesses of God.”⁵

“Come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, . . . willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end,”⁶ and to keep His commandments and always remember Him.⁷

The sacramental prayers are a reminder of these covenants. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew our commitment to live up to these

covenants. I believe it would be appropriate to memorize the sacramental prayers in our minds and in our hearts. This will help us focus on renewing our baptismal covenants. Whether we were 8 or 80 years old when we were baptized, I hope we will never forget that day and the covenants we made.

III. During the Sacrament We Can Feel Forgiveness of Our Sins

Thirdly, during the sacrament we can feel forgiveness of our sins. If we have spent time before sacrament meeting repenting of our sins, we can leave sacrament meeting feeling clean and pure. President Boyd K. Packer said: “The sacrament renews the process of forgiveness. Every Sunday when the sacrament is served, that is a ceremony to renew the process of forgiveness. . . . Every Sunday you cleanse yourself so that, in due time, when you die your spirit will be clean.”⁸ Partaking of the sacrament worthily can help us feel like the people of King Benjamin, who “were *filled with joy*, having received a *remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience*.”⁹

IV. We Can Receive Inspiration for Solutions to Our Problems

The fourth principle is that we can receive inspiration for solutions

to our problems during sacrament meeting. When I was a mission president in Bolivia, my wife, Mary Anne, and I had the blessing of attending a mission presidents’ seminar with President Henry B. Eyring. In that meeting he taught that there are three important ways to prepare to benefit from a meeting. We should come with our problems, humble as children ready to learn, and with the desire to help God’s children.

As we humbly come to sacrament meeting, we can be blessed to feel impressions for solutions to our daily problems. We must come prepared, be willing to listen, and not be distracted. In the scriptures we read, “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must *study it out* in your mind; then you must *ask me if it be right*, and if it is right I will cause that your *bosom shall burn* within you; therefore, *you shall feel that it is right*.”¹⁰ We can know what we should do to solve our problems.

V. Partaking of the Sacrament Worthily Will Help Us Be Filled with the Holy Ghost

The fifth principle, partaking of the sacrament worthily, will help us be filled with the Holy Ghost. Upon instituting the sacrament during His visit to the Nephites, Jesus stated, “He that

eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.”¹¹ They had been promised that if they hungered and thirsted after righteousness, they would be filled with the Holy Ghost. The sacramental prayer also promises that if we live up to our covenants, we will always have His Spirit to be with us.¹²

Elder Melvin J. Ballard said: “I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food.”¹³

We will be blessed as we feel gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, renew our baptismal covenants, feel forgiveness, and receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost as we partake of the sacrament each week. It will always be a great sacrament meeting if the sacrament is the center of our worship. I express my gratitude for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I know He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 22:19–20; emphasis added.
2. See 3 Nephi 18.
3. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1929, 11.
4. *Book of Mormon Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 1979), 417.
5. Mosiah 18:8–9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
8. Boyd K. Packer, *Mine Errand from the Lord* (2008), 196.
9. Mosiah 4:3; emphasis added.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8; emphasis added.
11. 3 Nephi 20:8.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
13. Melvin J. Ballard, in Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (1949), 149.



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

Converted unto the Lord

*Knowing that the gospel is true is the essence of a testimony.
Consistently being true to the gospel is the essence of conversion.*

My message focuses upon the relationship between receiving a testimony that Jesus is the Christ and becoming converted to Him and His gospel. Typically, we treat the topics of testimony and conversion separately and independently. However, we gain precious perspective and greater spiritual conviction as we consider these two important subjects together.

I pray the Holy Ghost will instruct and edify each of us.

Whom Say Ye That I Am?

We can learn much about testimony and conversion from the ministry of the Apostle Peter.

As Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He posed this penetrating question to His disciples: “Whom say ye that I am?”

Peter responded forthrightly: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:15–17).

As is evidenced in Peter’s reply and the Savior’s instruction, a testimony is personal knowledge of spiritual truth obtained by revelation. A testimony is a gift from God and is available to all

of His children. Any honest seeker of truth can obtain a testimony by exercising the necessary “particle of faith” in Jesus Christ to “experiment upon” (Alma 32:27) and “try the virtue of the word” (Alma 31:5), to yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19), and to awaken unto God (see Alma 5:7). Testimony brings increased personal accountability and is a source of purpose, assurance, and joy.

Seeking for and obtaining a testimony of spiritual truth requires asking, seeking, and knocking (see Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7) with a sincere heart, real intent, and faith in the Savior (see Moroni 10:4). Fundamental components of a testimony are knowing that Heavenly Father lives and loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that the fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth in these latter days.

When Thou Art Converted

As the Savior taught His disciples at the Last Supper, He said to Peter:

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to . . . sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31–32).

Interestingly, this mighty Apostle had talked and walked with the



Master, had witnessed many miracles, and had a strong testimony of the Savior's divinity. Yet even Peter needed additional instruction from Jesus about the converting and sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost and his obligation to serve faithfully.

The essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through the Savior's Atonement. True conversion brings a change in one's beliefs, heart, and life to accept and conform to the will of God (see Acts 3:19; 3 Nephi 9:20) and includes a conscious commitment to become a disciple of Christ.

Conversion is an enlarging, a deepening, and a broadening of the undergirding base of testimony. It is the result of revelation from God, accompanied by individual repentance, obedience, and diligence. Any honest seeker of truth can become converted by experiencing the mighty change of heart and being spiritually born of God (see Alma 5:12–14). As we honor the ordinances and covenants of salvation and exaltation (see D&C 20:25), "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20), and endure in faith to the end (see D&C 14:7), we become new creatures in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Conversion is an

offering of self, of love, and of loyalty we give to God in gratitude for the gift of testimony.

Book of Mormon Examples of Conversion

The Book of Mormon is filled with inspiring accounts of conversion. Amaleki, a descendant of Jacob, declared: "I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him" (Omni 1:26).

Knowing by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ is important and necessary. But earnestly coming unto Him and giving our whole souls as an offering requires much more than merely knowing. Conversion requires all of our heart, all of our might, and all of our mind and strength (see D&C 4:2).

King Benjamin's people responded to his teaching by exclaiming, "Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually"

(Mosiah 5:2). Accepting the words spoken, gaining a testimony of their truthfulness, and exercising faith in Christ produced a mighty change of heart and a firm determination to improve and become better.

Converted Lamanites in the book of Helaman are described as being "in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments. . . .

". . . And they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth" (Helaman 15:5–6).

As these examples highlight, the key characteristics associated with conversion are experiencing a mighty change in our hearts, having a disposition to do good continually, going forward in the path of duty, walking circumspectly before God, keeping the commandments, and serving with unwearied diligence. Clearly, these faithful souls had become deeply devoted to the Lord and His teachings.

Becoming Converted

For many of us, conversion is an ongoing process and not a onetime



event that results from a powerful or dramatic experience. Line upon line and precept upon precept, gradually and almost imperceptibly, our motives, our thoughts, our words, and our deeds become aligned with the will of God. Conversion unto the Lord requires both persistence and patience.

Samuel the Lamanite identified five basic elements in becoming converted unto the Lord: (1) believing in the teachings and prophecies of the holy prophets as they are recorded in the scriptures, (2) exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, (3) repenting, (4) experiencing a mighty change of heart, and (5) becoming “firm and steadfast in the faith” (see Helaman 15:7–8). This is the pattern that leads to conversion.

Testimony and Conversion

Testimony is the beginning of and a prerequisite to continuing conversion. Testimony is a point of departure; it is not an ultimate destination. Strong

testimony is the foundation upon which conversion is established.

Testimony alone is not and will not be enough to protect us in the latter-day storm of darkness and evil in which we are living. Testimony is important and necessary but not sufficient to provide the spiritual strength and protection we need. Some members of the Church with testimonies have wavered and fallen away. Their spiritual knowledge and commitment did not measure up to the challenges they faced.

An important lesson about the connection between testimony and conversion is evident in the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah.

“As many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, . . . as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted

unto the Lord, never did fall away.

“For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more. . . .

“Now, these are they who were converted unto the Lord” (Alma 23:6–8).

Two major elements are described in these verses: (1) *the knowledge of the truth*, which may be interpreted as a testimony, and (2) *converted unto the Lord*, which I understand to be conversion to the Savior and His gospel. Thus, the powerful combination of both testimony and conversion unto the Lord produced firmness and steadfastness and provided spiritual protection.

They never did fall away and surrendered “the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more.” To set aside cherished “weapons of rebellion” such as selfishness, pride, and disobedience requires more than merely believing and knowing. Conviction, humility, repentance, and submissiveness

precede the abandonment of our weapons of rebellion. Do you and I still possess weapons of rebellion that keep us from becoming converted unto the Lord? If so, then we need to repent now.

Note that the Lamanites were not converted to the missionaries who taught them or to the excellent programs of the Church. They were not converted to the personalities of their leaders or to preserving a cultural heritage or the traditions of their fathers. They were converted unto the Lord—to Him as the Savior and to His divinity and doctrine—and they never did fall away.

A testimony is spiritual knowledge of truth obtained by the power of the Holy Ghost. Continuing conversion is constant devotion to the revealed truth we have received—with a heart that is willing and for righteous reasons. Knowing that the gospel is true is the essence of a testimony. Consistently being true to the gospel is the essence of conversion. We should know the gospel is true and be true to the gospel.

Testimony, Conversion, and the Parable of the Ten Virgins

I now want to use one of many possible interpretations of the parable

of the ten virgins to highlight the relationship between testimony and conversion. Ten virgins, five who were wise and five who were foolish, took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Please think of the lamps used by the virgins as the lamps of testimony. The foolish virgins took their lamps of testimony but took no oil with them. Consider the oil to be the oil of conversion.

“But the wise took oil [of conversion] in their vessels with their lamps [of testimony].

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps [of testimony].

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil [even the oil of conversion]; for our lamps [of testimony are weak and] are gone out.

“But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Matthew 25:4–9).

Were the five wise virgins selfish and unwilling to share, or were they indicating correctly that the oil of

conversion cannot be borrowed? Can the spiritual strength that results from consistent obedience to the commandments be given to another person? Can the knowledge obtained through diligent study and pondering of the scriptures be conveyed to one who is in need? Can the peace the gospel brings to a faithful Latter-day Saint be transferred to an individual experiencing adversity or great challenge? The clear answer to each of these questions is no.

As the wise virgins emphasized properly, each of us must “buy for ourselves.” These inspired women were not describing a business transaction; rather, they were emphasizing our individual responsibility to keep our lamp of testimony burning and to obtain an ample supply of the oil of conversion. This precious oil is acquired one drop at a time—“line upon line [and] precept upon precept” (2 Nephi 28:30), patiently and persistently. No shortcut is available; no last-minute flurry of preparation is possible.

“Wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom” (D&C 33:17).

Testimony

I promise that as we come to a knowledge of the truth and are converted unto the Lord, we will remain firm and steadfast and never fall away. Eagerly we will set aside our weapons of rebellion. We will be blessed with bright light from our lamps of testimony and an ample supply of the oil of conversion. And as each of us becomes more fully converted, we will strengthen our families, our friends, and our associates. Of these truths I testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■





By President Thomas S. Monson

God Be with You Till We Meet Again

As we take the messages of the past two days into our hearts and into our lives, we will be blessed.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have come to the close of another inspiring general conference. I personally have been spiritually fed and uplifted and know that you too have felt the special spirit of this conference.

We offer our heartfelt gratitude to all who have participated in any way. The truths of the gospel have been beautifully taught and reemphasized. As we take the messages of the past two days into our hearts and into our lives, we will be blessed.

As always, the proceedings of this conference will be available in the coming issues of the *Ensign* and the *Liahona* magazines. I encourage you to read the talks once again and to ponder the messages contained therein. I have found in my own life that I gain even more from these inspired sermons when I study them in greater depth.

We have had unprecedented coverage of the conference, reaching across the continents and the oceans to people everywhere. Though we are far removed from many of you, we feel of your spirit and send our love and appreciation to you.

To our Brethren who have been released at this conference, may I express the heartfelt gratitude of all of us for your many years of devoted service. Countless are those who have been blessed by your contributions to the work of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, I have just recently celebrated my 85th birthday, and I am grateful for each year the Lord has granted me. As I reflect upon my life's experiences, I thank Him for His many blessings to me. As I mentioned in my message this morning, I have felt His hand directing my efforts as I have tried earnestly to serve Him and to serve all of you.

The office of the President of the Church is a demanding one. How grateful I am for my two faithful counselors, who serve by my side and who are always willing and exceptionally able to assist in the work which comes to the First Presidency. I express my gratitude as well for the noble men who comprise the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They work tirelessly in the cause of the Master, with the members of the Quorums of the Seventy providing inspired assistance to them.

I wish also to commend you, my brothers and sisters, wherever you are throughout the world, for all that you do in your wards and branches, your stakes and districts. As you willingly fulfill callings when you are asked, you are helping to build the kingdom of God on earth.

May we ever watch over one another, assisting in times of need. Let us not be critical and judgmental but let us be tolerant, ever emulating the Savior's example of loving-kindness. In that vein, may we willingly serve one another. May we pray for the inspiration to know of the needs of those around us, and then may we go forward and provide assistance.

Let us be of good cheer as we go about our lives. Although we live in



increasingly perilous times, the Lord loves us and is mindful of us. He is always on our side as we do what is right. He will help us in time of need. Difficulties come into our lives, problems we do not anticipate and which we would never choose. None of us is immune. The purpose of mortality is to learn and to grow to be more like our Father, and it is often during the difficult times that we learn the most, as painful as the lessons may be. Our lives can also be filled with joy as we follow the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

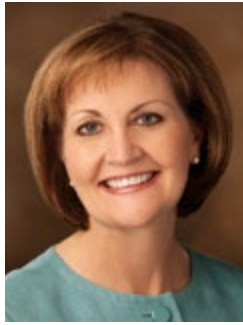
The Lord admonished, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”¹ What great happiness this knowledge should bring to us. He lived for us and He died for us. He paid the price for our sins. May we emulate His example. May we show our great gratitude to Him by accepting His sacrifice and living lives that will qualify us to return and one day live with Him.

As I have mentioned at previous conferences, I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. I need them; I feel them. We as General Authorities also remember all of you and pray for our Heavenly Father’s choicest blessings to be with you.

Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, we adjourn for six months. May God be with you until we meet again at that time. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, even Jesus Christ the Lord, amen. ■

NOTE

1. John 16:33.



By Linda K. Burton
Relief Society General President

Is Faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ Written in Our Hearts?

Making, keeping, and rejoicing in our covenants will be the evidence that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is truly written in our hearts.

My beloved sisters, you have been on my mind and in my heart for months as I have pondered this challenging responsibility. Though I don’t feel equal to the responsibility placed upon me, I know that the call has come from the Lord through His chosen prophet, and for now, that is enough. The scriptures teach that “whether by [the Lord’s] voice or by the voice of [His] servants, it is the same.”¹

One of the precious gifts associated with this calling is the assurance that Heavenly Father loves all of His daughters. I have felt His love for each of us!

Like you, I love the scriptures! In the book of Jeremiah we find a scripture that is very dear to my heart. Jeremiah lived in a difficult time and place, but the Lord allowed him to

foresee “a time of hope during the latter-day gathering of Israel”²—our day. Jeremiah prophesied:

“After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and *write it in their hearts*; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . .

“ . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”³

We are the people Jeremiah saw. Have we invited the Lord to write the law, or doctrine, in our hearts? Do we believe that the forgiveness available through the Atonement that Jeremiah refers to applies to us personally?

A few years ago, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared his feelings about the



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deep-rooted faith of pioneers who pushed toward the Salt Lake Valley even after the deaths of their children. He said, “They didn’t do that for a program, they didn’t do it for a social activity, they did it because the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ was in their soul, it was in the marrow of their bones.”

He expressed, with tender emotion: “That’s the only way those mothers could bury [their babies] in a breadbox and move on, saying, ‘The promised land is out there somewhere. We’re going to make it to the valley.’”

“They could say that because of covenants and doctrine and faith and revelation and spirit.”

He concluded with these thought-provoking words: “If we can keep that in our families and in the Church, maybe a lot of other things start to take care of themselves. Maybe a lot of other less-needed things sort of fall out of the wagon. I’m told those handcarts could only hold so much. Just as our ancestors had to choose what they took, maybe the 21st century will drive us to decide, ‘What can we put on this handcart?’ It’s the substance of our soul; it’s the stuff right down in the marrow of our bones.”⁴ Or, to put it another way, it is what is *written in our hearts!*

As a new Relief Society presidency, we have sought the Lord earnestly to know what essential things He would have us put in our Relief Society handcart to continue moving His work forward. We have felt that Heavenly

Father would first have us help His beloved daughters understand the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As we do so, we know our faith will increase, as will our desire to live righteously. Second, as we have considered the critical need to strengthen families and homes, we have felt that the Lord would have us encourage His beloved daughters to cheerfully cleave to their covenants. When covenants are kept, families are strengthened. Finally, we feel He would have us work in unity with the other auxiliaries and with our priesthood leaders, striving to seek out and help those in need to progress along the path. It is our fervent prayer that each of us will open our hearts and let the Lord engrave in them the doctrines of the Atonement, covenants, and unity.

How can we expect to strengthen families or help others unless we first have written in our own hearts a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement? Tonight I would like to share three principles of the Atonement that, if written in our hearts, will increase our faith in Jesus Christ. It is my hope that understanding these principles will bless each of us, whether we are new to the Church or lifelong members.

Principle 1: “All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”⁵

We, with you, bear witness of the Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our testimonies, like yours, have been written in our hearts as we have faced assorted soul-stretching challenges and adversities. Without an understanding of Heavenly Father’s perfect plan of happiness and the Savior’s Atonement as the central feature of that plan, these challenges could seem unfair. We all share in the trials of life together. But in faithful hearts is written, “All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”

Why does the Lord allow suffering and adversity to come to us in this life? Simply put, it is part of the plan for our growth and progress! We “shouted for joy”⁶ when we knew we would have the opportunity to come to earth to experience mortality. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquillity.”⁷

The example of a faithful pioneer sister illustrates this truth. Mary Lois Walker was married at age 17 to John T. Morris in St. Louis, Missouri. They crossed the plains with the Saints in 1853, entering the Salt Lake Valley shortly after their first anniversary. On their journey they had suffered the privations typical of other Saints. But their sufferings and adversity did not end when they reached the Salt Lake Valley. The following year Mary, then 19, wrote: “A son was born to us. . . . One evening when he was two or three months old . . . something whispered to me, ‘You will lose that little one.’”

During the winter the baby’s health declined. “We did all we could, . . . but the baby grew steadily worse. . . . On the second of February he passed away . . . and so I drank the bitter cup of parting from my own flesh and blood.” But her trials were

still not over. Mary's husband was also stricken, and three weeks after losing her baby, he died.

Mary wrote: "So was I, while yet in my teens, bereft in the short period of 20 days, of my husband and my only child, in a strange land hundreds of miles from my blood kin and with a mountain of difficulty before me . . . and I wished that I too, might die and join my loved one[s]."

Mary continues: "One Sunday evening I was taking a walk with my friend. . . . I was reminded of [my husband's] absence and my intense loneliness, and as I wept bitterly I could see, as it were in mental vision, the steep hill of life I should have to climb and felt the reality of it with great force. A deep depression settled upon me, for the enemy knows when to attack us, *but our [Savior, Jesus Christ,] is mighty to save.* Through . . . the help given of the Father, I was able to battle with all the force which seemed to be arrayed against me at this time."⁸

Mary learned at the tender age of 19 that the Atonement gives us the assurance that all things that are unfair in this life can and will be made right—even the deepest sorrows.

Principle 2: There is power in the Atonement to enable us to overcome the natural man or woman and become true disciples of Jesus Christ.⁹

There is a way to know when we have learned a doctrine or principle of the gospel. It is when we are able to teach the doctrine or principle in a way that a child can understand it. A valuable resource to teach children to understand the Atonement is an analogy that is found in a Primary lesson. Perhaps this can help us as we teach our own children, grandchildren, or friends of other faiths who desire to understand this essential doctrine.



"A [woman] walking along a road fell into a pit so deep [she] could not climb out. No matter what [she] did, [she] could not get out by [herself]. The [woman] called for help and rejoiced when a kind passerby heard [her] and lowered a ladder down into the pit. This allowed [her] to climb out of the pit and regain [her] freedom.

"We are like the [woman] in the pit. Sinning is like falling into the pit, and we can't get out by ourselves. Just as the kind passerby heard the [woman's] cry for help, Heavenly Father sent his Only Begotten Son to provide the means of escape. Jesus

Christ's atonement could be compared to lowering a ladder into the pit; it gives us the means to climb out."¹⁰ But the Savior does more than lower the ladder, He "comes down into the pit and makes it possible for us to use the ladder to escape."¹¹ "Just as the [woman] in the pit had to climb up the ladder, we must repent of our sins and obey the gospel principles and ordinances to climb out of our pit and make the Atonement work in our lives. Thus, after all we can do, the Atonement makes it possible for us to become worthy to return to Heavenly Father's presence."¹²



Recently I was privileged to meet a modern-day pioneer, a beloved daughter of God and recent convert to the Church in Chile. She is a single mother with two young sons. Through the power of the Atonement, she has been enabled to put her past behind her and is now earnestly striving to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. As I think of her, a principle taught by Elder David A. Bednar comes to mind: “It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us—that is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us but also to empower us.”¹³

As this Chilean sister and I discussed how to stay on the path leading to eternal life, she enthusiastically assured me that she was determined to continue on the path. She had been off the path most of her life, and she declared that there was nothing “out there” off the path that she wanted to have back in her life again. The enabling power of the Atonement is living inside of her. It is being written in her heart.

That power not only enables us to

climb out of the pit but also gives us power to continue on the strait and narrow path leading back to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

Principle 3: The Atonement is the greatest evidence we have of the Father’s love for His children.

We would do well to ponder this stirring thought from Elder Oaks: “Think how it must have grieved our Heavenly Father to send His Son to endure incomprehensible suffering for our sins. That is the greatest evidence of His love for each of us!”¹⁴

That supreme act of love ought to send each of us to our knees in humble prayer to thank our Heavenly Father for loving us enough that He sent His Only Begotten and perfect Son to suffer for our sins, our heartaches, and all that seems unfair in our own individual lives.

Remember the woman President Dieter F. Uchtdorf spoke of recently? He said: “One woman who had been through years of trial and sorrow said through her tears, ‘I have come to realize that I am like an old 20-dollar bill—crumpled, torn, dirty, abused, and scarred. But I am still a 20-dollar bill. I am worth something. Even though I may not look like much and

even though I have been battered and used, I am still worth the full 20 dollars.’”¹⁵

This woman knows that she is a beloved daughter of her Heavenly Father and that she was worth enough to Him to send His Son to atone for her, individually. Every sister in the Church should know what this woman knows—that she is a beloved daughter of God. How does knowing our worth to Him change how we keep our covenants? How does knowing our worth to Him affect our desire to minister to others? How does knowing our worth to Him increase our desire to help those who need to understand the Atonement as we do—way down deep? When each of us has the doctrine of the Atonement written deep in our hearts, then we will begin to become the kind of people the Lord wants us to be when He comes again. He will recognize us as His true disciples.

May the Atonement of Jesus Christ cause a “mighty change” to be wrought in our hearts.¹⁶ As we awaken to this doctrine, declared by an angel of God to be “glad tidings of great joy,”¹⁷ I promise that we will feel as King Benjamin’s people felt. After they had prayed mightily that the Atonement would be applied in their lives, “they were filled with joy”¹⁸ and were “willing to enter into a covenant with . . . God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things.”¹⁹ Making, keeping, and rejoicing in our covenants will be the evidence that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is truly written in our hearts. Please remember these three principles, sisters:

1. “All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”²⁰

2. There is power in the Atonement to enable us to overcome the natural man or woman and become true disciples of Jesus Christ.²¹
3. The Atonement is the greatest evidence we have of the Father's love for His children.²²

“After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and *write it in their hearts*; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”²³ I invite us to ask the Lord to write these principles of the Atonement in our hearts. I testify that they are true. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
2. *Old Testament: Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual* (2001), 198.
3. Jeremiah 31:33–34; emphasis added.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Roundtable Discussion,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Feb. 9, 2008, 28.
5. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.
6. Job 38:7.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 42; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33.
8. Autobiography of Mary Lois Walker Morris (copy in possession of Linda Kjar Burton).
9. See David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 12–19; *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.
10. *Primary 7: New Testament* (1997), 104.
11. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:123.
12. *Primary 7*, 104.
13. David A. Bednar, *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 14; *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42.
14. Dallin H. Oaks, “Love and Law,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 26.
15. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Are My Hands,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2010, 69.
16. See Alma 5:12–14.
17. Mosiah 3:3.
18. See Mosiah 4:1–3.
19. See Mosiah 5:2–5.
20. *Preach My Gospel*, 52.
21. See David A. Bednar, *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 12–19; *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.
22. See Dallin H. Oaks, *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 26.
23. Jeremiah 31:33; emphasis added.



By Carole M. Stephens

First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

Wide Awake to Our Duties

We must be awake to our duty and continue with faith as we draw upon the comforting, strengthening, enabling, and healing power of the Atonement.

After my call to the Relief Society general presidency, I felt a desire to know more about the women who had served before me. I was impressed by the teachings of Sister Zina D. Young, first counselor in the second Relief Society general presidency. She said, “Sisters, it is for us to be wide awake to our duties.”¹ I pondered on the words *awake* and *duty* and did some additional searching in the scriptures.

In the New Testament, Paul taught the Saints of his day:

“It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer. . . .

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: . . . let us put on the armour of light.”²

In the Book of Mormon, Alma taught his people the sacred duties of those who enter into a covenant with God:

“And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

“Yea, and are willing 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. . . .

“Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?”

“And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.”³

Sister Young's statement and these scriptures caused me to consider the “duties” we must awaken to in our day.

When we are baptized, we enter into a covenant. Elder Robert D. Hales taught, “When we make and keep covenants, we are coming out of the world and into the kingdom of God.”⁴

We are changed. We look different, and we act different. The things we listen to and read and say are different, and what we wear is different because

we become daughters of God bound to Him by covenant.

When we are confirmed, we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, the right to have the constant influence of a member of the Godhead to guide us, to comfort us, and to protect us. He warns us when we are tempted to walk away from our covenants and back into the world. President Boyd K. Packer teaches that none of us “will ever make a serious mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Holy Ghost.”⁵

To receive this gift and always have the Spirit with us, we must be worthy and vigilant about checking the condition of our hearts. Is our heart soft? Do we have a humble heart, a teachable heart, a gentle heart? Or have our hearts become gradually hardened as we have allowed too much of the noise of the world to distract us from the gentle promptings that have surely come from the Spirit?

When we were baptized, our hearts were changed and awakened to God.

While on our mortal journey, we need to regularly ask ourselves, “If [I] have experienced a change of heart, . . . can [I] feel so now?”⁶ And if not, then why not?

Many of the early Saints “experienced this mighty change in [their] hearts.”⁷ It awakened them to receive temple blessings that strengthened them in their duties. Early Saints in Nauvoo went “to the temple all day and long into the night”⁸ to receive ordinances and make covenants before they began their journey westward.

Sarah Rich, a Relief Society sister in Nauvoo, said this: “Many were the blessings we had received in the house of the Lord, which has caused us joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing He would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay before us.”⁹

With hearts changed through faith in the Savior, they relied on the power of His Atonement. They were awakened to act. They knew deep in

their hearts that there was one—the Savior—who understood their personal adversity because He suffered it for them in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. He felt their fear, their doubt, their pain, and their loneliness. He suffered their sorrows, their persecution, their hunger, their fatigue, and their loss. And because He suffered all these things, He could say to them, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”¹⁰

And they came. They trusted in and followed the prophet. They knew the journey would be long, their duty difficult. They knew that sacrifice would be required, but sustained by their faith and cleaving to their covenants, they were spiritually prepared.

Before leaving Nauvoo, a group of Saints wrote a message in the assembly hall in the temple they were forced to abandon. It read, “The Lord has beheld our sacrifice: come after us.”¹¹

Recently I participated in a pioneer trek with young men and young women in our ward. Each morning I asked myself, “What is my sacrifice? How do I come after them?”

On the second day of the trek we had pulled our handcarts eight miles (13 km) when we came to a place on the trail called “the women’s pull.” Men and women were separated, and the men were sent ahead up a hill. As we started to pull our handcarts, I looked up to see our priesthood brethren, young and old, lining both sides of the trail, hats off in respect for the women.

The path was easy at first, but soon we were in deep sand, and the hill grew steep. I had my head down and was pushing with all my might when I felt a tug on the cart and looked up to see Lexi, one of our young women and my neighbor. She had pulled her handcart to the top and, seeing our





need for help, ran back. When we reached the top, I wanted so much to run back to help those following me, but I was breathing heavily and my heart was pounding so hard, the words *heart attack* entered my mind more than once! I watched with gratitude as other young women dropped their handcarts and ran to help.

When everyone reached the top, we took some time to record feelings in our journals. I wrote: “I didn’t prepare well enough physically so didn’t have the strength to help those following me. I may never need to pull a handcart again, but I never want to let my sisters down spiritually, never!”

It was a sacred experience that awakened me spiritually to my duties to my family and others. Throughout our journey I reflected on what I had learned.

First I thought about my sisters, those who *had* pulled and those who *continue today* to pull their handcarts alone. Nearly 20 percent of the women in those early handcart companies were alone for at least part of the way. These were women who had not married, were divorced, or were widowed. Many were single

mothers.¹² They all pulled together—covenant daughters, young and old, in different life circumstances, on the same path, with the same goal.

Those who ran to help their sisters in need reminded me of rescuers, both seen and unseen, who are quick to observe, see a need, and act.

I thought of the Lord’s words: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”¹³

Lining both sides of the trail were faithful, obedient, covenant-keeping men. Their priesthood power—the power God uses to bless all His children—lifted, strengthened, and supported us. They were a reminder that we are never alone. We can have this power with us always as we keep our covenants.

I thought of the men who were separated on the journey from families, leaving them to pull the handcart alone. Many men died on the journey. Some sons stayed behind to serve missions in their native lands. Others had emigrated earlier to prepare for their families’ arrival in the Salt Lake Valley.

Some men were absent by choice, having chosen not to keep their covenants.

Like those who went before, many today live in circumstances that are not ideal. We continue to teach and strive for the ideal because we know that continually striving will keep us progressing along the path and prepare us for opportunities to receive all promised blessings as we “wait upon the Lord.”¹⁴

Each of us has had and will continue to have adversity in our lives. This mortal life is a time of testing, and we will continue to have opportunities to use our agency to choose what we will learn from the adversity that will surely come.

As daughters of God, we continue on the path in faith because we recognize, as President Thomas S. Monson taught, “The saving ordinances received in the temple that permit us to someday return to our Heavenly Father in an eternal family relationship and to be endowed with blessings and power from on high are worth every sacrifice and every effort.”¹⁵

It isn’t enough to just be on the journey; we must be awake to our duty and continue with faith as we

draw upon the comforting, strengthening, enabling, and healing power of the Atonement.

Sisters, I love you. I don't know many of you personally, but I do know *who* you are! We are covenant-keeping daughters in His kingdom, and endowed with power through our covenants, we are prepared to do our duty.

Relief Society prepares women for the blessings of eternal life by awakening us spiritually to increase in faith and personal righteousness. Let us begin with ourselves. Let us begin where we are. Let us begin today. When we are spiritually awake, we will be better able to strengthen families and homes and help others.

This is a work of salvation, and the strengthening and enabling power of the Atonement makes it possible. Awaken to who we are. Awaken to our duty. We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Zina D. Young, in *Woman's Exponent*, Oct. 15, 1877, 74.
2. Romans 13:11-12.
3. Mosiah 18:8-11.
4. Robert D. Hales, "Modesty: Reverence for the Lord," *Liahona*, Aug. 2008, 21; *Ensign*, Aug. 2008, 36.
5. Boyd K. Packer, "How to Survive in Enemy Territory," *Liahona*, Oct. 2012, 35; *New Era*, Apr. 2012, 3.
6. Alma 5:26.
7. Alma 5:14.
8. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 29.
9. Sarah Rich, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 30.
10. Matthew 11:28.
11. In *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 30.
12. Research conducted by Jolene S. Allphin from stories and company rosters; see *Tell My Story, Too*, 8th ed. (2012).
13. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
14. Isaiah 40:31.
15. Thomas S. Monson, "The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 92.



By Linda S. Reeves

Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

The Lord Has Not Forgotten You

Our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, know us and love us. . . . We can feel of Their love and compassion in our suffering.

As we meet sisters around the world, we are amazed at the strength of your testimonies. So many of you are first- or second-generation members of the Church. We see many sisters serving in multiple callings, traveling long distances to attend church, and sacrificing to make and keep sacred temple covenants. We honor you. You are the Lord's modern-day pioneers!

Recently my husband, Mel, and I met a volunteer tour guide named Mollie Lenthal as we visited a museum in Australia. We found out that Mollie, a lovely woman in her 70s, has no children and has never married. She is an only child, and her parents have been deceased for many years. Her closest relatives are two cousins who live on another continent. Suddenly, I was overwhelmed with the Spirit testifying to me, almost as if Heavenly Father were speaking: "Mollie is *not* alone! Mollie is *my* daughter! I am her Father! She is a very important daughter in *my* family, and she is *never alone!*"

One of my favorite stories from the Savior's life is the story of Lazarus.

The scriptures tell us that "Jesus loved Martha, . . . her sister [Mary], and [their brother] Lazarus."¹ Word was sent to Jesus that Lazarus was very ill, but Jesus did not come immediately; He stayed away two more days, stating that "this sickness is . . . for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."²

Hearing that Jesus was coming, Martha "went and met him,"³ telling Him what had happened. Lazarus had "lain in the grave four days already."⁴ Grieving, Martha ran back to her home to tell Mary that the Lord had come.⁵ Mary, weighed down with sorrow, ran to Jesus, fell down at His feet, and wept.⁶

We are told that "when Jesus therefore saw [Mary] weeping, . . . he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," and asked where they had laid him.

"They said unto him, Lord, come and see."⁷

Then we read some of the most compassionate, loving words in scripture: "Jesus wept."⁸

Apostle James E. Talmage wrote, "The sight of the two women so



overcome by grief . . . caused Jesus to sorrow [with them] so that He groaned in spirit and was deeply troubled.”⁹ This experience testifies of the compassion, empathy, and love that our Savior and our Heavenly Father feel for each of us every time we are weighed down by the anguish, sin, adversity, and pains of life.

Dear sisters, our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, know us and love us. They know when we are in pain or suffering in any way. They do not say, “It’s OK that you’re in pain right now because soon everything is going to be all right. You will be healed, or your husband will find a job, or your wandering child will come back.” They feel the depth of our suffering, and we can feel of Their love and compassion in our suffering.

Alma testified:

“And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

“And he will take upon him . . . their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know . . . how to succor his people according to their infirmities.”¹⁰

When we wonder *if* we are known by our Savior and our Father in Heaven or *how well* They know us personally, we might remember the Savior’s words to Oliver Cowdery:

“If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.”¹¹

Earlier the Savior stated to him, “There is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.”¹²

The Savior reminded Oliver that He knew every detail of that pleading prayer—and remembered the exact time, the very night.

Many years ago my husband became very ill with a rare disease. As the weeks went by and the sicker he became, the more I became convinced that he was dying. I told no one of my

fears. We had a large, young family and a loving, eternal marriage, and the thought of losing my husband and raising my children by myself filled me with loneliness, despair, and even anger. I am ashamed to say that I pulled away from my Heavenly Father. For days I quit praying; I quit planning; I cried. I finally came to the realization that I could not do this alone.

For the first time in many days, I knelt down and poured out my heart to my Father in Heaven, pleading for forgiveness for turning away from Him, telling Him all of my deepest feelings, and finally crying out that if this was what He really wanted me to do, I would do it. I knew He must have a plan for our lives.

As I continued on my knees to pour out my heart, the sweetest, most peaceful, loving feeling came over me. It was as if a blanket of love was flowing over me. It was as if I could feel Heavenly Father saying, “That was all I needed to know.” I determined never to turn away from Him again. Gradually and amazingly, my husband



and understands those very moments. He loves you! And He will carry you through those moments, just as He did Mary and Martha. He has paid the price that He might know how to succor you. Cast your burdens upon Him. Tell your Heavenly Father how you feel. Tell Him about your pain and afflictions and then give them to Him. Search the scriptures *daily*. There you will also find great solace and help.

Our Savior asked:

“For can a woman forget her suck-
ing child, that she should not have
compassion on the son of her womb?
Yea, they may forget, yet will I not
forget thee. . . .

“ . . . I have graven thee upon the
palms of my hands.”¹⁴

“I have commanded that *none* of
you should go away, but rather have
commanded that ye should come unto
me, that ye might feel and see; even
so shall ye do unto the world.”¹⁵

That is our charge. We must feel
and see for ourselves and then help
all of Heavenly Father’s children to
feel and see and know that our Savior
has taken upon Himself not only all
our sins but also our pains and our
suffering and afflictions so that He can
know what we feel and how to com-
fort us. I testify of Him in the name of
Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 11:5.
2. John 11:4.
3. John 11:20.
4. John 11:17.
5. See John 11:28.
6. See John 11:32.
7. John 11:33–34.
8. John 11:35.
9. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 493.
10. Alma 7:11–12.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 6:22.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 6:16.
13. See Alma 36:14–22; emphasis added.
14. 1 Nephi 21:15–16.
15. 3 Nephi 18:25; emphasis added.

began to get better until he made a full recovery.

Years later my husband and I knelt by the side of our 17-year-old daughter and pleaded for her life. This time the answer was no, but that same feeling of love and peace that our Savior has promised was just as powerful, and we knew that even though Heavenly Father was calling her back home, everything would be all right. We have come to know what it means to cast our burdens upon the Lord, to know that He loves us and feels compassion for us in our sorrows and pain.

One of the sweetest father-to-son moments in the Book of Mormon is Alma the Younger’s testimony to his son Helaman. Alma described the “inexpressible horror” he felt as he imagined coming into the presence of God to be judged of his many transgressions. After feeling the weight of

all his sins for three days and nights, he repented and pleaded with the Savior to have mercy on him. He described to Helaman the “exquisite and sweet” joy of remembering his pains “no more.” Instead of feeling “inexpressible horror” at the thought of coming before the throne of God, Alma saw a vision of “God sitting upon his throne” and declared, “My soul did *long* to be there.”¹³

Is that not how we feel, my dear sisters, as we repent and contemplate the love, the mercy, and the gratitude we feel for our Heavenly Father and our Savior—that we too “long to be there,” to be embraced by Their loving arms once again?

Just as the Lord has testified to me that He has not forgotten His precious daughter Mollie Lenthal, I testify that He has *not forgotten you!* Whatever sin or weakness or pain or struggle or trial you are going through, He knows



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

The Caregiver

You will be strengthened and yet inspired to know the limits and extent of your ability to serve.

I am grateful to be in your company tonight. The women of the Church of Jesus Christ have been moving toward becoming the society of sisters that the Prophet Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, described in these words: "We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together."¹

There are three parts to that remarkable description of the qualifications to associate in a state of happiness with God. One is to care for each other. Another is to teach each other and be taught. And the third is to sit down together with God.

My purpose tonight is to help you feel the commendation and appreciation of God for what you have already done to help each other reach that lofty goal. And, second, it is to describe some of what is yet to come in your unified service.

Like the sisters of an earlier time, you have responded to the Lord's call to go to the relief of others. In 1856 the prophet Brigham Young asked the Saints to go to the aid of handcart pioneers stranded in the mountain snows. He said in that time of need to the members in general conference: "Your faith, religion, and profession

of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, . . . otherwise your faith will be in vain."²

Women in Utah responded by the hundreds. In their poverty they filled wagons with all they could spare and all they could gather from others to comfort those in distress. One of those valiant sisters recorded, "I never took more satisfaction and, I might say, pleasure in any labor I ever performed in my life, such a unanimity of feeling prevailed."³

When the rescue was complete and the snows melted, that same sister recorded the question of her faithful heart: "What comes next for willing hands to do?"⁴

In our time, bands of valiant sisters across the earth have turned their faith into action in hundreds of places. And they ask in their hearts and prayers the same question about the future of their lives of service.

Each of you is in a unique place in your journey to eternal life. Some have years of experience, and others are early in their mortal discipleship. Each is unique in her personal history

and her challenges. But all of you are sisters and beloved daughters of our Heavenly Father, who knows and watches over each of you.

What you have done remarkably well together is to cherish, watch over, and comfort each other. I was a witness of that threefold miracle just one month ago in your service to one sister. As her father, I thank you and I want to extend my thanks to God, who guided one visiting teacher.

Our daughter Elizabeth, who lives in another state and time zone from us, was at home with her three-year-old daughter. Her other child was in her first week of kindergarten. Elizabeth was six months pregnant and looking forward to the birth of her third child, which the doctors said would be another girl. Her husband, Joshua, was away at his work.

When she saw that she was passing blood and that the flow was increasing, she called her husband on the phone. He told her to call for an ambulance and that he would meet her at the hospital, which was 20 minutes from her home. Before she could place the call, she heard a knock at the front door.

At the door she was surprised to see her Relief Society visiting teaching companion. They had no appointment for that morning. Her companion had simply felt she ought to come by to see Elizabeth.

She helped her into the car. They arrived at the hospital minutes before Joshua arrived from his work. The doctors decided in less than 20 minutes to take the baby by surgery to save Elizabeth and her baby. So a tiny girl came into the world, crying loudly, 15 weeks ahead of schedule. She weighed one pound, eleven ounces (765 g). But she was alive, and so was Elizabeth.



the beaten man and then put in place a specific plan for others to do more. He did that because he understood that helping may require more than what one person can do.

Lessons in that story can guide you in whatever your future holds. Those same lessons were available in your own childhood and recent experiences.

At least once, and perhaps often, you have been surprised when you encountered someone in need of care. It may have been a parent, a grandparent, a sister, or a child struck by illness or disability. Your feelings of compassion prevailed over your human desires. So you began to offer help.

Like the traveler in the scripture story of the good Samaritan, it is likely that the help needed turned into longer-term care than you could give alone. The Samaritan needed to pass the traveler to the care of the innkeeper. The Lord's plan for serving others in need provides teams.

Bishops and Relief Society presidents always invite family members to help each other when there is a need. There are many reasons for that principle. Foremost is to provide to more people the blessing of increased love that comes from serving each other.

You have observed and felt that blessing. Whenever you have cared for someone for even a short time, you have felt love for the person you served. As the time to provide needed care grew longer, the feelings of love increased.

Since we are mortal, that increase in love may be interrupted by feelings of frustration and fatigue. That is another reason why the Lord lets us have the help of others in our service to those in need. That is why the Lord has created societies of caregivers.

The words of Lucy Mack Smith were in part fulfilled that day. A faithful member of the Relief Society, prompted by the Holy Ghost, watched over, cherished, and comforted her sister in God's kingdom. She and the tens of thousands of others who have given such inspired service over the generations have not only the thanks of those they helped and their loved ones but also of the Lord.

You remember His words of appreciation to those who receive little recognition for their benevolence: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁵

But the miracle of one Relief Society sister arriving to help just in time is multiplied through the power of a unified society of sisters. Here is just a part of the message Elizabeth's bishop sent to Elizabeth and to Joshua at the hospital hours after the baby was born: "The Relief Society president has everything under control. We are already building a future plan to assist with your girls at home so Elizabeth can travel back and forth to the hospital while the unnamed cute baby remains there. We've done it before, long term, and [our] people jump at the chance."

The bishop went on to say, speaking for himself and the ward: "We've even

come to the hospital and sat with kids in the playroom when moms didn't want to leave them somewhere else."

And then: "We won't execute our plan without coordination and concurrence from you, of course. Just wanted to let you know not to worry about the things we can [and will] do."

What they did for my daughter made it possible for her to have a precious moment when she held, for the first time, her tiny daughter.

And then the bishop closed his message to Joshua and Elizabeth with one that sisters send out of their commitment across the earth to serve others for the Master: "Keep the faith."

With all your differences in personal circumstances and past experiences, I can tell you something of what lies ahead for you. As you keep the faith, you will find yourself invited by the Lord often to serve someone in need when it will not seem convenient. It may appear to be an unpleasant and perhaps even impossible task. When the call comes, it may seem you are not needed or that someone else could easily give the succor.

Remember that when the Lord lets us encounter someone in distress, we honor the good Samaritan for what he did not do as much as for what he did. He did not pass by on the other side even though the beaten traveler on the road was a stranger and perhaps an enemy. He did what he could for

A few weeks ago I was present as a young woman rose to be sustained in a sacrament meeting as the assistant coordinator of visiting teaching, a position I did not know existed. I wondered if she knew what a tribute the Lord had paid her. Because of a restless child, she had to leave the meeting before I could tell her how much the Lord would love and appreciate her for her help coordinating the efforts of His disciples.

Caring for those in need takes a team, a loving and unified society. That is what the Lord is building among you. He loves you for any part you play.

One evidence of His appreciation is that God allows you to feel increasing love for those you serve. That is a reason why you weep at the death of someone you have served for a long time. Losing the chance to care for them can feel like an even greater loss than does the temporary separation. I heard a woman—whom I have known a long time—recently, the week her husband died, bear a testimony of gratitude for the chance to serve him to the very end of his life. No tears were visible, but her happy smile was.

Even though extended and loving service to people is richly rewarded, you have learned that there are physical, emotional, and financial limits to what is possible. The person giving care long enough can become the one who needs care.

The Lord, who is the Master Nurturer of people in need, gave inspired counsel to weary caregivers in these words delivered by King Benjamin and recorded in the Book of Mormon: “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins . . . I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the

hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.”⁶

But then He goes on to warn those of you who might fail to respond to the evidence that you are pushing on too far and too long in your loving service: “And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man [or any caregiver] should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.”⁷

That counsel can be hard to apply when the choice seems to be balancing a desire to do all you can to help others with the wisdom to be prudent in meeting your own needs to retain

your power to serve. You may have seen others struggle with such hard choices. One example is the choice to care for a person approaching the end of life at home or in a care facility when you may be close to exhaustion.

What you know of the plan of salvation can be your guide in such heartrending choices. That is one of the reasons why Lucy Mack Smith wisely said that the sisters were to “gain instruction.”

It helps to have a sure conviction of the purpose of the Lord for every child of God in the crucible of mortal life. He taught the essence of the plan of salvation to the Prophet Joseph this way as he struggled to understand his seemingly endless trials: “And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high.”⁸





Our choice to best help someone through hard trials then becomes, “What course should I follow that will best help the person I love to ‘endure well?’” It is for us to make it more likely that he or she can exercise faith in Christ, keep a bright hope of eternal life, and practice charity, the pure love of Christ, to the end of his or her life.

I have seen sisters in the kingdom put that focus on the Savior and His purpose. Think of the times you have gone into the room where the Relief Society or the Primary or the Young Women have met.

A picture of the Savior or His words may not be evident, but you know a testimony of the reality and value of His Atonement has been felt in that hour as it has been this evening. There may not be a picture of a holy temple or the words “Families Can Be Forever,” but you can see hope in their smiles.

And you have seen, as I have, a wise visiting teacher build the confidence in a struggling sister that her service to someone else, even as she is failing, is still needed and valuable. Great Relief

Society presidents find ways to let those who need care help in the care of others. They create opportunities for sisters to endure trials well as they care for each other in the pure love of Christ. That may include gentle urging of the tired giver of care to rest and accept the help of others.

The sisters make that possible by being slow to judge those going through trials. Most people carrying heavy loads begin to doubt themselves and their own worth. We lighten their loads as we are patient with their weaknesses and celebrate whatever goodness we can see in them. The Lord does that. And we could follow His example—He the greatest nurturer of all.

We speak often of the strength of the circle of sisters in the Church of Jesus Christ. We must learn to recognize that the Savior is always in the circle as we invite Him.

More and more, we will see daughters of God invite sisters into the circle with them. As sisters come into a meeting and look for a seat, they will hear the softly spoken words, “Please, come sit here with me.”

We will hear those words in that future day Lucy Mack Smith foresaw when the sisters will “sit down in heaven together.” We do not prepare for that day in a moment. It will come from days and years of caring for each other and taking the words of eternal life down deep into our hearts.

My prayer is that many of us will be together in the glorious future that lies before us. I bear you my testimony that your hope for those days will be justified. The Lord Jesus Christ, through His infinite Atonement, made it possible for each of you. Heavenly Father hears and answers your prayers of faith for guidance and for help to endure in your service for Him.

The Holy Ghost is sent to you and to those you care for. You will be strengthened and yet inspired to know the limits and extent of your ability to serve. The Spirit will comfort you when you may wonder, “Did I do enough?”

I testify that the Lord will be with you and that your way will be prepared and marked for you by Him in your service to those He loves in their needs and trials. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Lucy Mack Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 25.
2. Brigham Young, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 36.
3. Lucy Meserve Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 37.
4. Lucy Meserve Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 37.
5. Matthew 25:40.
6. Mosiah 4:26.
7. Mosiah 4:27.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:8.



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code to watch or share a short video clip (1–2 minutes) of this message.

Conference Story Index

The following list of selected experiences from general conference addresses can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The speakers are listed in alphabetical order, and the number refers to the first page of the talk.

SPEAKER	STORY
Neil L. Andersen	(39) A family's faith does not falter following the death of their daughter.
Shayne M. Bowen	(15) Shayne M. Bowen and his missionary companion teach a family that little children need no baptism.
Linda K. Burton	(78) A woman assists Linda K. Burton during her second visit to the temple as a newlywed. (111) Pioneer Mary Lois Walker loses her husband and a child while crossing the plains.
Craig C. Christensen	(12) Six-year-old Ben Christensen feels the Holy Ghost as he visits a temple open house.
D. Todd Christofferson	(47) A young man in India works hard to help his family and to get an education.
Quentin L. Cook	(6) British Olympian Eric Liddell refuses to run a race on Sunday.
Ann M. Dibb	(10) A young woman confidently wears a T-shirt proclaiming her membership in the Church.
Larry Echo Hawk	(32) Larry Echo Hawk's drill instructor discovers his copy of the Book of Mormon.
Henry B. Eyring	(60) Henry B. Eyring carves a board for each of his sons to represent their special gifts. (72) Henry B. Eyring's granddaughter looks for Jesus at a temple open house. (72) Henry B. Eyring leaves Stanford University for employment at Ricks College. (72) Henry B. Eyring's daughter-in-law prays on the beach and dedicates her time to the Lord.
Robert C. Gay	(34) Robert C. Gay's father asks him if he would sell his soul for a nickel. (34) Robert C. Gay follows a prompting to help a boy sobbing by the side of the road.
Daniel L. Johnson	(101) Latter-day Saints attend the temple after a storm destroys their fruit crop.
Thomas S. Monson	(68) N. Eldon Tanner is surprised to see four men advance in the priesthood. (68) Thomas S. Monson receives inspiration to call branch presidents. (68) John H. Groberg bears his testimony to the king of Tonga. (86) Thomas S. Monson follows a prompting to offer suggestions about missionary work. (86) Thomas S. Monson follows a prompting to visit a friend in the hospital. (86) Thomas S. Monson encourages a young man to serve a mission. (86) A prayer by youth at a temple cultural celebration is answered.
Russell M. Nelson	(18) A man responds to a prompting to "stop the boys on the bikes."
Russell T. Osguthorpe	(96) Youth attending Sunday School help two class members with autism share what they learned.
Boyd K. Packer	(75) Boyd K. Packer's boat is hit by a severe ocean storm in Western Samoa.
Linda S. Reeves	(118) Linda S. Reeves turns to God after her husband becomes ill.
Richard G. Scott	(93) Youth in Russia index 2,000 names each and submit an ancestor's name for temple work.
Carole M. Stephens	(115) Young women come to each other's aid during a pioneer trek reenactment.
Gary E. Stevenson	(51) A college student leaves a party in Japan after refusing marijuana cigarettes.
Scott D. Whiting	(37) Temple contractors fix two small flaws in the Laie Hawaii Temple.

Age Requirement for Missionary Service Lowered

By Heather Whittle Wrigley

Church News and Events

At the opening of the 182nd Semiannual General Conference, President Thomas S. Monson announced that, effective immediately, men may begin serving missions at age 18 and women at age 19.

Later, at a press conference, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized that the change is an option: “Young men and young women should not begin their service before they are ready spiritually and temporally,” he said. Such things as schooling, family

circumstances, and health still remain important considerations for the timing of missionary service.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that prospective missionaries may be recommended by their bishop and stake president for full-time service 120 days prior to their 18th birthday or to their availability date. Young men may enter the missionary training center (MTC) after graduating from high school or its equivalent and reaching 18 years of age. Women may enter after their 19th birthday.

Young men and women may now begin serving missions at ages 18 and 19, respectively, depending on individual circumstances and a determination by local priesthood leaders.

Prospective missionaries are being asked to enhance their pre-mission preparation prior to their time at the MTC.

“God is hastening His work,” Elder Holland said. “And He needs more and more willing and worthy missionaries to spread the light and the truth and the hope and the salvation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to an often dark and fearful world.”

Elder Holland said it is likely that additional missions will be created.

To help accommodate the anticipated increase in missionaries in missions around the world, time spent at the MTCs will be reduced by one-third for all missionaries. A recently implemented 12-week training course being administered in the mission field will help further prepare missionaries. ■

Read more by searching “missionary age requirement” on news.lds.org.



Teachings for Our Time

From October 2012 through March 2013, fourth-Sunday Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons should be prepared from one or more talks given in the October 2012 general conference. In April 2013, talks may be selected from either the October 2012 or the April 2013 conference. Stake and district presidents should choose which talks will be used in their areas.

Learn more by reviewing the “Teachings for Our Time” section of the May 2012 *Liahona* or *Ensign*. ■



Come, Follow Me is a new curriculum that will help teachers teach in the Savior's way and help youth become more fully converted to the gospel.

Church Announces New Youth Curriculum for 2013

The Church has announced a new curriculum—*Come, Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth*—for Aaronic Priesthood quorums, Young Women, and youth Sunday School classes for 2013.

One of the main goals of *Come, Follow Me* is to help teachers—in church and in the home—teach as the Savior did, making lessons more like gospel-centered conversations. Youth will be invited to play a greater role in teaching and learning.

“The focus is on strengthening and building faith, conversion, and testimony, using the most current teachings of the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies,” reads a September 12, 2012, letter from the First Presidency.

Come, Follow Me is organized into units that focus on one doctrinal topic each month and are shared across Sunday School, Young Women, and Aaronic Priesthood classes.

In each unit are more lessons than can be taught in one month, so teachers and leaders are asked to seek inspiration and coordinate to determine which lesson outlines to use.

A new guidebook, *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior's Way*, will help leaders and teachers better understand how to adapt lessons to the unique needs of their youth and how to help youth learn the gospel.

All the lessons are printable from the Internet. Printed versions of *Come, Follow Me* will be available at a later date. By the end of 2012, all of the lesson outlines will be available online in 23 languages.

Members, leaders, and teachers can explore the new curriculum online at **lds.org/youth/learn**.

Area and local leaders will provide training for leaders and teachers before the end of 2012. ■

Learn more at news.lds.org. Also see page 96 in this issue. To go directly to the website containing the new learning resources for youth, scan this QR code with a mobile device or visit lds.org/youth/learn.



New Tools Help Members Prepare Family Names

In a letter dated October 8, 2012, the First Presidency invited members—youth and young single adults in particular—to receive the full blessings of the temple by preparing their own family names to take to the temple.

Furthermore, those with “large numbers of family names reserved [are encouraged] to release these names in a timely manner so the necessary ordinances can be performed.”

To help members respond to the First Presidency’s call, the Church is developing new resources and experiences, which can be found in 10 languages at familysearch.org.

A recent upgrade to new.familysearch.org called Family Tree, for instance, provides an enhanced approach to family history work by letting users (1) connect and collaborate on shared family lines, (2) edit and delete incorrect data, and (3) easily submit names of ancestors for temple ordinances. Users can also find videos on “Assigning Names to the Temple” and other training at familysearch.org/treetraining. ■



Elder Craig C. Christensen

*Of the Presidency
of the Seventy*

Elder Craig C. Christensen began serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy on August 1, 2012, following his call to that position in April 2012.

Born to Sheron and Colleen Christensen in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, in March 1956, Elder Christensen grew up in northern California in “an active, nurturing LDS family.” He emphasized that he has always believed the gospel to be true, yet his testimony was strengthened during his missionary service in Chile.

“As a missionary, my desire to feel the Holy Ghost became constant, and my testimony of the gospel deepened and became much more palpable to me,” he said. On his mission he gained a love for the Book of Mormon, which continues in his teachings today.

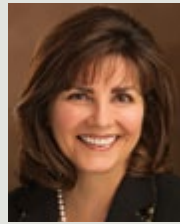
Elder Christensen has been a member of the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy since 2002. Most recently, he served as Executive Director of the Priesthood Department. Past callings include president of the Mexico South Area, Mexico City East Mission president, bishop, high councilor, and stake mission president.

Elder Christensen has a bachelor’s degree in accounting from Brigham Young University and a master of business administration degree from the University of Washington. He has owned and operated businesses in the retail automotive and real estate development industries and has been a visiting instructor at several universities.

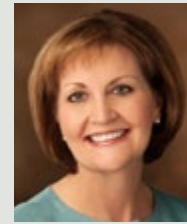
Elder Christensen married Debora Jones on March 28, 1978. They reside in Holladay, Utah, and have four children and five grandchildren. ■

General Auxiliary Presidencies

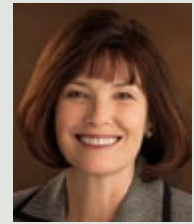
RELIEF SOCIETY



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First Counselor



Linda K. Burton
President



Linda S. Reeves
Second Counselor

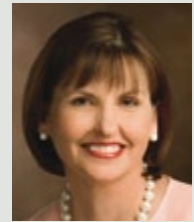
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Mary N. Cook
First Counselor

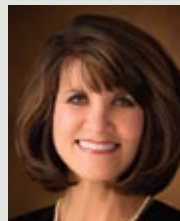


Elaine S. Dalton
President

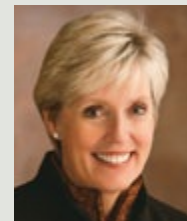


Ann M. Dibb
Second Counselor

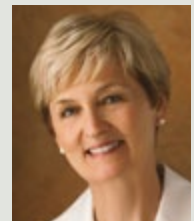
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President



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Second Counselor



**A Step of Faith,
by Michael T. Malm**

“And when the disciples saw [Jesus] walking on the sea, they were troubled. . . .

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

*“And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus”
(Matthew 14:26–29).*



“I am pleased to announce that effective immediately all worthy and able young men who have graduated from high school or its equivalent, regardless of where they live, will have the option of being recommended for missionary service beginning at the age of 18, instead of age 19,” announced President Thomas S. Monson during the opening session of the 182nd Semiannual General Conference of the Church. He also said, “Today I am pleased to announce that able, worthy young women who have the desire to serve may be recommended for missionary service beginning at age 19, instead of age 21.”