

# Ensign

## General Conference Addresses

**Church Membership  
Reaches 15 Million**

**Full-Time Missionary  
Force Jumps to  
More Than 80,000**





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**Balm of Gilead, by Annie Henrie**

*“Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jeremiah 8:22). . . . Love is the balm that brings healing to the soul. . . . [The] Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ, gave His life that we might have eternal life, so great was His love for His Father and for us” (Thomas S. Monson, “A Doorway Called Love,” Ensign, Nov. 1987, 66).*

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Quick-response (QR) codes have been provided for the talks by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. You may use a camera-enabled smartphone or tablet with a QR-code-reader app to link to a short video clip (1–2 minutes) from the talk. A URL to this video is also provided. To view the full talk, go to [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).



# Summary for the 183rd Semiannual General Conference

## **SATURDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 2013, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Kent F. Richards.  
Benediction: Matthew O. Richardson.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: “How Wondrous and Great,” *Hymns*, no. 267; “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3; “Israel, Israel, God Is Calling,” *Hymns*, no. 7, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “There Is Sunshine in My Soul,” *Hymns*, no. 227; “Keep the Commandments,” *Children’s Songbook*, 146, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Come, Ye Thankful People,” *Hymns*, no. 94, arr. Wilberg, pub. Oxford.

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 5, 2013, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Elder Paul V. Johnson.  
Benediction: Carol F. McConkie.  
Music by a family choir from stakes in Roy, Kaneshville, Hooper, and West Haven, Utah; Jane Fjeldsted, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “On This Day of Joy and Gladness,” *Hymns*, no. 64, arr. Fjeldsted/Margetts, unpublished; “I Know That My Savior Loves Me,” 2010 Children’s Sacrament Meeting Presentation, by Bell and Creamer, arr. Fjeldsted/Margetts, unpublished; “Press Forward, Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 81; “Love at Home,” *Hymns*, no. 294, arr. Fjeldsted/Margetts, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 2013, PRIESTHOOD SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: Elder Paul E. Koelliker.  
Benediction: Elder Walter F. González.  
Music by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Murray, Utah; Kelly DeHaan, director; Richard Elliott, organist: “Sing Praise to Him,” *Hymns*, no. 70, arr. Kempton, unpublished; “Like Ten Thousand Legions Marching,” *Hymns*, no. 253, arr. Elliott, unpublished; “Do What Is Right,” *Hymns*, no. 237; “God of Our Fathers, Whose

Almighty Hand,” *Hymns*, no. 78, arr. Huff, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 6, 2013, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Cheryl A. Esplin.  
Benediction: Elder Francisco J. Viñas.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Clay Christiansen and Richard Elliott, organists: “Sweet Is the Work,” *Hymns*, no. 147; “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” *Hymns*, no. 66; “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Hymns*, no. 105, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel,” *Hymns*, no. 252; “O Divine Redeemer,” by Gounod; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 6, 2013, GENERAL SESSION**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.  
Invocation: David L. Beck.  
Benediction: Elder Claudio R. M. Costa.  
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: “They, the Builders of the Nation,” *Hymns*, no. 36, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Jackman; “When He Comes Again,” *Children’s Songbook*, 82–83, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Called to Serve,” *Hymns*, no. 249; “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” *Hymns*, no. 165, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## **SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28, 2013, GENERAL RELIEF SOCIETY MEETING**

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: Linda K. Burton.  
Invocation: Laraine Swenson.  
Benediction: Ana De Agostini.  
Music by a Relief Society choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center; Emily Wadley, director; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; “Go Forth with Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 263; “As Sisters in Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 309, arr. Sally DeFord, unpublished; “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270, descant arr. Wadley, unpublished; “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Lyon, pub. by Jackman.

## **CONFERENCE TALKS AVAILABLE**

To access general conference talks on the Internet in many languages, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org). Talks are also available on the Gospel Library application for mobile devices. Generally within six weeks following conference, English video and audio recordings are available at distribution centers. Audio and Braille files for those who are blind or have low vision and ASL videos are available at [lds.org/go/2BU](http://lds.org/go/2BU). For more information, call 1-800-537-5971 or log on to [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org).

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## **ON THE COVER**

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## **CONFERENCE PHOTOGRAPHY**

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# Ensign

**A MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**

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By President Thomas S. Monson

# Welcome to Conference

*It is my prayer that we may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord as we listen and learn.*

How good it is, my beloved brothers and sisters, to meet together once again. It has been just over 183 years since the Church was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith, under the direction of the Lord. At that meeting on April 6, 1830, there were six members of the Church present.<sup>1</sup>

I am happy to announce that two weeks ago, the membership of the Church reached 15 million. The Church continues to grow steadily and to change the lives of more and more people every year. It is spreading across the earth as our missionary force seeks out those who are searching for the truth.

It has scarcely been one year since I announced the lowering of the age of missionary service. Since that time the number of full-time missionaries serving has increased from 58,500 in October 2012 to 80,333 today. What a tremendous and inspiring response we have witnessed!

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, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup> Some of you here today will yet remember the words of President David O. McKay, who phrased the familiar “Every member a missionary!”<sup>4</sup>

To their words I add my own. Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work.

To help maintain our ever-increasing missionary force, I have asked our members in the past to contribute, as they are able, to their ward missionary fund or to the General Missionary Fund of the Church. The response to that request has been gratifying



and has helped support thousands of missionaries whose circumstances do not allow them to support themselves. I thank you for your generous contributions. The need for help is ongoing, that we might continue to assist those whose desire to serve is great but who do not, by themselves, have the means to do so.



Now, brothers and sisters, we have come here to be instructed and inspired. Many messages, covering a variety of gospel topics, will be given during the next two days. Those men and women who will speak to you have sought heaven's help concerning the messages they will give.

It is my prayer that we may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord as we listen and learn. In the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. While as many as a few dozen people were present the day the Church was organized, six were officially listed as organizing members.
2. Matthew 28:19.

3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330.
4. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.



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**By Elder Robert D. Hales**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# General Conference: Strengthening Faith and Testimony

*Oh, how we need general conference! Through conferences our faith is fortified and our testimonies deepened.*

**T**hank you, President Monson, for your teaching and example of Christlike service and your charge for all of us to be missionaries. We ever pray for thee.

In our dispensation, the Savior Jesus Christ referred to a gathering of Saints as “*my* general conference.”<sup>1</sup>

Wherever we are in this world, however we receive these proceedings, I testify that we are gathered in *His* conference. I also testify that we will hear His word, for He has said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>2</sup>

Conferences have always been part of the true Church of Jesus Christ. Adam gathered his posterity and prophesied of things to come. Moses gathered the children of Israel and taught them the commandments he had received. The Savior taught multitudes gathered both in the Holy Land and on the American continent. Peter gathered believers in Jerusalem. The first general conference in these latter days was convened just two months after the Church was organized, and

conferences have continued to this very day.

These conferences are always under the direction of the Lord, guided by His Spirit.<sup>3</sup> We are not assigned specific topics. Over weeks and months, often through sleepless nights, we wait upon the Lord. Through fasting, praying, studying, and pondering, we learn the message that *He* wants us to give.

Some might ask, “Why doesn’t the inspiration come more easily and quickly?” The Lord taught Oliver Cowdery, “You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right.”<sup>4</sup> Conference messages come to us after prayerful preparation, through the Holy Ghost.

This principle is true for all members of the Church as we prepare to participate in ward, stake, and general conferences. We study out in our minds what we need and desire from Heavenly Father, and we pray to understand and apply that which we are taught. As the time for conference arrives, we sacrifice other

activities, “lay[ing] aside the things of this world, [to] seek for the things of a better.”<sup>5</sup> Then we gather our families to hear the word of the Lord, as King Benjamin’s people did.<sup>6</sup>

Children and youth love to be included. We make a serious mistake if we assume that the conference is above their intellect and spiritual sensitivity. To the young members of the Church, I promise that if you will listen, you will feel the Spirit well up within you. The Lord will tell you what He wants you to do with your life.

In conferences we can receive the word of the Lord meant just for us. One member testified: “As I listened to your address, I was astounded. . . . Your talk was personal revelation directly from the Lord to my family. I have never experienced such a strong manifestation of the Spirit in my life as those minutes when the Holy Ghost spoke directly to me.”

Another said, “I have never before felt so profoundly that a talk was being given to me.”

This is possible because the Holy Ghost carries the word of the Lord unto our hearts in terms we can understand.<sup>7</sup> When I take notes at conference, I do not always write down exactly what the speaker is saying; I note the personalized direction the Spirit is giving me.

What is *said* is not as important as what we *hear* and what we *feel*.<sup>8</sup> That is why we make an effort to experience conference in a setting where the still, small voice of the Spirit can be clearly heard, felt, and understood.

Oh, how we need general conference! Through conferences our faith is fortified and our testimonies deepened. And when we are converted, we strengthen each other to stand strong amid the fiery darts of these last days.<sup>9</sup>

In recent decades the Church has largely been spared the terrible misunderstandings and persecutions experienced by the early Saints. It will not always be so. The world is moving away from the Lord faster and farther than ever before. The adversary has been loosed upon the earth. We watch, hear, read, study, and share the words of prophets to be forewarned and protected. For example, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” was given long before we experienced the challenges now facing the family. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles” was prepared in advance of when we will need it most.

We may not know all the reasons why the prophets and conference speakers address us with certain topics in conference, but the Lord does. President Harold B. Lee taught: “The only safety we have as members of this church is to . . . give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through His prophet. . . . There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your [personal] views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord Himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; . . . and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory’ (D&C 21:6).”<sup>10</sup>

How did President Lee know what we would be facing in our day? He knew because he was a prophet, seer, and revelator. And if we listen and obey the prophets now, including those who will speak in this very



conference, we will be strengthened and protected.

The greatest blessings of general conference come to us after the conference is over. Remember the pattern recorded frequently in scripture: we gather to hear the words of the Lord, and we return to our homes to live them.

After King Benjamin taught his people, “he dismissed the multitude, and they returned, every one, according to their families, to their own houses.”<sup>11</sup> In his day, King Limhi did the same.<sup>12</sup> After teaching and ministering to the people at the temple in Bountiful, the Savior entreated the people, “Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.”<sup>13</sup>

We accept the Savior’s invitation when we ponder and pray to understand what we have been taught and then go forward and do His will. Remember President Spencer W. Kimball’s words: “I have made up my mind that when I go home from this [general] conference . . . there are many, many areas in my life that I can perfect. I have made a mental list of them, and I expect to go to work as

soon as we get through.”<sup>14</sup> President Monson recently said: “I encourage you to read the talks . . . 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.”<sup>15</sup>

In addition to inviting us to hold personal and family scripture study, Heavenly Father wants us to regularly study and apply what we have learned in conference. I testify that those who put their trust in the Lord and heed this counsel in faith will gain great strength to bless themselves and their families for generations to come.

Heavenly Father has provided the way. At this conference, 97 percent of the Church can hear these messages in their own language. Millions of members in 197 countries will watch this conference in 95 languages. In just two or three days the messages will appear on LDS.org in English, and within one week they will begin to be available in 52 languages. Now we receive the printed Church magazines within three weeks of the general conference. No longer do we have to wait months for the talks to arrive by mail. On a computer, phone, or other electronic device, we can read, listen to, watch, and share the teachings of the



prophets. Anytime, anywhere, we can enlarge our knowledge, strengthen our faith and testimony, protect our families, and lead them safely home.

The messages of this conference will also be woven into the online youth curriculum. Parents, you may access youth lessons for yourself on LDS.org. Find out what your children are learning, and make it the subject of your own study, family discussions, family home evenings, family councils, and personal interviews with each of your children concerning what they need to be taught individually.

I encourage all members to use the resources on the Church's websites and mobile apps. They are continually being refined so that they are easier to use and more relevant to our lives. On LDS.org you will find resources to help you study the gospel, strengthen your home and family, and serve in your calling. You can also find your ancestors who need temple ordinances and resources to support you in the work of salvation, including sharing the gospel. Parents can take the lead in preparing their children for baptism, the priesthood, full-time missions, and the temple. They can help us walk the strait and narrow path of temple ordinances and covenants and qualify for the blessing of eternal life.

In last April's conference, in the general priesthood meeting, I told about my father drawing a picture of a knight in armor to teach me about putting on the whole armor of God and the spiritual protection it brings.

After that session was over, a father reported to his family what he had learned. Inspired, their young son Jason searched LDS.org to hear the message for himself. A few days later he appeared in family home evening to share the lesson with his brothers and sisters. Here he is.

A simple conference message, inspired of the Lord, received by a child, was taught to a family in a personal, powerful way. I love his breastplate of righteousness. I love his shield of faith to thwart the fiery darts of the adversary. These are the blessings of conference.

My brothers and sisters, I bear my



Jason in his "whole armor of God"

special witness that the Lord Jesus Christ lives and stands at the head of this Church. This is *His* general conference. I promise you in His name that if you pray with a sincere desire to hear your Heavenly Father's voice in the messages of this conference, you will discover that He has spoken to you to help you, to strengthen you, and to lead you home into His presence. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 124:88; emphasis added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:2.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
6. See Mosiah 2:5.
7. See 2 Nephi 33:1.
8. See Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Tonga Area Conference 1976, 27.
9. See Luke 22:31–32.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 84–85.
11. Mosiah 6:3.
12. See Mosiah 8:4.
13. 3 Nephi 17:3.
14. Spencer W. Kimball, "Spoken from Their Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 111.
15. Thomas S. Monson, "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 110.



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**By Elder Ulisses Soares**  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Be Meek and Lowly of Heart

*Being meek does not mean weakness, but it does mean behaving with goodness and kindness.*

Mormon taught that a man “cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.”<sup>1</sup> He added that without such attributes, “faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart.”<sup>2</sup>

Meekness is the quality of those who are “Godfearing, righteous, humble, teachable, and patient under suffering.”<sup>3</sup> Those who possess this attribute are willing to follow Jesus Christ, and their temperament is calm, docile, tolerant, and submissive.

The Apostle Paul taught that meekness is a fruit of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it can most easily be attained if we “live in the Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> And to live in the Spirit, our lifestyle must reflect righteousness before the Lord.

As we take Christ’s name upon us, it is expected that we strive to emulate His attributes and change our character to become more like Him each day. The Savior, admonishing His disciples, said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>6</sup> If we “come unto Christ, . . . deny [ourselves] of all ungodliness; . . . and love God,” then through Christ’s

grace the day will come when we may be perfect in Him.<sup>7</sup>

“Christlike attributes are gifts from God. [These attributes] come as [we] use [our] agency righteously. . . . With a desire to please God, [we have to] recognize [our] weaknesses and be willing and anxious to improve.”<sup>8</sup>

Meekness is vital for us to become more Christlike. Without it we won’t be able to develop other important virtues. Being meek does not mean weakness, but it does mean behaving with goodness and kindness, showing strength, serenity, healthy self-worth, and self-control.

Meekness was one of the most abundant attributes in the Savior’s life. He Himself taught His disciples, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.”<sup>9</sup>

We are blessed to be born with the seed of meekness in our hearts. We need to understand that it is not possible to grow and develop that seed in the twinkling of an eye but rather through the process of time. Christ asks us to “take up [our] cross daily,”<sup>10</sup> meaning that it must be a constant focus and desire.

President Lorenzo Snow, the fifth prophet of our dispensation, taught, “It is our duty to try to be perfect, . . . to improve each day, and look upon our course last week and do things better this week; do things better today than we did them yesterday.”<sup>11</sup> So the first step to becoming meek is to improve day by day. Each day we need to try to be better than the previous as we move forward through this process.

President Snow added:

“We have our little follies and our weaknesses; we should try to overcome them as fast as possible, and . . . should [instill] this feeling in the hearts of our children . . . that they may learn to [behave] properly before Him under all circumstances.

“If the husband can live with his wife one day without quarrelling or without treating anyone unkindly or without grieving the Spirit of God . . . he is so far perfect. Then let him try to be the same the next day. But supposing he should fail in this his next day’s attempt, that is no reason why he should not succeed in doing so the third day.”<sup>12</sup>

Upon acknowledging our dedication and perseverance, the Lord will give us that which we are not able to attain due to our imperfections and human weaknesses.

Another important step to becoming meek is learning how to control our temper. Because the natural man dwells within each one of us and because we live in a world full of pressure, controlling our temper may become one of the challenges in our lives. Think for a few seconds how you react when someone does not comply with your desires the moment you want them to. What about when people disagree with your ideas, even though you are absolutely sure that they represent the proper solution to a



problem? What is your response when someone offends you, critiques your efforts, or is simply unkind because he or she is in a bad mood? At these moments and in other difficult situations, we must learn to control our temper and convey our feelings with patience and gentle persuasion. This is most important within our homes and within our relationships with our eternal companions. During the 31 years I've been married to my sweetheart, she has often given me gentle reminders of this as we have faced life's unsettling challenges.

Among instructions found in his Second Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul said:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

"And that they may recover themselves."<sup>13</sup>

By controlling our reactions, being calm and temperate, and avoiding

contention, we will begin to qualify for the gift of meekness. President Henry B. Eyring once said, "When we with faith control our tempers and subdue our pride, the Holy Ghost gives His approval, and sacred promises and covenants become sure."<sup>14</sup>

Another step to attain meekness is to become humble. The Lord instructed Thomas B. Marsh through the Prophet Joseph Smith, saying, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."<sup>15</sup>

I believe, brothers and sisters, that only those who are humble are able to acknowledge and understand the Lord's answers to their prayers. The humble are teachable, recognizing how dependent they are on God and desiring to be subject to His will. The humble are meek and have the ability to influence others to be the same. God's promise to the humble is that He will lead them by the hand. I truly believe that we will avoid detours and sadness in our lives as long as we walk hand in hand with the Lord.

One of the most beautiful modern-day examples of meekness that I am aware of is that of Brother Moses Mahlangu. His conversion began in 1964, when he received a copy of the Book of Mormon. He was fascinated as he read this book, but it was not until the early '70s that he saw an LDS Church sign on a building in Johannesburg, South Africa, as he was walking down a street. Brother Mahlangu was intrigued and entered the building to learn more about the Church. He was kindly told that he could not attend the services or be baptized because the country's laws did not allow it at that time.

Brother Mahlangu accepted that decision with meekness, humility, and without resentment, but he continued to have a strong desire to learn more about the Church. He asked the Church leaders if they could leave one of the meetinghouse windows open during the Sunday meetings so he could sit outside and listen to the services. For several years, Brother Mahlangu's family and friends attended church regularly "through the

window.” One day in 1980 they were told that they could attend church and also be baptized. What a glorious day it was for Brother Mahlangu.

Later the Church organized a branch in his neighborhood in Soweto. This was possible only because of the determination, courage, and faithfulness of people like Brother Mahlangu who remained faithful for so many years under difficult circumstances.

One of Brother Mahlangu’s friends, who had joined the Church at the same time, recounted this story to me when I visited the Soweto stake. At the end of our conversation, he gave me a hug. At that moment, brothers and sisters, I felt as if I was encircled in the Savior’s loving arms. Meekness emanated from this good brother’s eyes. With a heart full of goodness and deep gratitude, he asked if I could just tell President Thomas S. Monson how grateful and blessed he and many others were for having the true gospel in their lives. Brother Mahlangu and his friend’s example of meekness truly influenced many lives for good—especially mine.

Brothers and sisters, I believe the Savior Jesus Christ is the supreme example of meekness. Even during the last moments of His mortal life, being unfairly accused and condemned, painfully carrying His cross up to Golgotha, being mocked and cursed by His enemies, being abandoned by many who knew Him and had witnessed His miracles, He was nailed on the cross.

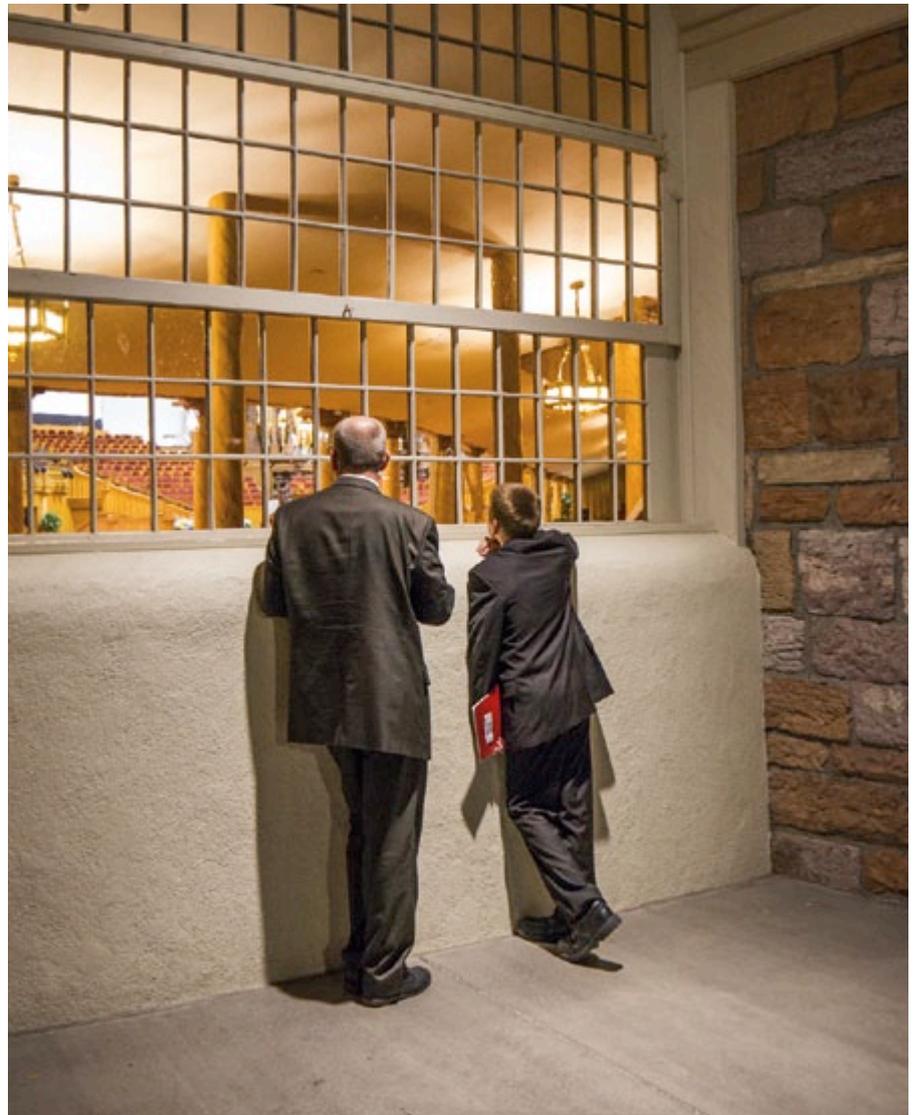
Even after the most intense physical suffering, the Lord turned to His Father and spoke from the bottom of His meek and humble heart: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”<sup>16</sup> Christ faced extreme physical and spiritual suffering, giving us the opportunity to change our spiritual

character and become meek like Him.

I bear my witness that Jesus Christ is our Savior. I testify to you that, thanks to His love, it is possible to change. It is possible to leave our weaknesses behind. It is possible to reject the evil influences in our lives, control our anger, become meek, and develop the attributes of our Savior. He showed us the way. He gave us the perfect example and commanded each one of us to become as He is. His invitation to us is to follow Him, follow His example, and become like Him. Of these truths I bear testimony in His sacred name, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moroni 7:43.
2. Moroni 7:44.
3. Guide to the Scriptures, “Meek, Meekness”; scriptures.lds.org.
4. See Galatians 5:22–23.
5. Galatians 5:25.
6. Matthew 5:48.
7. Moroni 10:32.
8. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 115.
9. Matthew 11:29.
10. Luke 9:23.
11. Lorenzo Snow, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 13.
12. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow* (2012), 100, 101.
13. 2 Timothy 2:24–26.
14. Henry B. Eyring, “Families under Covenant,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 65.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
16. Luke 23:34.





**By Carole M. Stephens**  
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Do We Know What We Have?

*Priesthood ordinances and covenants provide access to the fulness of the blessings promised to us by God, which are made possible by the Savior's Atonement.*

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles state: “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”<sup>1</sup> To achieve this divine destiny, each son and daughter of God needs priesthood ordinances and covenants.

We need baptism. When we are immersed in the waters of baptism, we covenant to take Christ’s name upon us, always remember Him, keep His commandments, and serve Him to the end, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>2</sup>

We need the gift of the Holy Ghost. Through that ordinance, we can have access to the constant companionship of the Spirit. President Wilford Woodruff taught: “Every man or woman that has ever entered into the church of God and been baptized for the remission of sins has a right to revelation, a right to the Spirit of God, to assist them in their labors, in their administrations to their children, in

counseling their children and those over whom they are called upon to preside. The Holy Ghost is not restricted to men, nor to apostles or prophets; it belongs to every faithful man and woman, and to every child who is old enough to receive the gospel of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

We need to receive the temple endowment. Elder M. Russell Ballard said: “When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which by definition is priesthood power. . . . The endowment is literally a gift of power.”<sup>4</sup>

We need the sealing ordinance, which leads to eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God.”<sup>5</sup> This priesthood ordinance is received only by a man and a woman together. Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, “Priesthood authority has been restored so that families can be sealed eternally.”<sup>6</sup>

We need the opportunity to renew our covenants each week as we partake of the sacrament. Latter-day prophets and apostles have taught that when we worthily partake of the sacrament, we can renew not only our

baptismal covenant but “all covenants entered into with the Lord.”<sup>7</sup>

These priesthood ordinances and covenants provide access to the fulness of the blessings promised to us by God, which are made possible by the Savior’s Atonement. They arm sons and daughters of God with power, God’s power,<sup>8</sup> and provide us with the opportunity to receive eternal life—to return to God’s presence and live with Him in His eternal family.

I recently went with priesthood leaders to visit the homes of four women in Honduras. These sisters and their families were in need of priesthood keys and authority, priesthood ordinances and covenants, and priesthood power and blessings.

We visited a dear sister who is married and has two beautiful children. She is faithful and active in the Church, and she is teaching her children to choose the right. Her husband supports her Church activity, but he is not a member. Their family is strong, but to enjoy greater strength, they need additional priesthood blessings. They need the father to receive the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost and to have the priesthood conferred upon him. They need the priesthood power that can come through the endowment and sealing.

Our next visit was at the home of two single sisters, women of great faith. One sister has a son preparing for a mission. The other sister is receiving treatment for cancer. In times of discouragement and despair, they remember the Savior’s Atonement and are filled with faith and hope. They both need the additional blessings and power available through temple ordinances. We encouraged them to join the future missionary in their home in preparing to receive those ordinances.



Our last visit was at the home of a sister whose husband recently died in a tragic accident. A recent convert to the Church, she had not understood that she could receive her own endowment and be sealed to her husband. When we taught her that these blessings could be available to her and her deceased husband, she was filled with hope. Knowing that through temple ordinances and covenants her family can be sealed together, she has faith and determination to face the trials ahead.

This widow's son is preparing to receive the Aaronic Priesthood. His ordination will be a great blessing to her and her family. They will have a priesthood holder in their home.

When I met these faithful women in Honduras, I could see that they were striving to keep their families active in the gospel. They expressed gratitude for covenant-keeping ward members who tenderly watch over them and help support their temporal and spiritual needs. However, each of these sisters had needs

that had not been fully met.

In each of the three homes we visited, a wise priesthood leader asked each sister if she had received a priesthood blessing. Each time the answer was no. Each sister asked for and received a priesthood blessing that day. Each wept as she expressed gratitude for the comfort, direction, encouragement, and inspiration that came from her Heavenly Father through a worthy priesthood holder.

These sisters inspired me. They showed reverence for God and His power and authority. I was also grateful for the priesthood leaders who visited these homes with me. When we left each home, we counseled together about how to help these families receive the ordinances they needed to progress on the covenant path and strengthen their homes.

There exists today a great need for men and women to cultivate respect for each other as sons and daughters of God and reverence for our Father in Heaven and His priesthood—His power and authority.

He has a plan for us, and when we exercise our faith and trust in His plan, our reverence for Him and for His priesthood power and authority will be strengthened.

In the worldwide leadership training *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*, we were taught that sisters who don't have priesthood holders in their homes need never feel alone. They are blessed and strengthened through the ordinances they have received and the covenants they keep. They should not hesitate to reach out when help is needed. Elder M. Russell Ballard taught that every woman in the Church needs to know that she has a bishop, an elders quorum president, a home teacher, and other worthy



priesthood holders whom she can rely on to come into her home and assist her and, as Sister Rosemary M. Wixom added, to “give a blessing.”<sup>9</sup>

Elder Ballard also taught: “Our Father in Heaven is generous with His power. All men and all women have access to this power for help in our own lives. All who have made sacred covenants with the Lord and who honor those covenants are eligible to receive personal revelation, to be blessed by the ministering of angels, [and] to commune with God.”<sup>10</sup>

We all need each other. Sons of God need daughters of God, and daughters of God need sons of God.

We have different gifts and different strengths. First Corinthians chapter 12 emphasizes the need for sons and daughters of God, each one of us, to fulfill our individual roles and responsibilities according to the Lord’s plan, that all may benefit.<sup>11</sup>

Sons of God, do you know who you are? Do you know what you have? Are you worthy to exercise the priesthood and receive the power and blessings of the priesthood? Do you embrace your roles and responsibilities to strengthen homes as fathers, grandfathers, sons,

brothers, and uncles? Do you show respect for women, womanhood, and motherhood?

Daughters of God, do we know who we are? Do we know what we have? Are we worthy to receive the power and blessings of the priesthood? Do we receive the gifts given to us with gratitude, grace, and dignity? Do we embrace our roles and responsibilities to strengthen homes as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts? Do we show respect for men, manhood, and fatherhood?

As covenant sons and daughters, do we have faith in our Heavenly Father and His eternal plan for us? Do we have faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement? Do we believe that we have a divine nature and destiny? And in our efforts to achieve this destiny and receive all that the Father has,<sup>12</sup> do we understand the importance of receiving priesthood ordinances and making, keeping, and renewing our covenants with the Lord?

We are beloved spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents, with a divine nature and destiny. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, loved us enough to give His life for us. His Atonement provides the way for us to progress

on the path to our heavenly home, through sacred priesthood ordinances and covenants.

These priesthood ordinances and covenants were restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and today President Thomas S. Monson holds all the keys of the priesthood on the earth.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson taught: “In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is found the priesthood authority to administer the ordinances by which we can enter into binding covenants with our Heavenly Father in the name of His Holy Son. . . . God will keep His promises to you as you honor your covenants with Him.”<sup>13</sup>

Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. See Moroni 4:3; 6:3.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
4. M. Russell Ballard, “Let Us Think Straight” (Brigham Young University Education Week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013); speeches.byu.edu.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; see also Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Nurturing Marriage,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 37; or in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 134.
7. Delbert L. Stapley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14; quoted in L. Tom Perry, “As Now We Take the Sacrament,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 41; see also *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 561; *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 220.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
9. See M. Russell Ballard and Rosemary M. Wixom, “Blessings of the Priesthood in Every Home,” in *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood* (worldwide leadership training, 2013); lds.org/broadcasts.
10. M. Russell Ballard, “Let Us Think Straight”; speeches.byu.edu.
11. See also Doctrine and Covenants 46:9, 12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
13. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 22.



By **Elder Edward Dube**  
Of the Seventy

# Look Ahead and Believe

*In the sight of the Lord, it is not so much what we have done or where we have been but much more where we are willing to go.*

While I was a boy working in the fields with my mother, she taught me one of the most important lessons in life. It was late in the morning, the sun was up, and we had been hoeing for what I thought to be a very long time. I stopped to look back at what we had accomplished and said to my mother, “Look at all we have done!” Mother did not respond. Thinking that she had not heard me, I repeated what I had said a little louder. She still did not reply. Raising my voice a little higher, I repeated again. Finally, she turned to me and said, “Edward, never look back. Look ahead at what we still have to do.”

My dear brothers and sisters, the covenant we made with the Lord when we were baptized, “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in” (Mosiah 18:9), is a lifelong commitment. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf counseled, “Those who have entered the waters of baptism and received the gift of the Holy Ghost have set their feet on the path of discipleship and are charged to follow steadily and fully in the footsteps of our Savior” (“Saints for All Seasons,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Sept. 2013, 5). The Lord through His

servants calls us to serve in various callings, which we accept with total commitment. When a release has been extended and a call in a different assignment has been issued, we joyfully accept it, knowing, as our forebearers knew, that “in the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how” (J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

Thus when a stake president or a bishop is released, he joyfully accepts his release, and when a calling is extended to serve in any way which the Lord, through His servants, “seeth fit” (Mosiah 3:19), he is not overshadowed by his previous experience, nor does he look back and think that he has served enough. He is “not weary in well-doing,” because he knows that he is “laying the foundation of a great work” with a clear vision that such efforts bless lives for eternity. Thus “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

We should all be “anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled: “The past is to be learned from but not lived in. We look back to claim

the embers from glowing experiences but not the ashes. And when we have learned what we need to learn and have brought with us the best that we have experienced, then we look ahead and remember that *faith is always pointed toward the future*” (“The Best Is Yet to Be,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2010, 24; or *Liahona*, Jan. 2010, 18).

While my mother’s lesson of looking ahead was directed toward the visible weeds in the field, that challenge was minor in comparison to what the early Saints went through. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin described this experience so well: “In 1846, more than 10,000 [people] left the thriving city [of Nauvoo] that had been built on the banks of the Mississippi River. With faith in prophetic leaders, those early Church members left their ‘City Beautiful’ and struck off into the wilderness of the American frontier. They did not know exactly where they were going, precisely how many miles lay ahead, how long the journey would take, or what the future held in store for them. But they *did know* they were led by the Lord and His servants” (“Faith of Our Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 33).

They knew how it was to look ahead and believe. A decade and a half earlier, some of these members were present when a revelation was received:

“For verily I say unto you, blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation” (D&C 58:2–3).



We too can look ahead and believe. We can embrace the invitation of our Lord, who with stretched-open hands invites us:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Our dear prophet, President Thomas S. Monson; his counselors; and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have extended an invitation for us all to participate in the work of salvation. The new converts, youth, young adults, those who have retired from their professions, and full-time missionaries need to be equally yoked in hastening the work of salvation.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, once attended an ox pulling contest, where he drew out an analogy. He said of the experience: “A wooden sledge was weighted with cement blocks: ten thousand pounds [4,535 kg]—five tons. . . . The object was for the oxen to move the sledge three feet [91 cm]. . . . I noticed a well-matched pair of very large, brindled, blue-gray animals . . . [the] big blue oxen of seasons past.”

In speaking about the result of the contest, he said: “Teams were eliminated one by one. . . . The big blue oxen didn’t even place! A small, nondescript pair of animals, not very well matched for size, moved the sledge all three times.”

He was then given an explanation to the surprising outcome: “The big blues were larger and stronger and

better matched for size than the other team. But the little oxen had better teamwork and coordination. They hit the yoke together. Both animals jerked forward at exactly the same time and the force moved the load” (“Equally Yoked Together,” address delivered at regional representatives’ seminar, Apr. 3, 1975; in *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* [2004], 30).

As we look ahead and believe, we need this same teamwork in hastening the work of salvation as we invite others to come unto Christ. In our individual capacities, we need to follow the counsel of President Dieter F. Uchtdorf to “stand close together and lift where we stand” (“Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 56). We can tap our full potential, just as was observed by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve: “As I travel throughout the Church I

marvel at all the positive things that are occurring. Yet I never feel that we, as a people, are living up to our real potential. My sense is that we do not always work together, that we are still too much interested in aspirations for personal honors and success, and show too little interest in the common goal of building the kingdom of God” (“United in Building the Kingdom of God,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 35).

May we all unite in a common objective “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, who sees from the beginning to the end, knew very well the road He would travel to Gethsemane and Golgotha when He proclaimed, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). In the sight of the Lord, it is not so much what we have done or where we have been but much more where we are willing to go.

Our guiding principles were taught to us by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 49).

I testify that as we follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and raise our hands to the square with action in sustaining our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, we will find peace, comfort, and joy, and we “shall eat the good of the land . . . in these last days” (D&C 64:34). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

# The Windows of Heaven

*Spiritual and temporal blessings come into our lives as we live the law of tithing.*

I want to describe two important lessons I have learned about the law of tithing. The first lesson focuses upon the blessings that come to individuals and families as they faithfully obey this commandment. The second lesson emphasizes the importance of tithing in the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in all of the world. I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm to each of us the truthfulness of the principles I discuss.

## **Lesson Number 1—Significant but Subtle Blessings**

Sister Bednar’s mother is a faithful woman and an inspired homemaker. From the earliest days of her marriage, she carefully has kept the household financial records. For decades she has accounted conscientiously for the family income and expenditures using very simple ledgers. The information she has collected over the years is comprehensive and informative.

When Sister Bednar was a young woman, her mother used the data in the ledgers to emphasize basic principles of provident living and prudent home management. One day as they reviewed together various categories

of expenses, her mother noted an interesting pattern. The costs for doctor visits and medicines for their family were far lower than might have been expected. She then related this finding to the gospel of Jesus Christ and explained to her daughter a powerful truth: as we live the law of tithing, we often receive significant but subtle blessings that are not always what we expect and easily can be overlooked. The family had not received any sudden or obvious additions to the household income. Instead, a loving Heavenly Father had bestowed simple blessings in seemingly ordinary ways. Sister Bednar always has remembered this important lesson from her mother about the help that comes to us through the windows of heaven, as promised by Malachi in the Old Testament (see Malachi 3:10).

Often as we teach and testify about the law of tithing, we emphasize the immediate, dramatic, and readily recognizable temporal blessings that we receive. And surely such blessings do occur. Yet some of the diverse blessings we obtain as we are obedient to this commandment are significant but subtle. Such blessings



(see Alma 58:11). Thus, the sons of Helaman did take courage, were fixed with a determination to conquer, and did go forth with all of their might against the Lamanites (see Alma 58:12–13). Assurance, peace, faith, and hope initially might not seem like the blessings warriors in battle might want, but they were precisely the blessings these valiant young men needed to press forward and prevail physically and spiritually.

Sometimes we may ask God for success, and He gives us physical and mental stamina. We might plead for prosperity, and we receive enlarged perspective and increased patience, or we petition for growth and are blessed with the gift of grace. He may bestow upon us conviction and confidence as we strive to achieve worthy goals. And when we plead for relief from physical, mental, and spiritual difficulties, He may increase our resolve and resilience.

I promise that as you and I observe and keep the law of tithing, indeed the windows of heaven will be opened and spiritual and temporal blessings will be poured out such that there shall not be room enough to receive them (see Malachi 3:10). We also will remember the Lord's declaration:

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

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

I testify that as we are spiritually attentive and observant, we will be blessed with eyes that see more clearly, ears that hear more consistently, and hearts that understand more fully the significance and subtlety of His ways, His thoughts, and His blessings in our lives.

can be discerned only if we are both spiritually attentive and observant (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).

The imagery of the “windows” of heaven used by Malachi is most instructive. Windows allow natural light to enter into a building. In like manner, spiritual illumination and perspective are poured out through the windows of heaven and into our lives as we honor the law of tithing.

For example, a subtle but significant blessing we receive is the spiritual gift of gratitude that enables our appreciation for what we have to constrain desires for what we want. A grateful person is rich in contentment. An ungrateful person suffers in the poverty of endless discontentment (see Luke 12:15).

We may need and pray for help to find suitable employment. Eyes and ears of faith (see Ether 12:19) are needed, however, to recognize the spiritual gift of enhanced discernment that can empower us to identify job opportunities that many other people might overlook—or the blessing of greater personal determination to search harder and longer for a position than other people may be able or willing to do. We might want and expect a job offer, but the blessing that comes to us through heavenly windows may be greater capacity to act

and change our own circumstances rather than expecting our circumstances to be changed by someone or something else.

We may appropriately desire and work to receive a pay raise in our employment to better provide the necessities of life. Eyes and ears of faith are required, however, to notice in us an increased spiritual and temporal capacity (see Luke 2:52) to do more with less, a keener ability to prioritize and simplify, and an enhanced ability to take proper care of the material possessions we already have acquired. We might want and expect a larger paycheck, but the blessing that comes to us through heavenly windows may be greater capacity to change our own circumstances rather than expecting our circumstances to be changed by someone or something else.

The stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon (see Alma 53; 56–58) prayed earnestly that God would strengthen and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies. Interestingly, the answers to these prayers did not produce additional weapons or an increased number of troops. Instead, God granted these faithful warriors assurance that He would deliver them, peace to their souls, and great faith and hope for their deliverance in Him

## Lesson Number 2—the Simplicity of the Lord’s Way

Before my call to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I read many times in the Doctrine and Covenants about the council appointed to oversee and disburse sacred tithing funds. The Council on the Disposition of the Tithes was established by revelation and consists of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric (see D&C 120). As I prepared in December of 2004 to attend my first meeting of this council, I eagerly anticipated a most remarkable learning opportunity.

I still remember the things I experienced and felt in that council. I gained a greater appreciation and reverence for the Lord’s laws of finance for individuals, for families, and for His Church. The basic financial program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—for both income and disbursement—is defined in sections 119 and 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Two statements found in these revelations provide the foundation for the fiscal affairs of the Church.

Section 119 simply states that all members “shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, . . . saith the Lord” (verse 4).

Then, concerning the authorized disbursement of the tithes, the Lord said, “It shall be disposed of by a council, composed of the First Presidency of my Church, and of the bishop and his council, and by my high council; and by mine own voice unto them, saith the Lord” (D&C 120:1). The “bishop and his council” and “my high council” referred to in this revelation are known today as the Presiding Bishopric and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, respectively.



These sacred funds are used in a rapidly growing church to spiritually bless individuals and families by constructing and maintaining temples and houses of worship, supporting missionary work, translating and publishing scriptures, fostering family history research, funding schools and religious education, and accomplishing many other Church purposes as directed by the Lord’s ordained servants.

I marvel at the clarity and brevity of these two revelations in comparison to the complicated financial guidelines and administrative procedures used in so many organizations and governments around the world. How can the

temporal affairs of an organization as large as the restored Church of Jesus Christ possibly operate throughout the entire world using such succinct instructions? To me the answer is quite straightforward: this is the Lord’s work, He is able to do His own work (see 2 Nephi 27:20), and the Savior inspires and directs His servants as they apply His directions and labor in His cause.

In that first council meeting I was impressed by the simplicity of the principles that guided our deliberations and decisions. In the financial operations of the Church, two basic and fixed principles are observed. First, the Church lives within its means and does not spend more than it receives. Second,

a portion of the annual income is set aside as a reserve for contingencies and unanticipated needs. For decades the Church has taught its membership the principle of setting aside additional food, fuel, and money to take care of emergencies that might arise. The Church as an institution simply follows the same principles that are taught repeatedly to the members.

As the meeting progressed, I found myself wishing that all members of the Church could observe the simplicity, the clarity, the orderliness, the charity, and the power of the Lord's own way (see D&C 104:16) for conducting the temporal affairs of His Church. I have now participated in the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes for many years. My gratitude and reverence for the Lord's pattern has grown each year, and the lessons learned have become even more profound.

My heart swells with love and admiration for the faithful and obedient members of this Church from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. As I travel the earth, I learn about your hopes and dreams, your varied living conditions and circumstances, and your struggles. I have

attended Church meetings with you and visited in some of your homes. Your faith strengthens my faith. Your devotion makes me more devoted. And your goodness and willing obedience to the law of tithing inspires me to be a better man, husband, father, and Church leader. I remember and think of you each time I participate in the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes. Thank you for your goodness and faithfulness as you honor your covenants.

The leaders of the Lord's restored Church feel a tremendous responsibility to care appropriately for the consecrated offerings of Church members. We are keenly aware of the sacred nature of the widow's mite.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:41–44).

I know from firsthand experience that the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes is vigilant in caring for the widow's mite. I express appreciation to President Thomas S. Monson and his counselors for their effective leadership in discharging this holy stewardship. And I acknowledge the voice (see D&C 120:1) and hand of the Lord that sustain His ordained servants in fulfilling the duty to represent Him.

#### **An Invitation and a Testimony**

The honest payment of tithing is much more than a duty; it is an important step in the process of personal sanctification. To those of you who pay your tithing, I commend you.

To those of you who presently are not obeying the law of tithing, I invite you to consider your ways and repent. I testify that by your obedience to this law of the Lord, the windows of heaven will be opened to you. Please do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.

I testify spiritual and temporal blessings come into our lives as we live the law of tithing. I bear witness that such blessings often are significant but subtle. I also declare that the simplicity of the Lord's way that is so evident in the temporal affairs of His Church provides patterns that can guide us as individuals and as families. I pray each of us may learn and benefit from these important lessons, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

# Come, Join with Us

*Regardless of your circumstances, your personal history, or the strength of your testimony, there is room for you in this Church.*

Once there was a man who dreamed that he was in a great hall where all the religions of the world were gathered. He realized that each religion had much that seemed desirable and worthy.

He met a nice couple who represented The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and asked, “What do *you* require of your members?”

“We do not require anything,” they replied. “But the *Lord* asks that we consecrate all.”

The couple went on to explain about Church callings, home and visiting teaching, full-time missions, weekly family home evenings, temple work, welfare and humanitarian service, and assignments to teach.

“Do you pay your people for all the work they do?” the man asked.

“Oh, no,” the couple explained. “They offer their time freely.”

“Also,” the couple continued, “every six months our Church members spend a weekend attending or watching 10 hours of general conference.”

“Ten hours of people giving talks?” the man wondered.

“What about your weekly church services? How long are they?”

“Three hours, every Sunday!”

“Oh, my,” the man said. “Do

members of your church actually do what you have said?”

“That and more. We haven’t even mentioned family history, youth camps, devotionals, scripture study, leadership training, youth activities, early-morning seminary, maintaining Church buildings, and of course there is the Lord’s law of health, the monthly fast to help the poor, and tithing.”

The man said, “Now I’m confused. Why would anyone want to join such a church?”

The couple smiled and said, “We thought you would never ask.”

## Why Would Anyone Join Such a Church?

At a time when many churches throughout the world are experiencing significant decreases in numbers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—though small in comparison with many others—is one of the fastest growing churches in the world. As of September 2013 the Church has more than 15 million members around the world.

There are many reasons for this, but may I offer a few?

## The Savior’s Church

First, this Church was restored in our day by Jesus Christ Himself. Here

you will find the authority to act in His name—to baptize for the remission of sins, to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to seal on earth and in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Those who join this Church love the Savior Jesus Christ and they wish to follow Him. They rejoice in the knowledge that God speaks to mankind again. When they receive sacred priesthood ordinances and make covenants with God, they can feel His power in their lives.<sup>2</sup> When they enter the holy temple, they sense they are in His presence. When they read the holy scriptures<sup>3</sup> and live the teachings of His prophets, they grow closer to the Savior they love so much.

## An Active Faith

Another reason is because the Church provides opportunities for doing good.

Believing in God is commendable, but most people want to do more than listen to inspirational sermons or dream of their mansions above.<sup>4</sup> They want to put their faith into practice. They want to roll up their sleeves and become engaged in this great cause.

And that is what happens when they join with us—they have many opportunities to transform their talents, compassion, and time into good works. Because we have no paid local clergy in our worldwide congregations, our members perform the work of ministry themselves. They are called by inspiration. Sometimes we volunteer; sometimes we *are* “volunteered.” We see assignments not as burdens but as opportunities to fulfill covenants we gladly make to serve God and His children.

## Treasured Blessings

A third reason why people join the Church is because walking the



path of discipleship leads to precious blessings.

We see baptism as the starting point in our journey of discipleship. Our daily walk with Jesus Christ leads to peace and purpose in this life and profound joy and eternal salvation in the world to come.

Those who follow this path faithfully avoid many of the pitfalls, sorrows, and regrets of life.

The poor in spirit and honest of heart find great treasures of knowledge here.

Those who suffer or grieve find healing here.

Those burdened with sin find forgiveness, liberty, and rest.

#### **To Those Who Leave**

The search for truth has led millions of people to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, there are some who leave the Church they once loved.

One might ask, “If the gospel is so wonderful, why would anyone leave?”

Sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations.

Some of our dear members struggle for years with the question whether they should separate themselves from the Church.

In this Church that honors personal agency so strongly, that was restored by a young man who asked questions and sought answers, we respect those who honestly search for truth. It may break our hearts when their journey takes them away from the Church we love and the truth we have found, but we honor their right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, just as we claim that privilege for ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Unanswered Questions**

Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We openly acknowledge that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable, and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question.

Sometimes questions arise because we simply don’t have all the information and we just need a bit more

patience. When the entire truth is eventually known, things that didn’t make sense to us before will be resolved to our satisfaction.

Sometimes there is a difference of opinion as to what the “facts” really mean. A question that creates doubt in some can, after careful investigation, build faith in others.

#### **Mistakes of Imperfect People**

And, to be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine.

I suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is perfect, and His doctrine is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes.

In the title page of the Book of Mormon we read, “And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

This is the way it has always been and will be until the perfect day when

Christ Himself reigns personally upon the earth.

It is unfortunate that some have stumbled because of mistakes made by men. But in spite of this, the eternal truth of the restored gospel found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not tarnished, diminished, or destroyed.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ and as one who has seen firsthand the councils and workings of this Church, I bear solemn witness that no decision of significance affecting this Church or its members is ever made without earnestly seeking the inspiration, guidance, and approbation of our Eternal Father. This is the Church of Jesus Christ. God will not allow His Church to drift from its appointed course or fail to fulfill its divine destiny.

### **There Is Room for You**

To those who have separated themselves from the Church, I say, my dear friends, there is yet a place for you here.

Come and add your talents, gifts, and energies to ours. We will all become better as a result.

*Some might ask, "But what about my doubts?"*

It's natural to have questions—the acorn of honest inquiry has often sprouted and matured into a great oak of understanding. There are few members of the Church who, at one time or another, have not wrestled with serious or sensitive questions. One of the purposes of the Church is to nurture and cultivate the seed of faith—even in the sometimes sandy soil of doubt and uncertainty. Faith is to hope for things which are not seen but which are true.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters—my dear friends—please, first



**Guatemala City, Guatemala**

doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.<sup>8</sup> We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Some might say, "I just don't fit in with you people in the Church."*

If you could see into our hearts, you would probably find that you fit in better than you suppose. You might be surprised to find that we have yearnings and struggles and hopes similar to yours. Your background or upbringing might seem different from what you perceive in many Latter-day Saints, but that could be a blessing. Brothers and sisters, dear friends, we need your unique talents and perspectives. The diversity of persons and peoples all around the globe is a strength of this Church.

*Some might say, "I don't think I could live up to your standards."*

All the more reason to come! The Church is designed to nourish the imperfect, the struggling, and the exhausted. It is filled with people who *desire* with all their heart to keep the commandments, even if they haven't *mastered* them yet.

*Some might say, "I know a member*

*of your Church who is a hypocrite. I could never join a church that had someone like him as a member."*

If you define *hypocrite* as someone who fails to live up perfectly to what he or she believes, then we are all hypocrites. None of us is quite as Christlike as we know we should be. But we earnestly desire to overcome our faults and the tendency to sin. With our heart and soul we yearn to become better with the help of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

If these are your desires, then regardless of your circumstances, your personal history, or the strength of your testimony, there is room for you in this Church. Come, join with us!

### **Come, Join with Us!**

In spite of our human imperfections, I am confident that you will find among the members of this Church many of the finest souls this world has to offer. The Church of Jesus Christ seems to attract the kind and the caring, the honest and the industrious.

If you expect to find perfect people here, you will be disappointed. But if you seek the pure doctrine of Christ, the word of God "which healeth the wounded soul,"<sup>9</sup> and the sanctifying

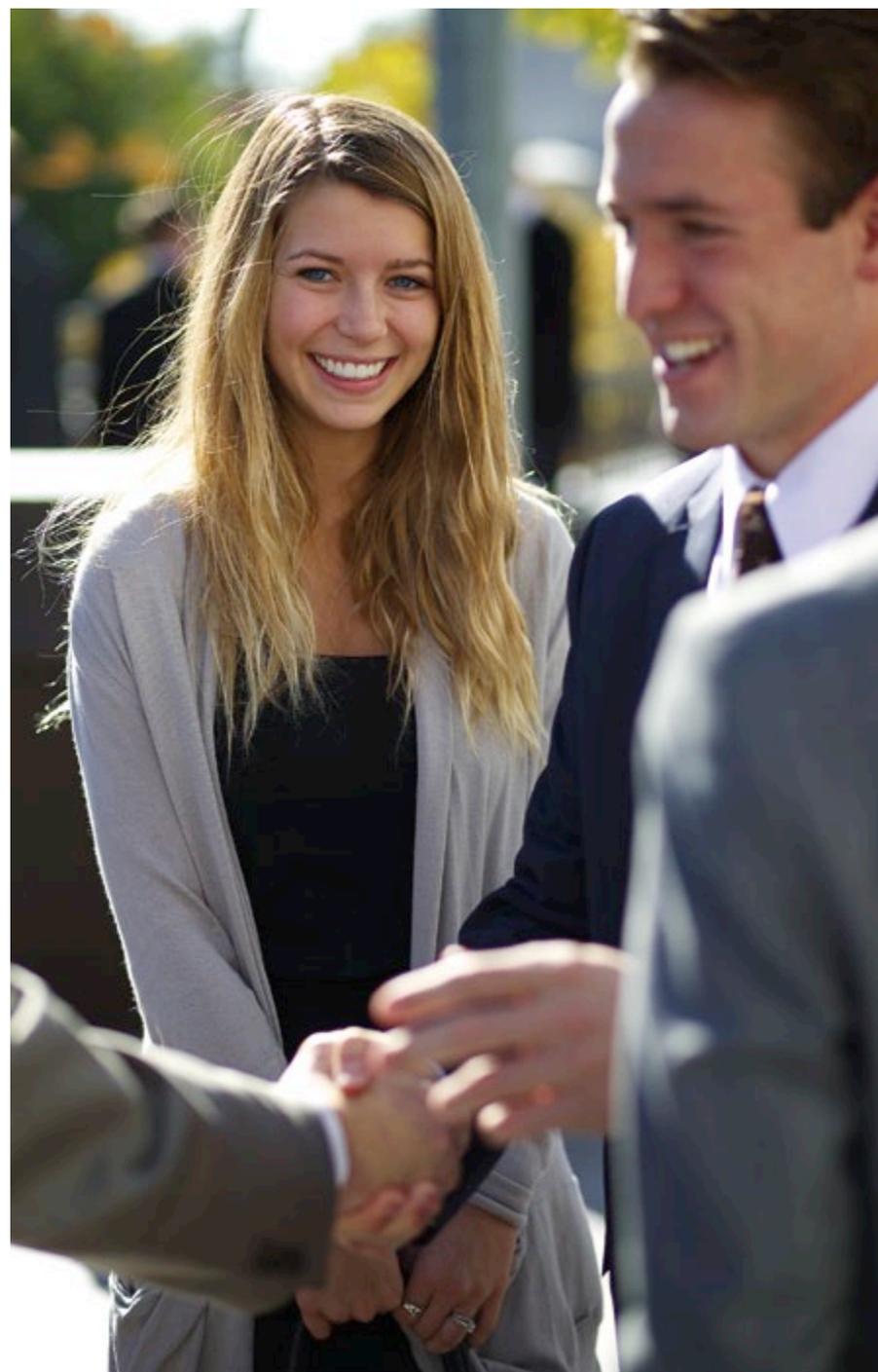
influence of the Holy Ghost, then here you will find them. In this age of waning faith—in this age when so many feel distanced from heaven’s embrace—here you will find a people who yearn to know and draw closer to their Savior by serving God and fellow-men, just like you. Come, join with us!

### Will Ye Also Go Away?

I am reminded of a time in the Savior’s life when many abandoned Him.<sup>10</sup> Jesus asked His twelve disciples:

“Will ye also go away?”

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”<sup>11</sup>



There are times when we have to answer the same question. Will we also go away? Or will we, like Peter, hold fast to the words of eternal life?

If you seek truth, meaning, and a way to transform faith into action; if you are looking for a place of belonging: Come, join with us!

If you have left the faith you once embraced: Come back again. Join with us!

If you are tempted to give up: Stay yet a little longer. There is room for you here.

I plead with all who hear or read these words: Come, join with us. Come heed the call of the gentle Christ. Take up your cross and follow Him.<sup>12</sup>

Come, join with us! For here you will find what is precious beyond price.

I testify that here you will find the words of eternal life, the promise of blessed redemption, and the pathway to peace and happiness.

I earnestly pray that your own search for truth will impress upon your heart the desire to come and join with us. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

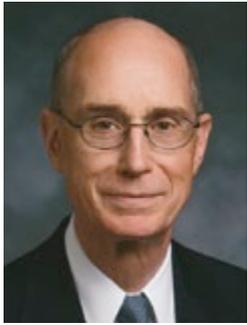
### NOTES

1. See Matthew 16:18–19; Helaman 10:7.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
3. See 2 Nephi 33:10.
4. See “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.
5. See Articles of Faith 1:11.
6. Title page of the Book of Mormon; see Mormon 8:17.
7. See Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21.
8. See F. F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer* (1924), 23.
9. Jacob 2:8.
10. See John 6:66.
11. John 6:67–68.
12. See Matthew 16:24.



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**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.

It is proposed that we release Elders John B. Dickson, Paul E.

Koelliker, and F. Michael Watson as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities.

It is also proposed that we release Elder Kent D. Watson as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

We likewise recognize and express appreciation to Elders César H. Hooker and Craig T. Wright, who have been

released from their service as Area Seventies.

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

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies: Julio A. Angulo, Peter F. Evans, and Gennady N. Podvodov.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Randall L. Ridd as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

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

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may manifest it.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote and for your continued faith and prayers in our behalf. ■





By **President Boyd K. Packer**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Key to Spiritual Protection

*Peace can be settled in the heart of each who turns to the scriptures and unlocks the promises of protection and redemption.*

A short time ago, I sealed a young couple in the temple. This couple had kept themselves worthy to arrive at the marvelous day when a son and a daughter leave the homes of their youth and become husband and wife. On this sacred occasion, they were pure and clean. In due course, they will begin to raise children of their own, consistent with the pattern established by our Father in Heaven. Their happiness, and the happiness of future generations, depends upon living those standards established by the Savior and set forth in His scriptures.

Parents today wonder if there is a safe place to raise children. There *is* a safe place. It is in a gospel-centered home. We focus on the family in the Church, and we counsel parents everywhere to raise their children in righteousness.

The Apostle Paul prophesied and warned that “in the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

“Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, “Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul also prophesied, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”<sup>2</sup>

These verses serve as a warning, showing which patterns to avoid. We must be ever watchful and diligent. We can review each of these prophecies and put a checkmark by them as being present and of concern in the world today:

**Perilous times**—present. We live in very precarious times.

**Covetous, boasters, proud**—all are present and among us.

**Blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection**—all of these are well accounted for.

**Trucebreakers, false accusers,** and so on—all can be checked off

against the prevailing evidence that exists all around us.

Moroni also spoke of the wickedness of our day when he warned:

“When ye shall see these things come among you . . . ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation. . . .

“Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.”<sup>3</sup>

The descriptions Paul and Moroni give of our day are so accurate that they cannot be dismissed. For many it may be quite disturbing, even discouraging. Nevertheless, when I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with feelings of positive optimism.

In Paul’s revelation, in addition to the list of challenges and problems, he also tells us what we can do to protect ourselves:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>

The scriptures hold the keys to spiritual protection. They contain the doctrine and laws and ordinances that will bring each child of God to a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer.

With years of preparation, there has been an enormous effort to produce the scriptures in every language, with footnotes and cross-references. We seek to make them available to all who wish to learn. They teach us where to go and what to do.



They offer hope and knowledge.

Years ago, Elder S. Dilworth Young of the Seventy taught me a lesson about reading the scriptures. A stake was struggling with tensions and difficulties among the members, and counsel needed to be given.

I asked President Young, “What should I say?”

He answered simply, “Tell them to read the scriptures.”

I asked, “Which scriptures?”

He said, “It really doesn’t matter. Tell them to open up the Book of Mormon, for instance, and begin to read. Soon the feeling of peace and inspiration will come, and a solution will present itself.”

Make scripture reading a part of your regular routine, and the blessings will follow. There is in the scriptures a voice of warning, but there is also great nourishment.

If the language of the scriptures at first seems strange to you, keep reading. Soon you will come to recognize the beauty and power found on those pages.

Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in righteousness.”<sup>5</sup>

You can test this promise for yourself.

We live in perilous times; nevertheless, we can find hope and peace for ourselves and for our families. Those living in sorrow, despairing at the possibility of children being rescued from where the world has taken them, must never give up. “Be not afraid, only believe.”<sup>6</sup> Righteousness is more powerful than wickedness.

Children taught an understanding of the scriptures early in life will come to know the path they should walk and will be more inclined to remain on that path. Those who stray will have the ability to return and, with help, can find their way back.

The sons of Mosiah fought against the Church for a time but later repented and underwent a dramatic change. In Alma we read, “These sons of Mosiah . . . had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.”<sup>7</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith was five years old when his father, Hyrum, was

killed in Carthage Jail. Later, Joseph crossed the plains with his widowed mother.

At age 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He felt lost and alone and said: “I was very much oppressed. . . . I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look [anyone] in the face.”

While pondering his plight one night, young Joseph dreamed he was on a journey, rushing as fast as he possibly could. He carried with him a small bundle. Finally, he came to a wonderful mansion, which was his destination. As he approached, he saw a sign which read, “Bath.” He quickly went in and washed himself. He opened his little bundle and found clean white clothing—“a thing,” he said, “I had not seen for a long time.” He put them on and rushed to the door of the mansion.

“I knocked,” he said, “and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said [were]: ‘Joseph,



### **Panama City, Panama**

you are late.’ Yet I took confidence and said:

“Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!”<sup>8</sup>

And so it can be for each of us.

If you are set on a course of faith and activity in the Church, stay on course and keep your covenants. Continue forward until the time when the Lord’s blessings will come to you and the Holy Ghost will be revealed as a moving force in your life.

If you are presently on a course that points away from the one outlined in the scriptures, let me assure you there is a way back.

Jesus Christ has prescribed a very clear method for us to repent and find healing in our lives. The cure for most mistakes can be found by seeking forgiveness through personal prayer. However, there are certain spiritual illnesses, particularly those dealing with violations of the moral law, which absolutely require the assistance and treatment of a qualified spiritual physician.

Years ago there came to my office a young woman and her aging father. She had brought him several hundred miles to find a remedy for the guilt he felt. As a young man he had made a serious mistake, and in his old age the memory came back to him. He could not shake the feeling of guilt.

He could not go back and undo the problem of his youth on his own, but he could start where he was and, with help, erase the guilt which had followed him all those years.

I was grateful that by teaching him principles from the Book of Mormon, it was as though a tremendous weight was lifted from his shoulders. When he and his daughter drove back home those many miles, the old man had left behind the guilt of the past transgression.

If you “awake to a sense of your awful situation”<sup>9</sup> and wish to return to full spiritual health, see your bishop. He holds the keys and can help you along the pathway of repentance.

Repentance is individual, and so is forgiveness. The Lord requires only that one turn from their sin, and “[He] will forgive their iniquity, and . . . remember their sin no more.”<sup>10</sup>

As the repentance process is completed, you will come to understand the meaning of Isaiah’s promise about the Atonement: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>11</sup>

Just as chalk can be removed from a blackboard, with sincere repentance the effects of our transgression can

be erased through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That promise applies in every case.

The gospel teaches us to be happy, to have faith rather than fear, to find hope and overcome despair, to leave darkness and turn toward the light of the everlasting gospel.

Paul and others warned about the trials of our time and the days yet to come. But peace can be settled in the heart of each who turns to the scriptures and unlocks the promises of protection and redemption that are taught therein. We invite all to turn to the Savior Jesus Christ, to His teachings as found in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

I bear certain witness of the scriptures as a key to our spiritual protection. I also bear witness of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, “that through him all might be saved”<sup>12</sup> who will be saved. The Lord’s Church has been established on the earth once again. Of the truthfulness of the gospel I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. 2 Timothy 3:1–5.
2. 2 Timothy 3:13.
3. Ether 8:24, 26.
4. 2 Timothy 3:14–15.
5. 2 Timothy 3:16.
6. Mark 5:36.
7. Alma 17:2.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 542.
9. Ether 8:24.
10. Jeremiah 31:34.
11. Isaiah 1:18.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 76:42.



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

# The Moral Force of Women

*Your intuition is to do good and to be good, and as you follow the Holy Spirit, your moral authority and influence will grow.*

From age immemorial, societies have relied on the moral force of women. While certainly not the only positive influence at work in society, the moral foundation provided by women has proved uniquely beneficial to the common good. Perhaps, because it is pervasive, this contribution of women is often underappreciated. I wish to express gratitude for the influence of good women, identify some of the philosophies and trends that threaten women's strength and standing, and voice a plea to women to cultivate the innate moral power within them.

Women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures. When praising the "unfeigned faith" he found in Timothy, Paul noted that this faith "dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice."<sup>1</sup>

Years ago, while living in Mexico, I observed firsthand what Paul meant. I recall a particular young mother, one of many among the women of the Church in Mexico whose faith in God

graces their lives so naturally that they seem scarcely aware of it. This lovely woman radiated a moral authority, born of goodness, that influenced all around her for good. With her husband, she sacrificed a number of pleasures and possessions for their higher priorities, seemingly without a second thought. Her ability to perform feats of lifting, bending, and balancing with her children was near superhuman. The demands on her were many and her tasks often repetitive and mundane, yet underneath it all was a beautiful serenity, a sense of being about God's work. As with the Savior, she was ennobled by blessing others through service and sacrifice. She was love personified.

I have been remarkably blessed by the moral influence of women, in particular my mother and my wife. Among other women that I look to in gratitude is Anna Daines. Anna and her husband, Henry, and their four children were among the pioneers of the Church in New Jersey, in the United States. Beginning in the 1930s, when Henry was a doctoral student at Rutgers University, he and Anna worked tirelessly with school and civic

organizations in Metuchen, where they lived, to overcome deeply rooted prejudice against Mormons and to make the community a better place for all parents to raise their children.

Anna, for example, volunteered at the Metuchen YMCA and made herself indispensable. Within a year she was appointed president of the Mothers' Auxiliary and then "was asked to run for one of the three women's positions on the YMCA board of directors. She won without opposition, and so joined the very council that only a few years before had refused to let the Saints meet in their building!"<sup>2</sup>

My family moved into the New Brunswick Ward when I was a teenager. Sister Daines took notice of me and often expressed her confidence in my abilities and potential, which inspired me to reach high—higher than I would have without her encouragement. Once, because of a thoughtful and timely warning from her, I avoided a situation that would surely have led to regret. Although she is no longer here, Anna Daines's influence continues to be felt and reflected in the lives of her descendants and countless others, myself included.

My grandmother Adena Warnick Swenson taught me to be conscientious in priesthood service. She encouraged me to memorize the sacramental blessings on the bread and water, explaining that in this way I could express them with greater understanding and feeling. Observing how she sustained my grandfather, a stake patriarch, engendered in me a reverence for sacred things. Grandma Swenson never learned how to drive a car, but she knew how to help boys become priesthood men.

A woman's moral influence is nowhere more powerfully felt or more beneficially employed than in the



home. There is no better setting for rearing the rising generation than the traditional family, where a father and a mother work in harmony to provide for, teach, and nurture their children. Where this ideal does not exist, people strive to duplicate its benefits as best they can in their particular circumstances.

In all events, a mother can exert an influence unequalled by any other person in any other relationship. By the power of her example and teaching, her sons learn to respect womanhood and to incorporate discipline and high moral standards in their own lives. Her daughters learn to cultivate their own virtue and to stand up for what is right, again and again, however unpopular. A mother's love and high expectations lead her children to act responsibly without excuses, to be serious about education and personal development, and to make ongoing contributions to the well-being of all around them. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once asked: "When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it

feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses?"<sup>3</sup>

Most sacred is a woman's role in the creation of life. We know that our physical bodies have a divine origin<sup>4</sup> and that we must experience both a physical birth and a spiritual rebirth to reach the highest realms in God's celestial kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Thus, women play an integral part (sometimes at the risk of their own lives) in God's work and glory "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>6</sup> As grandmothers, mothers, and role models, women have been the guardians of the wellspring of life, teaching each generation the importance of sexual purity—of chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage. In this way, they have been a civilizing influence in society; they have brought out the best in men; they have perpetuated wholesome

environments in which to raise secure and healthy children.

Sisters, I don't want to overpraise you as we sometimes do in Mother's Day talks that make you cringe. You don't have to be perfect;<sup>7</sup> I don't claim that you are (with one possible exception who is sitting nearby at the moment). What I mean to say is that whether you are single or married, whether you have borne children or not, whether you are old, young, or in between, your moral authority is vital, and perhaps we have begun to take it and you for granted. Certainly there are trends and forces at work that would weaken and even eliminate your influence, to the great detriment of individuals, families, and society at large. Let me mention three as a caution and a warning.

A pernicious philosophy that undermines women's moral influence is the devaluation of marriage and of motherhood and homemaking as a career. Some view homemaking with outright contempt, arguing it demeans women and that the relentless

demands of raising children are a form of exploitation.<sup>8</sup> They ridicule what they call “the mommy track” as a career. This is not fair or right. We do not diminish the value of what women or men achieve in any worthy endeavor or career—we all benefit from those achievements—but we still recognize there is not a higher good than motherhood and fatherhood in marriage. There is no superior career, and no amount of money, authority, or public acclaim can exceed the ultimate rewards of family. Whatever else a woman may accomplish, her moral influence is no more optimally employed than here.

Attitudes toward human sexuality threaten the moral authority of women on several fronts. Abortion for personal or social convenience strikes at the heart of a woman’s most sacred powers and destroys her moral authority. The same is true of sexual immorality and of revealing dress that not only debases women but reinforces the lie that a woman’s sexuality is what defines her worth.

There has long been a cultural double standard that expected women to be sexually circumspect while excusing male immorality. The unfairness of such a double standard is obvious, and it has been justifiably criticized and rejected. In that rejection, one would have hoped that men would rise to the higher, single standard, but just the opposite has occurred—women and girls are now encouraged to be as promiscuous as the double standard expected men to be. Where once women’s higher standards demanded commitment and responsibility from men, we now have sexual relations without conscience, fatherless families, and growing poverty. Equal-opportunity promiscuity simply robs women of their moral influence

and degrades all of society.<sup>9</sup> In this hollow bargain, it is men who are “liberated” and women and children who suffer most.

A third area of concern comes from those who, in the name of equality, want to erase all differences between the masculine and the feminine. Often this takes the form of pushing women to adopt more masculine traits—be more aggressive, tough, and confrontational. It is now common in movies and video games to see women in terribly violent roles, leaving dead bodies and mayhem in their wake. It is soul-numbing to see men in such roles and certainly no less so when women are the ones perpetrating and suffering the violence.

Former Young Women general president Margaret D. Nadauld taught: “The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune; we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity.”<sup>10</sup> In blurring feminine and masculine differences, we lose the distinct, complementary gifts of women and men that together produce a greater whole.

My plea to women and girls today is to protect and cultivate the moral force that is within you. Preserve that innate virtue and the unique gifts you bring with you into the world. Your intuition is to do good and to be good, and as you follow the Holy Spirit, your moral authority and influence will grow. To the young women I say, don’t lose that moral force even

before you have it in full measure. Take particular care that your language is clean, not coarse; that your dress reflects modesty, not vanity; and that your conduct manifests purity, not promiscuity. You cannot lift others to virtue on the one hand if you are entertaining vice on the other.

Sisters, of all your associations, it is your relationship with God, your Heavenly Father, who is the source of your moral power, that you must always put first in your life. Remember that Jesus’s power came through His single-minded devotion to the will of the Father. He never varied from that which pleased His Father.<sup>11</sup> Strive to be that kind of disciple of the Father and the Son, and your influence will never fade.

And do not be afraid to apply that influence without fear or apology. “Be ready always to give an answer to every [man, woman, and child] that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”<sup>12</sup> “Preach the word; be instant





in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”<sup>13</sup> “Bring up your children in light and truth.”<sup>14</sup> “Teach [them] to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>15</sup>

In these exhortations to women, let no one willfully misunderstand. By praising and encouraging the moral force in women, I am not saying that men and boys are somehow excused from their own duty to stand for truth and righteousness, that their responsibility to serve, sacrifice, and minister is somehow less than that of women or can be left to women. Brethren, let us stand with women, share their burdens, and cultivate our own companion moral authority.

Dear sisters, we rely on the moral force you bring to the world, to marriage, to family, to the Church. We rely on blessings you bring down from

heaven by your prayers and faith. We pray for your security, welfare, and happiness and for your influence to be sustained. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 1:5.
2. Orson Scott Card, “Neighborliness: Daines Style,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1977, 19.
3. Neal A. Maxwell, “The Women of God,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
4. See Moses 2:27.
5. See Moses 6:57–60.
6. Moses 1:39.
7. “A century ago, attachment scholar John Bowlby found that the bond created through the innumerable caring interactions between a mother and child is the critical foundation for social-emotional development. . . . And feminist scholar Sara Ruddick identified a mother’s ‘attentive love’ as the core of effective parenting. Through the ‘patient eye of love,’ mothers develop a special knowledge of their children—a knowledge that gives them unique insight into what the truly ‘best practices’ for each child should be” (Jenet Jacob Erickson, “Love, Not Perfection, Root

of Good Mothering,” *Deseret News*, May 12, 2013, G3).

8. It is true that many women over many generations have been exploited or saddled with unfair burdens both in family and employment, but selflessness and sacrifice need not and should not become abusive or exploitative. Elder Bruce C. Hafen observed: “If being ‘selfless’ means a woman must give up her own inner identity and personal growth, that understanding of selflessness is wrong. . . . But today’s liberationist model goes too far the other way, stereotyping women as excessively *independent* of their families. A more sensible view is that husbands and wives are *interdependent* with each other. . . . The critics who moved mothers from dependence to independence skipped the fertile middle ground of interdependence. Those who moved mothers from selflessness to selfishness skipped the fertile middle ground of self-chosen service that contributes toward a woman’s personal growth. Because of these excesses, debates about the value of motherhood have, ironically, caused the general society to discount not only mothers but women in general” (“Motherhood and the Moral Influence of Women” [remarks to the World Congress of Families II, Geneva, Plenary Session IV, Nov. 16, 1999], [http://worldcongress.org/wcf2\\_spkrs/wcf2\\_hafen.htm](http://worldcongress.org/wcf2_spkrs/wcf2_hafen.htm)).
9. One mother in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial observed: “With the exception of some Mormons, evangelicals and Orthodox Jews, scads of us don’t know how to teach our own sons and daughters not to give away their bodies so readily. . . . Still, in my own circle of girlfriends, the desire to push back is strong. I don’t know one of them who doesn’t have feelings of lingering discomfort regarding her own sexual past. And not one woman I’ve ever asked about the subject has said that she wishes she’d ‘experimented’ more” (Jennifer Moses, “Why Do We Let Them Dress Like That?” *Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 19, 2011, C3).
10. Margaret D. Nadauld, “The Joy of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 15; or *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 18.
11. See John 8:29.
12. 1 Peter 3:15.
13. 2 Timothy 4:2.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 93:40.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.



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By **Elder S. Gifford Nielsen**  
Of the Seventy

# Hastening the Lord's Game Plan!

*We each must develop and carry out our own personal game plan to serve with enthusiasm alongside the full-time missionaries.*

Several years ago I needed to speak to the wife of one of the bishops in our stake, so I called their home. A young son answered the phone. I said, "Hello. Is your mother there?"

His reply: "Yes, she is. I'll get her. Who is this?"

My response: "Tell her it's President Nielsen."

There was a short pause, and then, in a very animated voice, I heard, "Hey, Mom, President *Hinckley's* on the phone!"

I can't imagine what she must have been thinking. It had to be the longest walk to the phone she ever had. The thought did cross my mind: "Should I?" I didn't, but we had quite a laugh. Now that I think about it, she must have been so disappointed just talking to me.

What would you do if the prophet of the Lord really called you? Well, he has! President Thomas S. Monson, as he did once again this morning, has called each one of us to a very important work. He said, "Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in

the Lord's vineyard to bring souls unto Him" ("Faith in the Work of Salvation" [worldwide leadership training broadcast, June 2013]; [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts)).

Have we been listening?

All over the world, stakes, districts, and missions are experiencing a new level of energy, as the Savior's declaration to Joseph Smith in 1832 is being fulfilled: "Behold, I will hasten my work in its time" (D&C 88:73).

Brothers and sisters, that time is *now!* I feel it, and I'm sure you do also.

I wanted to put my excitement and my faith in Jesus Christ into action. When I played football, I thought in terms of game plans. There was no question going into a contest that if our team was prepared with the right plays, we were going to be successful. However, I recently spoke with BYU's legendary coach LaVell Edwards about our game plans, and he said, "I didn't care what play you called just as long as we scored a touchdown!" As one of his quarterbacks, I thought it was much more complex than that, but maybe his simple philosophy is the reason he has a stadium named after him.

Since we are all on the Lord's team, do we each have our own winning game plan? Are we ready to play? If we, as members, really loved our family, friends, and associates, wouldn't we want to share our testimony of the restored gospel with them?

At the seminar for new mission presidents held in June, a record 173 new presidents and their wives received final instructions before beginning their service. All 15 members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed this special group.

Elder L. Tom Perry added the concluding comments: "This is the most remarkable era in the history of the Church. This is something that ranks with the great events that have happened in past history, like the First Vision, like the gift of the Book of Mormon, like the Restoration of the gospel, like all of the things that build that foundation for us to go forward and teach in our Father in Heaven's kingdom" ("Concluding Remarks" [address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2013], 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City).

We need to be engaged as never before to match the excitement of our leaders and the commitment of our full-time missionaries. This work is not going to move forward in the Lord's intended way without us! As President Henry B. Eyring has said, "Whatever our age, capacity, Church calling, or location, we are as one called to the work to help Him in His harvest of souls" ("We Are One," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 62).

May I share with you a game plan I've felt impressed to implement after praying, reading chapter 13 of *Preach My Gospel*, and pondering past experiences? I invite you to consider these



three points as you think about your own plan.

First, specifically pray to bring someone closer to the Savior and His gospel every day. You could do this by seeing all people as sons and daughters of God helping each other on their journey home. Think of the new friends you would make.

Second, pray for the missionaries serving in your area and their investigators by name every day. The only way to do this is to greet them, look at their badge, call them by name, and ask them who they are teaching. Elder Russell M. Nelson wisely contributed, “Until you know a person’s name and face, the Lord cannot help you know his or her heart.”

I attended the baptism of a wonderful sister, who shared her testimony. I will forever remember her saying, “I’ve never had so many people praying for me and feeling so much love! I know this work is true!”

Third, invite a friend to an activity in or out of your home. Wherever you go or whatever you do, ponder who would enjoy the occasion and then

listen to the Spirit as He directs you.

The Savior has taught me a subtle lesson in my personal gospel learning which, I believe, applies beautifully to “the hastening.” When I’m emotionally charged about something, it shows in my writing and often ends in an exclamation point that by definition conveys a “strong feeling [or an] indication of major significance” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], “exclamation point”).

I became intrigued as scriptures about “the gathering” which ended with this punctuation mark started popping up, like Alma’s heartfelt plea: “O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!” (Alma 29:1).

Research suggests there are 65 passages showing this kind of strong missionary emotion, including these:

“How great is his joy in the soul that repenteth! . . .

“And 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!” (D&C 18:13, 15–16).

My awakening to these unique verses played an important role in my first assignment as an Area Seventy. I was a bit nervous being the companion of an Apostle, Elder Quentin L. Cook, at a stake conference. As I walked into the stake president’s office for the initial meeting that weekend, I noticed a pair of tattered-looking, bronzed shoes on the credenza behind his desk, accompanied by a scripture ending in an exclamation point. As I read it, I felt the Lord was aware of my study, had answered my prayers, and that He knew exactly what I needed to soothe my anxious heart.

I asked the stake president to tell me the story of the shoes.

He said:  
“These are shoes of a young convert to the Church whose family situation was strained, yet he was determined to serve a successful mission and did so in Guatemala. Upon his return I met with him to extend an honorable release and saw his shoes were worn out. This young man had given his all to the Lord without much, if any, family support.

“He noticed I was staring at his shoes and asked me, ‘President, is anything wrong?’

“I responded, ‘No, Elder, everything is right! Can I have those shoes?’”

The stake president continued: “My respect and love for this returning missionary was overwhelming! I wanted to memorialize the experience, so I had his shoes bronzed. It is a reminder to me when I walk into this office of the effort we all must give regardless of our circumstances. The verse was from Isaiah: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!’ (Isaiah 52:7).”

My dear brothers and sisters, the good bishop’s wife may have been wondering why the prophet was calling her. I testify she and we need wonder no more—EXCLAMATION POINT!

I know we each must develop and carry out our own personal game plan to serve with enthusiasm alongside the full-time missionaries—EXCLAMATION POINT!

I add my testimony to that of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!” (D&C 76:22). In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela  
Of the Seventy

## Small and Simple Things

*Let us reach out to others with faith and with love.*

My beloved brothers and sisters, just a few weeks ago I was at the missionary training center in Mexico City to share a message with the missionaries. My wife and I purposely arrived several hours early. As we explored the beautiful gardens and well-kept streets of the MTC, we couldn’t help but notice the happiness that radiated from the faces of hundreds of young elders and sisters, each focused on acquiring new language skills and learning to better appreciate his or her purpose as a missionary.

As I paused to fully take in this remarkable sight, I reflected upon the words of Alma when he commanded his son Helaman to keep a history of his people as part of the records which had been entrusted with him and to keep all these things sacred so that they would one day go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Alma then told him:

“Now ye may suppose that this is foolishness in me; but behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

“And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and

eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” (Alma 37:6–7).

The innocence and youth of our missionaries exemplify the Lord’s way—that those who are humble may “invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 1).

As members of the Church, we are able, through our own small and simple things, to “[convince] many of the error of their ways” and help bring “them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (Alma 37:8).

On one occasion I accompanied a stake president and bishop to visit a less-active member. We taught him, in a very simple way, about the blessings of the Sabbath. We expressed to him our sincere love. He responded, “All I needed was to have someone come and give me an *abrazo*,” or hug. I immediately stood up and embraced him. The next day was Sunday. This



same brother came to sacrament meeting with his entire family.

During a visiting teaching visit, Martha, a member of our ward, told my wife and her companion never to come back again. She had decided to stop coming to church. One of the visiting teachers asked Martha if they could sing a hymn together this one last time, and she agreed. As they sang, something special happened. Little by little, the Spirit began to fill the room. Each of them felt it. Martha's heart began to soften. With her eyes filled with tears, she expressed to her visiting teachers the feelings of her heart. At that moment, she realized that she knew that the gospel was true. She now thanked her visiting teachers and expressed a desire for them to return. From that day forward, she received them with joy.

Martha began to attend church with her young daughter. For years they attended regularly, with Martha never losing hope that her husband might eventually choose to join them. At last the day came when the Lord touched his heart, and he began to attend with them, as did their other daughter soon thereafter. This family began to feel the true joy that comes from having gospel blessings in their home. Martha has since served faithfully as our ward Relief Society president, and her husband has served well in several callings within the stake. All this began with the singing of a hymn, a small and simple thing that touched Martha's heart.

Naaman was a captain of the host of the king of Syria, an honorable man, a mighty man in valor, but he was also a leper (see 2 Kings 5:1).

After being unsuccessful in receiving a cure from the king of Israel for his leprosy, Naaman went to the house of Elisha, the prophet. Elisha sent a messenger out to him, saying:

“Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. . . .

“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

“Then went he down, and dipped

himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:10–11, 13–14).

Our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has invited us all to go forth and rescue our brothers and sisters. He said: "The world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The blessings of eternity await you" ("To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001, 48; or *Liahona*, July 2001, 57).

I testify that many of those who need our help are there waiting for us. They are ready for their valiant brothers and sisters to reach out to them and rescue them through small and simple means. I have personally spent many hours visiting less-active members of the Church whose hearts have already been softened by the Lord, who are now ready to receive our testimonies and our sincere expressions of love. When we reach out and invite them, they will return to the Church without hesitation.

Let us reach out to others with faith and with love. Let us remember the promise of the Lord:

"And 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!" (D&C 18:15–16).

I bear witness of the love of the Lord toward all His children. I know He lives and that He is our Redeemer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By Elder Timothy J. Dyches  
Of the Seventy

## Wilt Thou Be Made Whole?

*As we repent and become converted to the Lord, we become whole, and our guilt is swept away.*

**D**uring a time of joyful feasting at Jerusalem, the Savior left the multitudes to seek out those in greatest need. He found them at Bethesda, the five-porch pool by the sheep market that was renowned for attracting the afflicted.

The Gospel of John tells us that near the pool "lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

"For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (John 5:3–4).

The Savior's visit is depicted in a beautiful painting by Carl Bloch titled *Christ Healing the Sick at Bethesda*. Bloch captures Jesus gently lifting a temporary canopy, revealing an "impotent man" (John 5:7) who is lying near the pool, waiting. Here the word *impotent* refers to someone who is powerless and emphasizes the mercy and grace of the Savior, who came quietly to minister to those who could not help themselves.

In the painting, the afflicted man huddles on the floor in the shadows,

exhausted and demoralized after suffering his infirmity for 38 years.

As the Savior raises the edge of the cloth with one hand, He beckons with the other and asks a penetrating question: "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The man replies, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me" (John 5:6–7).

To the man's seemingly impossible challenge, Jesus provides a profound and unexpected answer:

"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked" (John 5:8–9).

In another tender scene, Luke tells us that the Savior, while traveling to Jerusalem, met 10 lepers. Because of their infirmity, they "stood afar off" (Luke 17:12). They were outcasts—unclean and unwanted.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," they cried (Luke 17:13)—in other words, importuning, "Isn't there *something* You can do for us?"

The Great Physician, full of compassion, still knew that faith must precede the miracle and therefore told



them, “Go shew yourselves unto the priests” (Luke 17:14).

As they went in faith, the miracle occurred. Can you imagine the overwhelming joy with each step as they witnessed in real time their bodies being cleansed, healed, and restored right before their eyes?

“One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

“And fell down on his face at [the Master’s] feet, giving him thanks. . . .

“And [Jesus] said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (Luke 17:15–16, 19).

In my former practice as a physician and surgeon, I focused on mending and correcting the physical. Jesus Christ heals body, mind, and spirit, and His healing begins with faith.

Do you remember when your faith and joy were full to the brim? Remember the moment you found your testimony or when God confirmed to you that you were His son or daughter and that He loved you very much—and you felt whole? If that time seems lost, it can be found again.

The Savior counsels us on how to

be made whole—to be complete or become healed:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

“Come, follow me” (Luke 18:22) invites us to leave behind the old life and worldly desires and become a new creature for whom “old things are passed away [and] all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17), even with a new, faithful heart. And we are made whole again.

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63).

As we draw near to Him, we realize that mortality is meant to be difficult and that “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) is not a flaw in the plan of salvation. Opposition, rather, is the indispensable element of mortality

and strengthens our will and refines our choices. The vicissitudes of life help us fashion an eternal relationship with God—and engrave His image upon our countenance as we yield our hearts to Him (see Alma 5:19).

“This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19) is what our Savior asked when He instituted what we call the sacrament. This ordinance with bread and water renews sacred covenants we have made with God and invites the power of the Atonement into our lives. We are healed by abandoning the habits and lifestyles that harden hearts and stiffen necks. When we lay down “the weapons of [our] rebellion” (Alma 23:7), we become “agents unto [ourselves]” (D&C 58:28), no longer blinded by the sophistry of Satan or deafened by the discordant noise of the secular world.

As we repent and become converted to the Lord, we become whole, and our guilt is swept away. We may wonder, as did Enos, “How is it done?” The Lord answers: “Because of thy faith in Christ. . . . Wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole” (Enos 1:7, 8).

Corrie ten Boom, a devout Dutch

Christian woman, found such healing despite having been interned in concentration camps during World War II. She suffered greatly, but unlike her beloved sister Betsie, who perished in one of the camps, Corrie survived.

After the war she often spoke publicly of her experiences and of healing and forgiveness. On one occasion a former Nazi guard who had been part of Corrie's own grievous confinement in Ravensbrück, Germany, approached her, rejoicing at her message of Christ's forgiveness and love.

"How grateful I am for your message, *Fraulein*," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!"

"His hand was thrust out to shake mine," Corrie recalled. "And I, who had preached so often . . . the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

"Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. . . . Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

"I tried to smile, [and] I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

"As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

"And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."<sup>1</sup>

Corrie ten Boom was made whole. President Thomas S. Monson has

said, "There is one life that sustains those who are troubled or beset with sorrow and grief—even the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

If you feel unclean, unloved, unhappy, unworthy, or unwhole, remember "all that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Have faith and patience in the Savior's timing and purposes for you. "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36).

Be assured the Savior still seeks to mend our souls and heal our hearts. He waits at the door and knocks. Let us answer by beginning again to pray, repent, forgive, and forget. Let us love God and serve our neighbor and stand in holy places with a life made clean. The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, the leper along the journey to Jerusalem, and Corrie ten Boom were made whole. "Wilt thou be made

whole?" Rise and walk. His "grace is sufficient" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and you will not walk alone.

I have come to know that God lives. I know that we are all His children and that He loves us for who we are and for who we can become. I know that He sent His Son to the world to be the atoning sacrifice for all mankind and that those who embrace His gospel and follow Him will be made whole and complete—"in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68), by His tender mercies. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place* (1971), 215.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Meeting Life's Challenges," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 71.
3. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.





**By Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Like a Broken Vessel

*How do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love?*

The Apostle Peter wrote that disciples of Jesus Christ are to have “compassion one of another.”<sup>1</sup> In that spirit I wish to speak to those who suffer from some form of mental illness or emotional disorder, whether those afflictions be slight or severe, of brief duration or persistent over a lifetime. We sense the complexity of such matters when we hear professionals speak of neuroses and psychoses, of genetic predispositions and chromosomal defects, of bipolarity, paranoia, and schizophrenia. However bewildering this all may be, these afflictions are some of the realities of mortal life, and there should be no more shame in acknowledging them than in acknowledging a battle with high blood pressure or the sudden appearance of a malignant tumor.

In striving for some peace and understanding in these difficult matters, it is crucial to remember that we are living—and chose to live—in a fallen world where for divine purposes our pursuit of godliness will be tested and tried again and again. Of greatest assurance in God’s plan is that a Savior was promised, a Redeemer, who through our faith in Him would lift us triumphantly over those tests and trials, even though the cost to do so would be unfathomable for both

the Father who sent Him and the Son who came. It is only an appreciation of this divine love that will make our own lesser suffering first bearable, then understandable, and finally redemptive.

Let me leave the extraordinary illnesses I have mentioned to concentrate on MDD—“major depressive disorder”—or, more commonly, “depression.” When I speak of this, I am not speaking of bad hair days, tax deadlines, or other discouraging moments we all have. Everyone is going to be anxious or downhearted on occasion. The Book of Mormon says Ammon and his brethren were depressed at a very difficult time,<sup>2</sup> and so can the rest of us be. But today I am speaking of something more serious, of an affliction so severe that it significantly restricts a person’s ability to function fully, a crater in the mind so deep that no one can responsibly suggest it would surely go away if those victims would just square their shoulders and think more positively—though I am a vigorous advocate of square shoulders and positive thinking!

No, this dark night of the mind and spirit is more than mere discouragement. I have seen it come to an absolutely angelic man when his beloved spouse of 50 years passed away. I

have seen it in new mothers with what is euphemistically labeled “after-baby blues.” I have seen it strike anxious students, military veterans, and grandmothers worried about the well-being of their grown children.

And I have seen it in young fathers trying to provide for their families. In that regard I once terrifyingly saw it in myself. At one point in our married life when financial fears collided with staggering fatigue, I took a psychic blow that was as unanticipated as it was real. With the grace of God and the love of my family, I kept functioning and kept working, but even after all these years I continue to feel a deep sympathy for others more chronically or more deeply afflicted with such gloom than I was. In any case we have all taken courage from those who, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, “search[ed] . . . and contemplate[d] the darkest abyss”<sup>3</sup> and persevered through it—not the least of whom were Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and Elder George Albert Smith, the latter being one of the most gentle and Christlike men of our dispensation, who battled recurring depression for some years before later becoming the universally beloved eighth prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

So how do you best respond when mental or emotional challenges confront you or those you love? Above all, never lose faith in your Father in Heaven, who loves you more than you can comprehend. As President Monson said to the Relief Society sisters so movingly last Saturday evening: “That love never changes. . . . It is there for you when you are sad or happy, discouraged or hopeful. God’s love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve [it]. It is simply always there.”<sup>4</sup> Never, ever



doubt that, and never harden your heart. Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Believe in miracles. I have seen so many of them come when every other indication would say that hope was lost. Hope is *never* lost. If those miracles do not come soon or fully or seemingly at all, remember the Savior's own anguished example: if the bitter cup does not pass, drink it and be strong, trusting in happier days ahead.<sup>5</sup>

In preventing illness whenever possible, watch for the stress indicators in yourself and in others you may be able to help. As with your automobile,

be alert to rising temperatures, excessive speed, or a tank low on fuel. When you face "depletion depression," make the requisite adjustments. Fatigue is the common enemy of us all—so slow down, rest up, replenish, and refill. Physicians promise us that if we do not take time to be well, we most assuredly will take time later on to be ill.

If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe. If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing *and* get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use *all* of the

marvelous gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation.

If you are the one afflicted or a caregiver to such, try not to be overwhelmed with the size of your task. Don't assume you can fix everything, but fix what you can. If those are only small victories, be grateful for them and be patient. Dozens of times in the scriptures, the Lord commands someone to "stand still" or "be still"—and wait.<sup>6</sup> Patiently enduring some things is part of our mortal education.

For caregivers, in your devoted effort to assist with another's health, do not destroy your own. In all these things be wise. Do not run faster than you have strength.<sup>7</sup> Whatever else you may or may not be able to provide, you can offer your prayers and you can give "love unfeigned."<sup>8</sup> "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; . . . [it] beareth all things, . . . hopeth all



things, endureth all things. Charity *never* faileth.”<sup>9</sup>

Also let us remember that through any illness or difficult challenge, there is still much in life to be hopeful about and grateful for. We are infinitely more than our limitations or our afflictions! Stephanie Clark Nielson and her family have been our friends for more than 30 years. On August 16, 2008, Stephanie and her husband, Christian, were in a plane crash and subsequent fire that scarred her so horrifically that only her painted toenails were recognizable when family members came to identify the victims. There was almost no chance Stephanie could live. After three months in a sleep-induced coma, she awoke to see herself. With that, the psyche-scarring and horrendous depression came. Having four children under the age of seven, Stephanie did not want them to see her ever again. She felt it would be better not to live. “I thought it would be easier,” Stephanie once told me in my office, “if they just forgot about me and I quietly slipped out of their life.”

But to her eternal credit, and with the prayers of her husband, family, friends, four beautiful children, and a fifth born to the Nielsons just 18 months ago, Stephanie fought her way back from the abyss of self-destruction to be one of the most popular “mommy bloggers” in the nation, openly declaring to the four million who follow her blog that her “divine purpose” in life is to be a mom and to cherish *every day* she has been given on this beautiful earth.

Whatever your struggle, my brothers and sisters—mental or emotional or physical or otherwise—do not vote against the preciousness of life by ending it! Trust in God. Hold on in His love. Know that one day the dawn will break brightly and all shadows of mortality will flee. Though we may feel we are “like a broken vessel,” as the Psalmist says,<sup>10</sup> we must remember, that vessel is in the hands of the divine potter. Broken minds can be healed just the way broken bones and broken hearts are healed. While God is at work making those repairs, the

rest of us can help by being merciful, nonjudgmental, and kind.

I testify of the holy Resurrection, that unspeakable cornerstone gift in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ! With the Apostle Paul, I testify that that which was sown in corruption will one day be raised in incorruption and that which was sown in weakness will ultimately be raised in power.<sup>11</sup> I bear witness of that day when loved ones whom we knew to have disabilities in mortality will stand before us glorified and grand, breathtakingly perfect in body and mind. What a thrilling moment that will be! I do not know whether we will be happier for ourselves that we have witnessed such a miracle or happier for them that they are fully perfect and finally “free at last.”<sup>12</sup> Until that hour when Christ’s consummate gift is evident to us all, may we live by faith, hold fast to hope, and show “compassion one of another,”<sup>13</sup> I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

- 1 Peter 3:8.
- See Alma 26:27; see also Alma 56:16.
- Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 267.
- Thomas S. Monson, “We Never Walk Alone,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 123, 124.
- See Matthew 26:39.
- See, for example, Psalm 4:4; Doctrine and Covenants 101:16.
- See Mosiah 4:27.
- Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
- 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8; emphasis added; see also Moroni 7:45–46.
- Psalm 31:12.
- See 1 Corinthians 15:42–43.
- “Free at Last,” in John W. Work, comp., *American Negro Songs: 230 Folk Songs and Spirituals, Religious and Secular* (1998), 197.
- 1 Peter 3:8.



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

# Put Your Trust in the Lord

*Become engaged in doing what you can in sharing the great message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Sister Ballard and I recently returned from an assignment to five countries in Europe. There we had the privilege of meeting with many of our missionaries, perhaps some of your sons and your daughters. Since President Thomas S. Monson's announcement of the lowering of the age for our young men and our young women to serve, I have had the privilege of meeting with over 3,000 of them. The Light of Christ radiates in their faces, and they are eager to move the work forward—to find and teach, to baptize, to activate, and to strengthen and to build the kingdom of God. Meeting with them, one quickly comes to know, however, that they cannot do this work alone. Today I want to speak to all members of the Church, because there is an urgency for each one of us to be engaged in sharing the gospel.

As has been quoted many times, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared that “after all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 330).

In 1974 President Spencer W. Kimball said this: “Perhaps the greatest reason for missionary work is to give the world its chance to hear and

accept the gospel. The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word *command* deliberately for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 4).

In July of that same year, Sister Ballard and I left with our children to preside over the Canada Toronto Mission. The words of President Kimball were ringing in my ears, especially when he said: “My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the world? We have been proselyting now 144 years. Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision?” (*Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 5).

He also asked us to quicken our pace, working together to build up the Church and kingdom of God.

This past June President Thomas S. Monson echoed exactly the same message to members of the Church. The President said: “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together . . . [and] labor in the Lord's vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude

of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work” (“Faith in the Work of Salvation” [address given at a special broadcast, June 23, 2013]; [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts)).

It is good, brothers and sisters, to reflect on the teachings of the prophets from the time of Joseph Smith to today. They have encouraged and called upon the leadership and the members of the Church to be anxiously engaged in bringing the message of the Restoration of the gospel to all of our Heavenly Father's children in all of the world.

My message this afternoon is that the Lord *is* hastening His work. In our day this can be done only when every member of the Church reaches out with love to share the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to work together in partnership with our 80,000 missionaries now serving. Information about this great work, especially the assignments for the stake and ward council leaders, is clearly outlined on the [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) website entitled “Hastening the Work of Salvation.”

We know from our research that most active members of the Church want the blessings of the gospel to be part of the lives of others whom they love, even those whom they have never met. But we also know that many members hesitate to do missionary work and share the gospel for two basic reasons.

- The first one is fear. Many members do not even pray for opportunities to share the gospel, fearing that they might receive divine promptings to do something they think they are not capable of doing.
- The second reason is misunderstanding of what missionary work is.



We know that when someone gets up to give a talk in sacrament meeting and says, “Today I’ll be talking about missionary work,” or perhaps even when Elder Ballard gets up in general conference and says the same thing, some of you listening may think, “Oh no, not again; we have heard this before.”

Now, we know that no one likes feeling guilty. Perhaps you feel you may be asked to do unrealistic things in your relationships with friends or neighbors. With the help of the Lord, let me remove any fear you or any of our full-time missionaries may have in sharing the gospel with others.

Make the decision to do what Jesus Christ has asked us to do. The Savior has said:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

“If ye . . . know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:7–11).

Brothers and sisters, fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members and the full-time missionaries kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities. Then, we must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father’s children, and surely those opportunities will come. These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. Just be positive, and those whom you speak with will feel your love. They will never forget that feeling, though the timing may not be right for them to embrace the gospel. That too may change in the future when their circumstances change.

It is impossible for us to fail when we do our best when we are on the Lord’s errand. While the outcome is a result of the exercise of one’s agency, sharing the gospel is our responsibility.

Trust the Lord. He is the Good Shepherd. He knows His sheep, and His sheep know His voice; and today the voice of the Good Shepherd is your voice and my voice. And if we are not engaged, many who would hear the message of the Restoration will be passed by. Simply stated, it’s a matter of faith and action on our part.

The principles are pretty simple—pray, personally and in your family, for missionary opportunities. The Lord has said in the Doctrine and Covenants that many people have been kept from the truth only “because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

You don’t have to be an outgoing person or an eloquent, persuasive teacher. If you have an abiding love and hope within you, the Lord has promised if you “lift up your voices unto this people [and] speak the thoughts that [He] shall put into your hearts, . . . you shall not be confounded before men;

“[And] it shall be given you . . . in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:5–6).

*Preach My Gospel* reminds all of us that “nothing happens in missionary work until [we] find someone to teach. Talk with as many people as you can each day. It is natural to be somewhat apprehensive about talking to people, but you can pray for the faith and strength to be more bold in opening your mouth to proclaim the restored gospel” ([2004], 156–57). You full-time missionaries, if you want to teach more, you must talk to more people every day. This has always been what the Lord has sent missionaries forth to do.

The Lord knows us. He knows we have our challenges. I realize that some of you may feel heavy laden, but I pray that none of you would ever feel that reaching out in normal, pleasant ways to share the gospel would ever be a burden. Rather, it is a privilege! There is no greater joy in life than being anxiously engaged in the service of the Lord.

The key is that you be inspired of God, that you ask Him for direction and then go and do as the Spirit prompts you. When members view

the work of salvation as their responsibility alone, it can be intimidating. When they view it as an invitation to follow the Lord in bringing souls unto Him to be taught by the full-time elders and sisters, it is inspiring, invigorating, and uplifting.

We are not asking everyone to do everything. We are simply asking all members to pray, knowing that if every member, young and old, will reach out to just “one” between now and Christmas, millions will feel the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful gift to the Savior.

Six weeks ago I received a letter from a very successful member missionary family, the Munns family of Florida. They wrote:

“Dear Elder Ballard, 30 minutes after the worldwide broadcast on hastening

the work of salvation, we held our family missionary council. We were thrilled to find that our teenage grandchildren wanted to be included. We’re happy to report that since our council meeting, we have expanded our family teaching pool by 200 percent.

“We have had grandchildren bring friends to church, have enjoyed sacrament meetings with some of our less-active friends, and have had some of our new contacts commit to take the missionary discussions. One of our less-active sisters has not only returned to church but has brought new investigators with her.

“No one has turned down the invitation to take the missionary discussions. What an exciting time to be a member of this Church” (personal letter, Aug. 15, 2013).

Heed the promptings of the Spirit. Supplicate the Lord in mighty prayer. Become engaged in doing what you can in sharing the great message of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

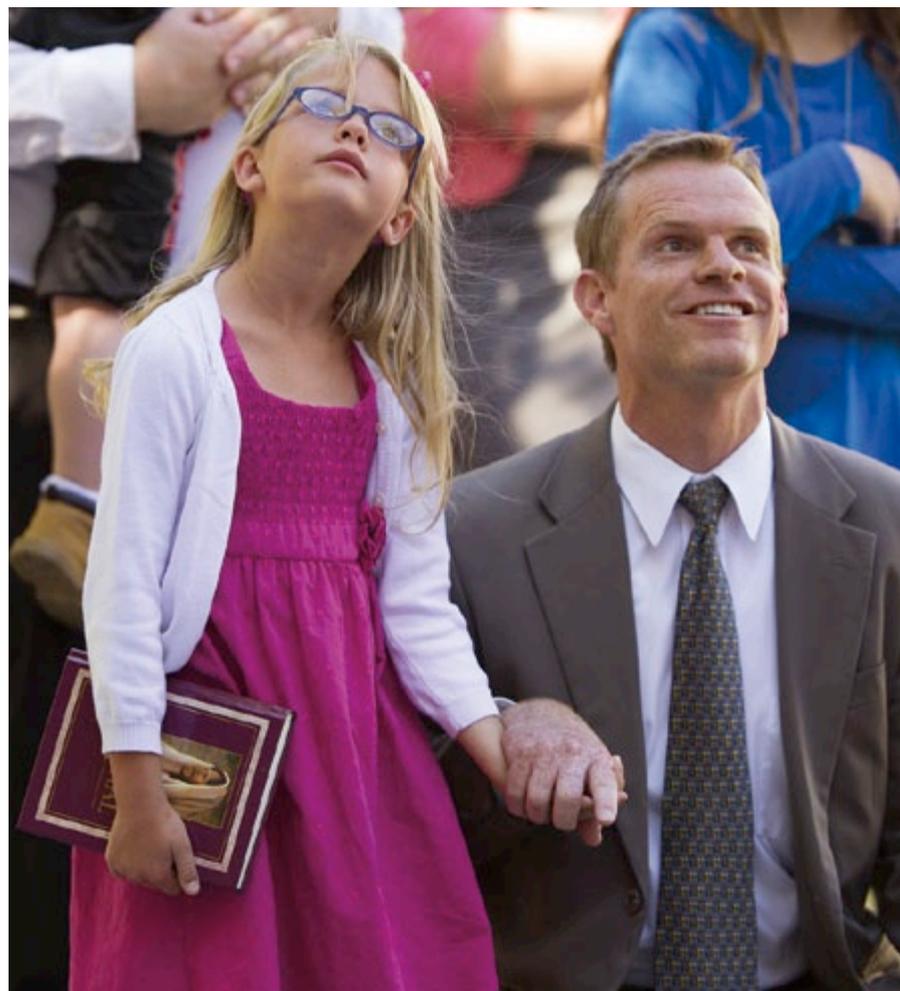
I quote from another successful member missionary, Clayton Christensen: “Every time you take someone figuratively by the hand and introduce him or her to Jesus Christ, you will feel how deeply our Savior loves you and loves the person whose hand is in yours” (*The Power of Everyday Missionaries: The What and How of Sharing the Gospel* [2013], 1).

God bless you, brothers and sisters, to find the great joy that comes from experiencing miracles through your faith. As we are taught in Moroni chapter 7:

“Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. . . .

“ . . . For it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain” (Moroni 7:33, 37).

From my own experience I can testify to you that the Lord will hear your prayers and you will have many opportunities now and for years to come to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ to Heavenly Father’s precious children. President Monson, we have listened. We will all seek to find the one. I pray that all of us may experience the great joy that comes from missionary service, in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

# The Doctrines and Principles Contained in the Articles of Faith

*Each article of faith adds unique value to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

When I was given the assignment to speak in the priesthood session of general conference, I immediately thought of a wonderful Primary teacher. Her great desire was to prepare us to be worthy of receiving the priesthood. She grilled us on the requirements then in place for graduation from Primary—memorize the names of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Articles of Faith. She also made us a promise—if all of us could recite the thirteen Articles of Faith by memory, we could choose the place and go on an outing for our last class.

We decided on a special spot we liked to hike to on the rocky slopes just above the first dam at the entrance of Logan Canyon, in northern Utah. There was a small, flat space in these rocky cliffs that had a natural fireplace where you could cook hot dogs and roast marshmallows. When we chose the location, however, we did not

consider our teacher, who was older and certainly not the athletic type. If we had thought about it more carefully, it might have occurred to us that she would have a difficult time making the hike. Her promise was her bond, however, and she gamely followed us.

First we climbed up the small hill. In our day there were no power lines to prevent access. With some help our teacher made it up the hill. Once over the top we dropped down into a rocky ridge to a place we called “Turtle Back.”

After we arrived, it took our teacher a little while to catch her breath. By the time we prepared to sit down and eat, she had recovered enough to teach us our final lesson. She told us how she had enjoyed teaching us in Primary for the last two years. She complimented us on how we had mastered the Articles of Faith. She could call out the number of any one of them, and we could quote it back

to her. Then she said memorizing the Articles of Faith would mean nothing more than a lot of words unless we understood the doctrines and principles contained in them. She encouraged us to study the gospel doctrine taught in each of the Articles of Faith. She explained that the doctrine found in the Articles of Faith was divided into sections.

## I. The Godhead and the Basic Doctrine of Christ

We learn from the first article of faith that the Godhead is three personages: God the Father, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

The second article teaches us that we are responsible for our own actions on earth.

The third gives a vision of the Savior’s mission for the salvation of Father in Heaven’s children.

The fourth teaches the importance of basic principles and ordinances.

The power of our teacher’s words has been a source of inspiration to me because of the emphasis she placed on gospel study. The scriptures guide us to a standard of truth by which we can judge the knowledge we are receiving, whether it be true or false. True doctrine comes from God, the source and foundation of all truths. The teachings and concepts of true doctrine are found in the gospel of our Lord and Savior. False teachings come from Satan, the father of all lies. His desire is to pervert, change, and alter revealed truths. He wants to deceive us so some of us will lose our way along the journey back to our heavenly home.

The scriptures teach us how to avoid false teachings. For example, in Paul’s letter to Timothy we read:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,



for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

This doctrine is to the Church like a battery is to a cell phone. When you remove the battery from your cell phone, it becomes useless. A church in which true doctrine is no longer taught is similarly useless. It cannot guide us back to our Heavenly Father and our eternal home.

## II. Organization and Order of the Priesthood

After we start to understand the basic doctrine of Christ, the fifth and sixth articles of faith teach us about the organization and order of the priesthood. Under the direction of the Lord, Joseph Smith organized the Savior’s Church using priesthood authority—the power of God. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the same organization that Christ organized and directed while He was on the earth.

What a glorious day it was for Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in May 1829 when they went into the woods to pray about the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins that they had read about while translating the Book of Mormon. There were many teachings about baptism being taught by different churches in the early 1800s, and Joseph and Oliver knew they could not all be true. They wanted to know about the correct manner of baptism and also who had the authority to baptize.

In answer to their petitions to the Lord, a messenger from heaven, John the Baptist, appeared to them. He placed his hands on their heads and conferred upon them the authority to baptize with these words: “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron” (D&C 13:1).

What a marvelous day in the history of the world! The priesthood was restored to the earth.

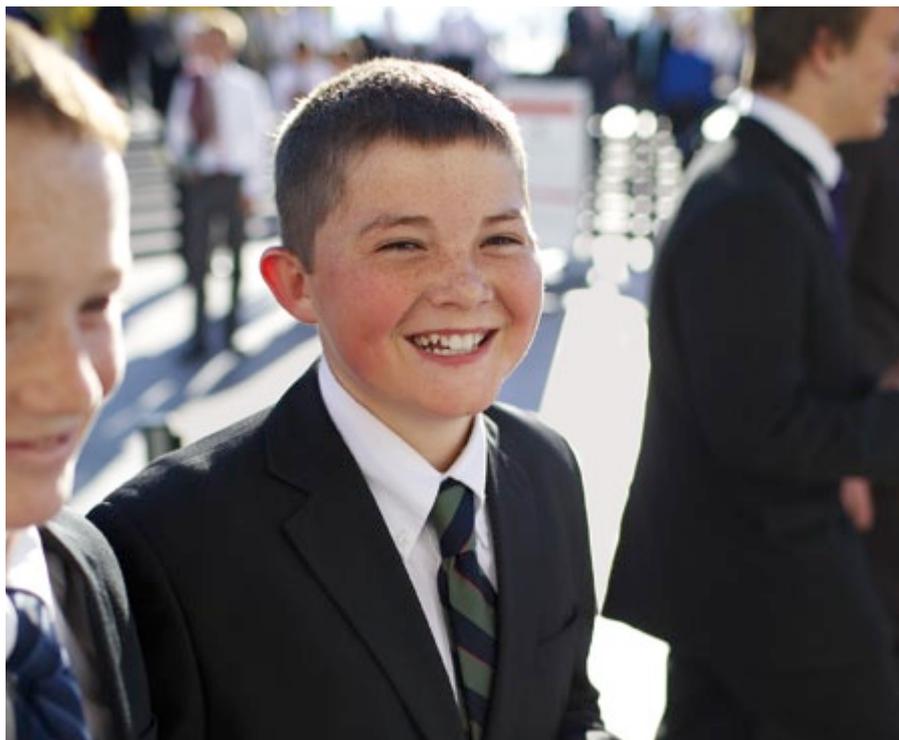
When we receive the priesthood, we receive the authority to act in the

name of God and lead in ways of truth and righteousness. This authority is a vital source of righteous power and influence for the benefit of God’s children on earth and will last beyond the veil. It was necessary for the priesthood to be restored before the true Church of Jesus Christ could be organized. This is the fundamental lesson we learn from the fifth and sixth articles of faith.

## III. Eternal Resources in a Mortal Journey

The next three articles of faith—seven, eight, and nine—outline resources available to instruct us in our mortal journey. We are given spiritual gifts to guide us as we follow the Lord’s teachings and to protect us from evil. The scriptures are another guide; if we read carefully the word of God, He will reveal our path back to eternal life.

The ninth article of faith teaches us that God has revealed, does reveal, and will reveal in the future many great and important truths to His prophets, seers, and revelators. We



learn that in addition to listening to the still, small voice of the Spirit and reading the scriptures, another source of guidance is our Church leaders, who are chosen, called, and set apart to bless our lives through the lessons they teach.

#### IV. Member Missionaries

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth articles of faith instruct us on how to conduct missionary work and share the gospel in a world of many nations and various laws. We learn about the gathering of Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of the Savior. We are instructed that men and women are agents unto themselves, and they can either accept or reject the word of God according to their own conscience. Finally, we learn as we spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the four corners of the earth that we must respect the governments of each nation we enter. Truly, we believe in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law of each land.

#### V. Aspirational Attributes

The thirteenth article of faith provides special insight into how we should conduct our lives and present

ourselves. It reads: “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”

All of us should aspire to embody these attributes and lead lives that exemplify them. The truths taught in the Articles of Faith build upon one another like the components of a cell phone mutually supporting one another. Like the elaborate supply chain that adds components to a cell phone, the Articles of Faith supply us with key doctrines of the Restoration. Each article of faith adds unique value to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My Primary teacher instilled in me a determination to study the doctrines of the kingdom. She taught me to seek the deep meaning contained in these simple Articles of Faith. She promised me that if I would invest in learning these sacred truths, the knowledge I acquired would change

my life for the better, and I testify to you that it has.

After my teacher’s wonderful lesson on that mountain in Logan Canyon, we noticed that we had stayed a little longer than we had planned. The evening was drawing to a close, and we realized we had a problem.

My teacher had struggled to arrive at our special spot, but returning presented a major challenge for us. This only compounded the poor selection of a place for our outing. The climb back was difficult for us, but even more so for a person of her age.

As we struggled to help her back up the hill, two policemen appeared. The Primary president had sent them out to find us, fearing we were lost. The drama of the event and the lessons taught made it an unforgettable experience in my life.

You young men—I encourage you to use your bright minds to study and learn the Articles of Faith and the doctrines they teach. They are among the most important and certainly the most concise statements of doctrine in the Church. If you will use them as a guide to direct your studies of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself prepared to declare your witness of the restored truth to the world. You will be able to declare in simple, straightforward, and profound ways the core beliefs you hold dear as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I add my testimony to the truthfulness of the thirteen Articles of Faith in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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**By Bishop Gérald Caussé**  
First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

# Ye Are No More Strangers

*In this Church there are no strangers and no outcasts.  
There are only brothers and sisters.*

Most of us at one time or another have been in a situation that was new to us, where we felt strange and insecure. This situation happened to our family about five years ago after President Thomas S. Monson extended the call to me to serve as a General Authority of the Church. This call necessitated our family's move from the beautiful place we had enjoyed for more than two decades. My wife and I still remember the instant reaction of our children when they learned about the change. Our 16-year-old son exclaimed, "It is not a problem at all. You may go; I will stay!"

He then quickly resolved to accompany us and faithfully embraced this new opportunity in his life. Living in new environments over the past few years has turned out to be an enjoyable learning experience for our family, especially due to the warm reception and goodness of the Latter-day Saints. As we have lived in different countries, we have come to appreciate that the unity of the people of God throughout the earth is something real and tangible.

My calling has led me to travel to

many countries and has given me the choice privilege to preside in many meetings. As I look out over various congregations, I often see members representing many countries, languages, and cultures. One marvelous aspect of our gospel dispensation is that it is not limited to a geographical area or a group of nations. It is global and universal. It is preparing for the glorious return of the Son of God by gathering "his children from the four quarters of the earth."<sup>1</sup>

Though the membership of the Church is increasing in its diversity, our sacred heritage transcends our differences. As members of the Church, we are admitted into the house of Israel. We become brothers and sisters, equal heirs to the same spiritual lineage. God promised Abraham that "as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after [his] name, and shall be accounted [his] seed, and shall rise up and bless [him], as *their* father."<sup>2</sup>

A promise has been made to everyone who becomes a member of the Church: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."<sup>3</sup>

The word *stranger* comes from the Latin word *extraneus*, which means "exterior" or "from the outside." Generally, it designates someone who is an "outsider" for various reasons, whether it be because of origin, culture, opinions, or religion. As disciples of Jesus Christ who strive to be in the world but not of the world, we sometimes feel like outsiders. We, better than many, know that certain doors can be closed to those who are considered to be different.

Throughout time the people of God have been commanded to care for all individuals who are strangers or who may be seen as different. In ancient times a stranger benefited from the same obligation of hospitality as a widow or an orphan. Like them, the stranger was in a situation of great vulnerability, and his survival depended on the protection he received from the local population. The people of Israel received precise instructions on this subject: "But the stranger that dwelleth

## **Panama City, Panama**





**Santiago, Chile**

with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”<sup>4</sup>

During His earthly ministry, Jesus was an example of one who went far beyond the simple obligation of hospitality and tolerance. Those who were excluded from society, those who were rejected and considered to be impure by the self-righteous, were given His compassion and respect. They received an equal part of His teachings and ministry.

For example, the Savior went against the established customs of His time to address the woman of Samaria, asking her for some water. He sat down to eat with publicans and tax collectors. He didn’t hesitate to approach the leper, to touch him and heal him. Admiring the faith of the Roman centurion, He said to the crowd, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus has asked us to observe the law of perfect love, which is a universal and unconditional gift. He said:

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

“And if ye salute your brethren

only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>6</sup>

In this Church there are no strangers and no outcasts. There are only brothers and sisters. The knowledge that we have of an Eternal Father helps us be more sensitive to the brotherhood and sisterhood that should exist among all men and women upon the earth.

A passage from the novel *Les misérables* illustrates how priesthood holders can treat those individuals viewed as strangers. Jean Valjean had just been released as a prisoner. Exhausted by a long voyage and dying of hunger and thirst, he arrives in a small town seeking a place to find food and shelter for the night. When the news of his arrival spreads, one by one all the inhabitants close their doors to him. Not the hotel, not the inn, not even the prison would invite him in. He is rejected, driven away, banished. Finally, with no strength left, he collapses at the front door of the town’s bishop.

The good clergyman is entirely aware of Valjean’s background, but he invites the vagabond into his home

with these compassionate words:

“This is not my house; it is the house of Jesus Christ. This door does not demand of him who enters whether he has a name, but whether he has a grief. You suffer, you are hungry and thirsty; you are welcome. . . . What need have I to know your name? Besides, before you told me [your name], you had one which I knew.’

“[Valjean] opened his eyes in astonishment.

“‘Really? You knew what I was called?’

“‘Yes,’ replied the Bishop, ‘you are called my brother.’”<sup>7</sup>

In this Church our wards and our quorums do not belong to us. They belong to Jesus Christ. Whoever enters our meetinghouses should feel at home. The responsibility to welcome everyone has growing importance. The world in which we live is going through a period of great upheaval. Because of the increased availability of transportation, speed of communication, and globalization of economies, the earth is becoming one large village where people and nations meet, connect, and intermingle like never before.

These vast, worldwide changes serve the designs of Almighty God. The gathering of His elect from the four corners of the earth is taking place not only by sending missionaries to faraway countries but also with the arrival of people from other areas into our own cities and neighborhoods. Many, without knowing it, are being led by the Lord to places where they can hear the gospel and come into His fold.

It is very likely that the next person converted to the gospel in your ward will be someone who does not come from your usual circle of friends and acquaintances. You may note this



by his or her appearance, language, manner of dress, or color of skin. This person may have grown up in another religion, with a different background or a different lifestyle.

Fellowshipping is an important priesthood responsibility. Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are to act in concert with the sisters under the direction of the bishop to ensure that each person is welcomed with love and kindness. Home teachers and visiting teachers will be watchful to ensure that no one is forgotten or ignored.

We all need to work together to build spiritual unity within our wards and branches. An example of perfect unity existed among the people of God after Christ visited the Americas. The record observes that there were no “Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.”<sup>8</sup>

Unity is not achieved by ignoring and isolating members who seem to be different or weaker and only associating with people who are like

us. On the contrary, unity is gained by welcoming and serving those who are new and who have particular needs. These members are a blessing for the Church and provide us with opportunities to serve our neighbors and thus purify our own hearts.

So, my brothers, it is your duty to reach out to anyone who appears at the doors of your Church buildings. Welcome them with gratitude and without prejudice. If people you do not know walk into one of your meetings, greet them warmly and invite them to sit with you. Please make the first move to help them feel welcome and loved, rather than waiting for them to come to you.

After your initial welcome, consider ways you can continue to minister to them. I once heard of a ward where, after the baptism of two deaf sisters, two marvelous Relief Society sisters decided to learn sign language so they could better communicate with these new converts. What a wonderful example of love for fellow brothers and sisters in the gospel!

I bear witness that no one is a

stranger to our Heavenly Father. There is no one whose soul is not precious to Him. With Peter, I testify that “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”<sup>9</sup>

I pray that when the Lord gathers His sheep at the last day, He may say to each one of us, “I was a stranger, and ye took me in.”

Then we will say to Him, “When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?”

And He will answer us, “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.”<sup>10</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 22:25.
2. Abraham 2:10; emphasis added.
3. Ephesians 2:19.
4. Leviticus 19:34.
5. Matthew 8:10; see also Matthew 8:2-3; Mark 1:40-42; 2:15; John 4:7-9.
6. Matthew 5:46-48.
7. Victor Hugo, *Les misérables*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood, 5 vols. (1887), 1:73.
8. 4 Nephi 1:17.
9. Acts 10:34-35.
10. Matthew 25:35, 38, 40.



By Elder Randy D. Funk  
Of the Seventy

# Called of Him to Declare His Word

*If you are humble and obedient and hearken to the voice of the Spirit, you will find great happiness in your service as a missionary.*

When I was sustained as a General Authority last April, I was serving as a mission president in India. I observed firsthand what another former mission president had told me: “The missionaries of this Church are simply stunning.”<sup>1</sup>

One of many outstanding missionaries with whom Sister Funk and I served was Elder Pokhrel from Nepal. After being a member of the Church for only two years, he was called to serve in the India Bangalore Mission, an English-speaking mission. He would tell you he was not well prepared. That was understandable. He had never seen a missionary until he was one, because no young missionaries serve in Nepal. He did not read English well enough to understand the instructions included with his call. When he reported to the missionary training center, instead of bringing nice slacks, white shirts, and ties, he packed, in his words, “five pairs of denim jeans, a couple of T-shirts, and a lot of hair gel.”<sup>2</sup>

Even after he obtained appropriate clothing, he said he felt inadequate every day during the first few weeks.

He described that time of his mission: “Not only was the English difficult, but the work was just as challenging. . . . On top of all of that, I was hungry, tired, and homesick. . . . Even though the circumstances were tough, I was determined. I felt weak and inadequate. I would pray at those times for Heavenly Father to help me. Without fail, every time I prayed, I would feel comforted.”<sup>3</sup>

Though missionary work was new and challenging for Elder Pokhrel, he served with great faith and faithfulness, seeking to understand and follow what he was learning from the scriptures, *Preach My Gospel*, and his mission leaders. He became a powerful teacher of the gospel—in English—and an excellent leader. After his mission and some time in Nepal, he returned to India to continue his education. Since January he has served as a branch president in New Delhi. Because of the real growth he experienced as a missionary, he continues to contribute to the real growth of the Church in India.

How did a young man who had never seen a missionary become one

with such spiritual strength? How will you receive spiritual power as a missionary to open the doors, in-boxes, and hearts of those in the mission where you will serve? As usual, the answers are found in the scriptures and the words of living prophets and apostles.

When the gospel was first preached in England in July 1837, the Lord revealed, “Whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them.”<sup>4</sup>

Wherever you are sent, to which-ever mission you are assigned, know that a member of the Twelve duly recommended that assignment and you are called by the Lord’s prophet. You are called “by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands.”<sup>5</sup>

The Lord then gave the conditions for this promise to be fulfilled. He said, “Inasmuch as [which means the promise will be fulfilled *if*] they [meaning the missionaries who are sent] shall [1] humble themselves before me, and [2] abide in my word, and [3] hearken to the voice of my Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

The Lord’s promises are clear. In order to have the spiritual power necessary to open the door of the kingdom of God in the nation to which you are sent, you must be humble and obedient and have the ability to hear and follow the Spirit.

These three attributes are closely interrelated. If you are humble, you will want to be obedient. If you are obedient, you will feel the Spirit. The Spirit is essential, for, as President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “Without the Spirit, you will never succeed *regardless* of your talent and ability.”<sup>7</sup>



As a mission president, I occasionally interviewed missionaries who struggled because they were not yet fully clean. They lived below their spiritual potential. No matter how hard they worked or how much good they did, they were unable to feel at peace and enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost until they had humbled themselves, fully repented, and partaken of the mercy and grace of the Savior.

The Lord instructs His servants to be humble because the process of being made whole spiritually begins with a broken heart. Think of the good that comes from broken things: Soil is broken to plant wheat. Wheat is broken to make bread. Bread is broken to become the emblems of the sacrament. When one who is repentant partakes of the sacrament with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, he or she becomes whole.<sup>8</sup> As we repent and become whole through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we have much more to offer the Savior as we serve Him. “Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him.”<sup>9</sup>

If you are burdened by sin and

need to repent, please do so immediately. When the Savior healed those who were afflicted, He often invited them to rise up. The scriptures record that they did so straightway, or immediately.<sup>10</sup> To be healed of your spiritual afflictions, please accept His invitation to rise up. Without delay, talk to your bishop, branch president, or mission president and begin the process of repentance now.

The healing power of the Atonement will bring peace to your soul and enable you to feel the Holy Spirit. The Savior’s sacrifice is beyond measure, but our sins, though numerous and serious, may be counted and confessed, forsaken and forgiven. “And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!”<sup>11</sup>

This promise in the Doctrine and Covenants is powerful: “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”<sup>12</sup> As you live a virtuous life, you will feel a peaceful confidence in your standing before God and you will have the power of the Spirit to be with you.<sup>13</sup>

Some who are newer members of the Church or who have recently

returned to full activity may say, “I am now worthy and have a desire to serve, but I don’t know if I know enough.” In April President Thomas S. Monson taught us, “A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God.”<sup>14</sup> How reassuring it is to know that through our obedience we gain knowledge.

Others may feel they have limited talents, abilities, or experience to offer. If you have such concerns, remember the experience of Elder Pokhrel. Prepare as well as you can, and know that our Heavenly Father will magnify your humble and obedient efforts. Elder Richard G. Scott offered this encouraging counsel: “When we obey the commandments of the Lord and serve His children unselfishly, the natural consequence is power from God—power to do more than we can do by ourselves. Our insights, our talents, our abilities are expanded because we receive strength and power from the Lord.”<sup>15</sup>

As you trust in the Lord and His goodness, the Almighty God will bless His children through you.<sup>16</sup> Elder

Hollings from Nevada learned that early in his mission. The day after he arrived in India, he traveled with Sister Funk and me to Rajahmundry, his first area. That afternoon Elder Hollings and Elder Ganaparam went to visit a Church member and her mother. The mother wanted to learn about the Church because she had seen how the gospel blessed the life of her daughter. Sister Funk joined them to provide fellowship. Because the lesson would be taught in English and the mother spoke only Telugu, a brother in the branch was there to interpret what was taught.

Elder Hollings's assignment in his very first teaching appointment was to teach the First Vision, using the words of the Prophet Joseph. At that point in the lesson, he turned to Sister Funk and asked, "Should I say it word for word?" knowing it would be interpreted.

She replied, "Say it word for word so the Spirit can testify of what you say."

When this new missionary sincerely taught the First Vision, using the words of the Prophet, the countenance of that dear sister changed. Tears appeared. As Elder Hollings finished that glorious message and before what he said could be interpreted, she asked through her tears in her native language, "May I be baptized? And will you teach my son?"

My young fellow servants, doors and hearts open daily to the gospel message—a message that brings hope and peace and joy to the children of God throughout the world. If you are humble and obedient and hearken to the voice of the Spirit, you will find great happiness in your service as a missionary.<sup>17</sup> What a wonderful season it is to be a

missionary—a time when the Lord is hastening His work!

I bear witness of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His "divine command"<sup>18</sup> to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations."<sup>19</sup> This is His Church. He leads it through living prophets and apostles. During the next hour, the First Presidency will teach us. May we be "quick to observe,"<sup>20</sup> as was Mormon, so when the call comes, we are worthy and able to declare with the power of the Spirit: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."<sup>21</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Personal conversations with Dennis C. Brimhall, president of the Kentucky Louisville Mission, 2005–8.
2. Ashish Pokhrel, "My Name Is Ashish Pokhrel and This Is My Story" (unpublished personal history, Sept. 2011).
3. Pokhrel, "My Name Is Ashish Pokhrel."
4. Doctrine and Covenants 112:21.
5. Articles of Faith 1:5.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 112:22.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 176.
8. Ideas taken from a talk given by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland at the Bountiful Utah North Stake conference, June 8–9, 2013.
9. Omni 1:26.
10. See Mark 5:41–42; John 5:8–9.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 18:13.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
14. Thomas S. Monson, "Obedience Brings Blessings," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 89.
15. Richard G. Scott, "For Peace at Home," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 30.
16. In describing what the many new missionaries will do, Elder Russell M. Nelson said: "They will do what missionaries have always done. They will preach the gospel! They will bless the children of Almighty God!" ("Catch the Wave," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 45).
17. See *Preach My Gospel*, v.
18. Thomas S. Monson, "Come, All Ye Sons of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 66.
19. Matthew 28:19.
20. Mormon 1:2.
21. 3 Nephi 5:13.





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

# You Can Do It Now!

*As long as we are willing to rise up again and continue on the path, . . . we can learn something from failure and become better and happier.*

When I was young, falling and getting up seemed to be one and the same motion. Over the years, however, I have come to the unsettling conclusion that the laws of physics have changed—and not to my advantage.

Not long ago I was skiing with my 12-year-old grandson. We were enjoying our time together when I hit an icy spot and ended up making a glorious crash landing on a steep slope.

I tried every trick to stand up, but I couldn't—I had fallen, and I couldn't get up.

I felt fine physically, but my ego was a bit bruised. So I made sure that my helmet and goggles were in place, since I much preferred that other skiers not recognize me. I could imagine myself sitting there helplessly as they skied by elegantly, shouting a cheery, "Hello, Brother Uchtdorf!"

I began to wonder what it would take to rescue me. That was when my grandson came to my side. I told him what had happened, but he didn't seem very interested in my explanations of why I couldn't get up. He looked me in the eyes, reached out, took my hand, and in a firm tone said, "Opa, you can do it now!"

Instantly, I stood.

I am still shaking my head over this. What had seemed impossible only a moment before immediately became a reality because a 12-year-old boy reached out to me and said, "You can do it now!" To me, it was an infusion of confidence, enthusiasm, and strength.

Brethren, there may be times in our lives when rising up and continuing on may seem beyond our own ability. That day on a snow-covered slope, I learned something. Even when we think we cannot rise up, there is still hope. And sometimes we just need someone to look us in the eyes, take our hand, and say, "You can do it now!"

## **The Delusion of Toughness**

We may think that women are more likely than men to have feelings of inadequacy and disappointment—that these feelings affect them more than us. I'm not sure that this is true. Men experience feelings of guilt, depression, and failure. We might pretend these feelings don't bother us, but they do. We can feel so burdened by our failures and shortcomings that we begin to think we will never be able to succeed. We might even assume that because we have fallen before, falling is our destiny. As one writer put it,

"We beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."<sup>1</sup>

I have watched men filled with potential and grace disengage from the challenging work of building the kingdom of God because they had failed a time or two. These were men of promise who could have been exceptional priesthood holders and servants of God. But because they stumbled and became discouraged, they withdrew from their priesthood commitments and pursued other but less worthy endeavors.

And thus, they go on, living only a shadow of the life they could have led, never rising to the potential that is their birthright. As the poet lamented, these are among those unfortunate souls who "die with [most of] their music [still] in them."<sup>2</sup>

No one likes to fail. And we particularly don't like it when others—especially those we love—see us fail. We all want to be respected and esteemed. We want to be champions. But we mortals do not become champions without effort and discipline or without making mistakes.

Brethren, our destiny is not determined by the number of times we stumble but by the number of times we rise up, dust ourselves off, and move forward.

## **Godly Sorrow**

We know this mortal life is a test. But because our Heavenly Father loves us with a perfect love, He shows us where to find the answers. He has given us the map that allows us to navigate the uncertain terrain and unexpected trials that each of us encounters. The words of the prophets are part of this map.

When we stray—when we fall or depart from the way of our Heavenly Father—the words of the prophets



tell us how to rise up and get back on track.

Of all the principles taught by prophets over the centuries, one that has been emphasized over and over again is the hopeful and heartwarming message that mankind can repent, change course, and get back on the true path of discipleship.

That does not mean that we should be comfortable with our weaknesses, mistakes, or sins. But there is an important difference between the sorrow for sin that leads to repentance and the sorrow that leads to despair.

The Apostle Paul taught that “*godly sorrow* worketh repentance to salvation . . . but the *sorrow of the world* worketh death.”<sup>3</sup> *Godly sorrow* inspires change and hope through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. *Worldly sorrow* pulls us down, extinguishes hope, and persuades us to give in to further temptation.

*Godly sorrow* leads to conversion<sup>4</sup> and a change of heart.<sup>5</sup> It causes us to hate sin and love goodness.<sup>6</sup> It encourages us to stand up and walk in the light of Christ’s love. True repentance is about transformation, not torture or torment. Yes, heartfelt regret and true remorse for disobedience are often painful and very important steps in the sacred process of repentance. But when guilt leads to self-loathing or prevents us from rising up again, it is impeding rather than promoting our repentance.

Brethren, there is a better way. Let us rise up and become men of God. We have a champion, a Savior, who walked through the valley of the shadow of death on our behalf. He gave Himself as a ransom for our sins. No one has ever had greater love than this—Jesus Christ, the Lamb without blemish, willingly laid Himself on the altar of sacrifice and paid the price for our sins to “the uttermost farthing.”<sup>7</sup> He took upon Himself our suffering. He took our burdens, our guilt upon His shoulders. My dear friends, when we decide to come to Him, when we take upon ourselves His name and boldly walk in the path of discipleship, then through the Atonement we are promised not only happiness and “peace in this world” but also “eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>8</sup>

When we make mistakes, when we sin and fall, let us think of what it means to truly repent. It means turning our heart and will to God and giving up sin. True heartfelt repentance brings with it the heavenly assurance that “we can do it now.”

#### Who Are You?

One of the adversary’s methods to prevent us from progressing is to confuse us about who we really are and what we really desire.

We want to spend time with our children, but we also want to engage in our favorite manly hobbies. We want to lose weight, but we also want

to enjoy the foods we crave. We want to become Christlike, but we also want to give the guy who cuts us off in traffic a piece of our mind.

Satan’s purpose is to tempt us to exchange the priceless pearls of true happiness and eternal values for a fake plastic trinket that is merely an illusion and counterfeit of happiness and joy.

Another method the adversary uses to discourage us from rising up is to make us see the commandments as things that have been forced upon us. I suppose it is human nature to resist anything that does not appear to be our own idea in the first place.

If we see healthy eating and exercise as something only our doctor expects of us, we will likely fail. If we see these choices as who we are and who we want to become, we have a greater chance of staying the course and succeeding.

If we see home teaching as only the stake president’s goal, we may place a lower value on doing it. If we see it as our goal—something we desire to do in order to become more Christlike and minister to others—we will not only fulfill our commitment but also accomplish it in a way that blesses the families we visit and our own as well.

Often enough, we are the ones who are being helped up by friends or family. But if we look around with observant eyes and the motive

of a caring heart, we will recognize the opportunities the Lord places in front of us to help others rise up and move toward their true potential. The scriptures suggest, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”<sup>9</sup>

It is a great source of spiritual power to live lives of integrity and righteousness and to keep our eyes on where we want to be in the eternities. Even if we can see this divine destination only with the eye of faith, it will help us to stay the course.

When our attention is mainly focused on our daily successes or failures, we may lose our way, wander, and fall. Keeping our sights on higher goals will help us become better sons and brothers, kinder fathers, and more loving husbands.

Even those who set their hearts upon divine goals may still occasionally stumble, but they will not be defeated. They trust and rely upon the promises of God. They will rise up again with a bright hope in a righteous God and the inspiring vision of a great future. They know they can do it now.

#### You Can Do It Now

Every person, young and old, has had his own personal experience with falling. Falling is what we mortals do. But as long as we are willing to rise up again and continue on the path toward the spiritual goals God has given us, we can learn something from failure and become better and happier as a result.

My dear brethren, my dear friends, there will be times when you *think* you cannot continue on. Trust the Savior and His love. With faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power and hope of the restored gospel, you *will* be able to walk tall and continue on.



Brethren, we love you. We pray for you. I wish you could hear President Monson pray for you. Whether you are a young father, an elderly priesthood bearer, or a newly ordained deacon, we are mindful of you. The Lord is mindful of you!

We acknowledge that your path will at times be difficult. But I give you this promise in the name of the Lord: rise up and follow in the footsteps of our Redeemer and Savior, and one day you will look back and be filled with eternal gratitude that you chose to trust the Atonement and its power to lift you up and give you strength.

My dear friends and brethren, no matter how many times you have slipped or fallen, rise up! Your destiny is a glorious one! Stand tall and walk in the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ! You are stronger than you

realize. You are more capable than you can imagine. You can do it now! Of this I testify in the sacred name of our Master and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), 180.
2. “The Voiceless,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (1908), 99.
3. 2 Corinthians 7:10; emphasis added.
4. See Acts 3:19.
5. See Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Mosiah 3:19.
6. See Mosiah 5:2.
7. Matthew 5:26.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
9. Colossians 3:23.



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

# Bind Up Their Wounds

*I pray that we may prepare ourselves to give whatever priesthood service the Lord may set before us on our mortal journey.*

All of us are blessed with responsibility for others. To hold the priesthood of God is to be held responsible by God for the eternal lives of His children. That is real, that is wonderful, and at times that can feel overwhelming.

There are elders quorum presidents listening tonight who know what I mean. Here is what happened to one of you. It has likely happened to many of you—and more than once. The details may vary, but the situation is the same.

An elder you do not know well asked for your help. He had just found out that he had to move his wife and young baby boy today from the apartment where they have been living to another one nearby.

He and his wife had already asked a friend if they could borrow a truck for the day to move their household and personal belongings. The friend loaned them the truck. The young father began to load all they owned into the truck, but in the first few minutes, he hurt his back. The friend who loaned the truck was too busy to help. The young father felt desperate. He thought of you, his elders quorum president.

By the time he asked for help, it was early afternoon. It was the day of

an evening Church meeting. You had already promised to help your wife with household projects that day. Your children had asked you to do something with them, but you hadn't gotten to it yet.

You also knew that the members of your quorum, particularly the most faithful, the ones you usually called on to help, were likely to be in the same time bind that you were in.

The Lord knew you would have such days when He called you to this position, so He gave you a story to encourage you. It is a parable for overloaded priesthood holders. We sometimes call it the story of the good Samaritan. But it is really the story for a great priesthood bearer in these busy, difficult last days.

The story is a perfect fit for the overtaxed priesthood servant. Just remember that you are the Samaritan and not the priest or the Levite who passed by the wounded man.

You may not have thought of that story when you faced such challenges. But I pray you will when such days come again, as they surely will.

We are not told in the scriptures why the Samaritan was traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is not likely that he was taking a stroll alone since he must have known that

robbers waited for the unwary. He was on a serious journey, and as was customary, he had with him a beast of burden as well as oil and wine.

In the Lord's words the Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man, stopped because "he had compassion."

More than only feeling compassion, he acted. Always remember the specifics of the account:

"And [he] went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."<sup>1</sup>

You and the priesthood bearers you are called to lead can have at least three assurances. First, the Lord will give you, if you ask, the feelings of compassion He feels for those in need. Second, He will provide others, like the innkeeper, to join with you in your service. And third, the Lord, like the good Samaritan, will more than recompense all who join in giving help to those in need.

You quorum presidents likely have acted on those assurances more than once. You asked others of the Lord's priesthood to help, with confidence that they would respond with compassion. You were not afraid to ask those who have responded most often in the past because you knew that they feel compassion easily. You asked them, knowing that in the past they have felt the Lord's generosity when they chose to help. You asked some already heavily burdened, knowing that the greater the sacrifice, the greater the compensation they will receive from the Lord.

Those who have helped in the past have felt the overflowing gratitude of the Savior.

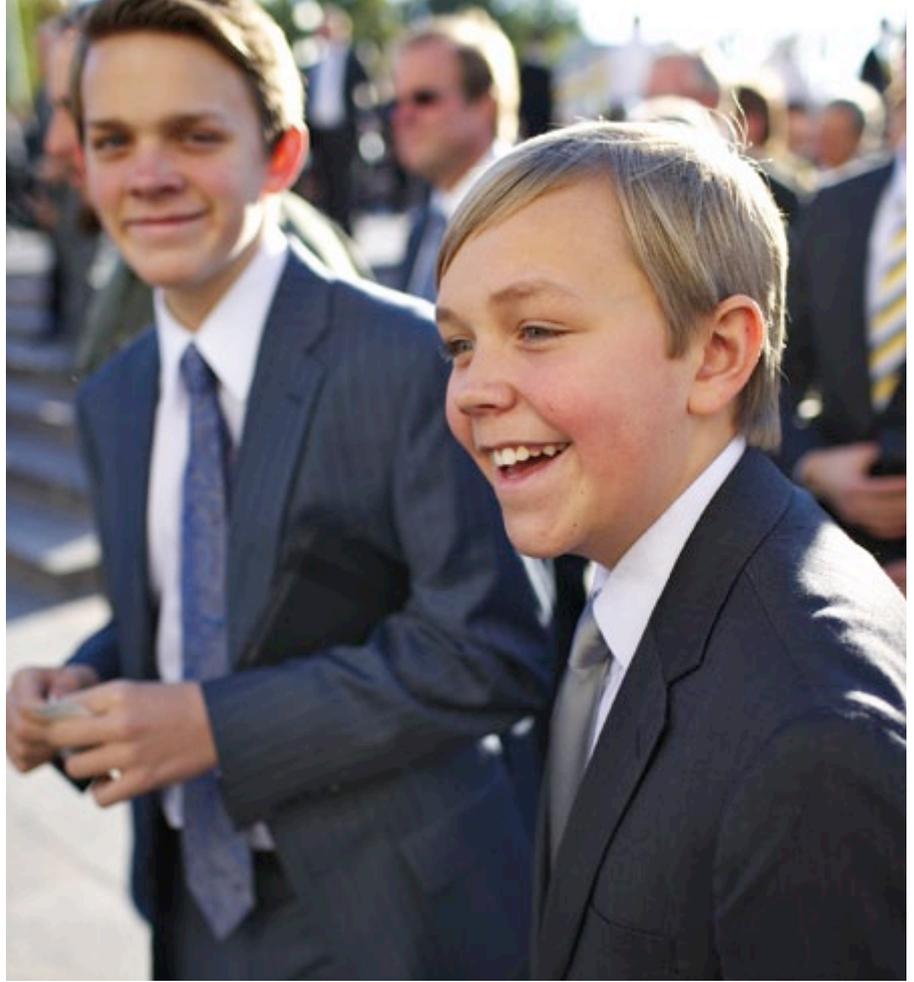
You may well have been inspired not to ask someone to help load and then unload that truck. As a leader you know your quorum members and their families well. The Lord knows them perfectly.

He knows whose wife was near the breaking point because her husband was unable to find time to do what she needed done to care for her needs. He knows which children would be blessed by seeing their father go one more time to help others or if the children needed the feeling that they matter to their father enough for him to spend time with them that day. But He also knows who needs the invitation to serve but might not appear to be a likely or willing candidate.

You cannot know all your quorum members perfectly well, but God does. So, as you have done so many times, you prayed to know whom to ask to help serve others. The Lord knows who will be blessed by being asked to help and whose family will be blessed by not being asked. That is the revelation you can expect to come to you as you lead in the priesthood.

I saw that happen when I was a young man. I was the first assistant in a priests quorum. The bishop called me one day at my home. He said that he wanted me to go with him to visit a widow in great need. He said he needed me.

As I waited for him to pick me up at my home, I was troubled. I knew the bishop had strong and wise counselors. One was a famous judge. The other ran a large company and would later become a General Authority. The bishop himself would someday serve as a General Authority. Why was the



bishop saying to an inexperienced priest, “I need your help”?

Well, I know better now what he might have said to me: “The Lord needs to bless you.” At the home of the widow, I saw him, to my amazement, tell the woman that she could get no help from the Church until she filled out the budget form he had left with her earlier. On the way home, as he saw how shocked I was, he chuckled at my surprise and said, “Hal, when she gets control of her spending, she will be able to help others.”

On another occasion my bishop took me with him to the home of alcoholic parents who sent two frightened little girls to meet us at the door. After he visited with the two little girls, we turned away and he said to me, “We can’t change the tragedy in their lives yet, but they can feel that the Lord loves them.”

On another evening he took me to the home of a man who hadn’t come to church in years. The bishop told him how much he loved him and

how much the ward needed him. It didn’t seem to have much effect on the man. But that time, and every time the bishop took me with him, it had a great effect on me.

There is no way that I can find out whether the bishop prayed to know which priest would be blessed by going with him on those visits. He may well have taken other priests with him many times. But the Lord knew I would someday be a bishop inviting those whose faith had grown cold to come back to the warmth of the gospel. The Lord knew I would someday be charged with the priesthood responsibility for hundreds and even thousands of Heavenly Father’s children who were in desperate temporal need.

You young men cannot know what acts of priesthood service the Lord is preparing you to give. But the greater challenge for every priesthood holder is to give spiritual help. All of us have that charge. It comes with being a member of a quorum. It comes with being a member of a

family. If the faith of anyone in your quorum or your family is attacked by Satan, you will feel compassion. Much like the service and mercy given by the Samaritan, you will also minister to them with healing balm for their wounds in their time of need.

In your service as a full-time missionary, you will go to thousands of people in great spiritual need. Many, until you teach them, will not even know that they have spiritual wounds that, left untreated, will bring endless misery. You will go on the Lord's errand to rescue them. Only the Lord can bind up their spiritual wounds as they accept the ordinances that lead to eternal life.

As a quorum member, as a home teacher, and as a missionary, you cannot help people repair spiritual damage unless your own faith is vibrant. That means far more than reading the scriptures regularly and praying over them. The prayer in the moment and quick glances in the scriptures are not

preparation enough. The reassurance of what you will need comes with this counsel from the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man."<sup>2</sup>

That promise can be claimed only if we "treasure up" the words of life and do it continually. The treasuring part of that scripture has meant for me a matter of feeling something about the words. For instance, when I have gone to try to help someone wavering in his or her faith about the Prophet Joseph Smith's divine calling, feelings come back to me.

It is not only the words from the Book of Mormon. It is a feeling of assurance of truth that comes whenever I read even a few lines from the Book of Mormon. I cannot promise that it will come to every person

infected with doubt about the Prophet Joseph or the Book of Mormon. But I know Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God because I have treasured it.

I know from experience that you can get the assurance of truth from the Spirit because it has come to me. You and I must have that assurance before the Lord puts us in the way of a traveler we love who has been wounded by the enemies of truth.

There is another preparation we must make. It is a human characteristic to become hardened to the pains of others. That is one of the reasons why the Savior went to such lengths to tell of His Atonement and of His taking upon Himself the pains and sorrows of all of our Heavenly Father's children that He might know how to succor them.

Even the best of Heavenly Father's mortal priesthood holders do not rise to that standard of compassion easily.



Our human tendency is to be impatient with the person who cannot see the truth that is so plain to us. We must be careful that our impatience is not interpreted as condemnation or rejection.

As we prepare to give succor for the Lord as His priesthood servants, there is a scripture to guide us. It contains a gift we will need for our journey, wherever the Lord will send us. The good Samaritan had that gift. We will need it, and the Lord has told us how we can find it:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.”<sup>3</sup>

I pray that we may prepare ourselves to give whatever priesthood service the Lord may set before us on our mortal journey. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Luke 10:33–35.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.
3. Moroni 7:46–48.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

## True Shepherds

*Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the transformations which can take place in people's lives.*

Tonight in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City and in locations far and near are assembled those who bear the priesthood of God. Truly you are “a royal priesthood”—even “a chosen generation,” as the Apostle Peter declared.<sup>1</sup> I am honored to have the privilege to address you.

When I was growing up, each summer our family would drive to Provo Canyon, about 45 miles (72 km) south and a little east of Salt Lake City, where we would stay in the family cabin for several weeks. We boys were always anxious to get on the fishing stream or into the swimming hole, and we would try to push the car a little faster. In those days, the automobile my father drove was a 1928 Oldsmobile. If he went over 35 miles (56 km) an hour, my mother would say, “Keep it down! Keep it down!” I would say, “Put the accelerator down, Dad! Put it down!”

Dad would drive about 35 miles an hour all the way up to Provo Canyon or until we would come around a bend in the road and our journey would be halted by a herd of sheep. We would watch as hundreds of sheep filed past us, seemingly without a shepherd, a few dogs yapping at their heels as they moved along. Way back in the rear we could see

the shepherd on his horse—not a bridle on it but a halter. He was occasionally slouched down in the saddle dozing, since the horse knew which way to go and the yapping dogs did the work.

Contrast that to the scene which I viewed in Munich, Germany, many years ago. It was a Sunday morning, and we were en route to a missionary conference. As I looked out the window of the mission president's automobile, I saw a shepherd with a staff in his hand, *leading* the sheep. They followed him wherever he went. If he moved to the left, they followed him to the left. If he moved to the right, they followed him in that direction. I made the comparison between the true shepherd who led his sheep and the shepherd who rode casually behind his sheep.

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep.”<sup>2</sup> He provides for us the perfect example of what a true shepherd should be.

Brethren, as the priesthood of God we have a shepherding responsibility. The wisdom of the Lord has provided guidelines whereby we might be shepherds to the families of the Church, where we can serve, we can teach, and we can testify to them. Such is called home teaching, and it is



about this that I wish to speak to you tonight.

The bishop of each ward in the Church oversees the assigning of priesthood holders as home teachers to visit the homes of members every month. They go in pairs. Where possible, a young man who is a priest or a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood accompanies an adult holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. As they go into the homes of those for whom they are responsible, the Aaronic Priesthood holder should take part in the teaching which takes place. Such an assignment will help to prepare these young men for missions as well as for a lifetime of priesthood service.

The home teaching program is a response to modern revelation

commissioning those ordained to the priesthood “to teach, expound, exhort, baptize, . . . and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties, . . . to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them; and see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking.”<sup>3</sup>

President David O. McKay admonished: “Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father’s children. . . . [It] is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the . . . spirit into every home and heart. To love the work and do our best will bring unbounded peace, joy and satisfaction to [a noble,] dedicated [teacher] of God’s children.”<sup>4</sup>

From the Book of Mormon we read that Alma “consecrated all their priests and all their teachers; and none were consecrated except they were just men.

“Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness.”<sup>5</sup>

In performing our home teaching responsibilities, we are wise if we learn and understand the challenges of the members of each family, that we might be effective in teaching and in providing needed assistance.

A home teaching visit is also more likely to be successful if an appointment is made in advance. To illustrate this point, let me share with you an experience I had some years ago. At that time the Missionary Executive Committee was comprised of Spencer W. Kimball, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson. One

evening Brother and Sister Hinckley hosted a dinner in their home for the committee members and our wives. We had just finished a lovely meal when there was a knock at the door. President Hinckley opened the door and found one of his home teachers standing there. The home teacher said, “I know I didn’t make an appointment to come, and I don’t have with me my companion, but I felt I should come tonight. I didn’t know you would be entertaining company.”

President Hinckley graciously invited the home teacher to come in and sit down and to instruct three Apostles and our wives concerning our duty as members. With a bit of trepidation, the home teacher did his best. President Hinckley thanked him for coming, after which he made a hurried exit.

I mention one more example of the incorrect way to accomplish home teaching. President Marion G. Romney, who was a counselor in the First Presidency some years ago, used to tell about his home teacher who once went to the Romney home on a cold winter night. He kept his hat in his hand and shifted nervously when invited to sit down and give his message. As he remained standing, he said, “Well, I’ll tell you, Brother Romney, it’s cold outside, and I left my car engine running so it wouldn’t stop. I just came by so I could tell the bishop I had made my visits.”<sup>6</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson, after relating President Romney’s experience in a meeting of priesthood holders, then said, “We can do better than that, brethren—much better!”<sup>7</sup> I agree.

Home teaching is more than a mechanical visit once per month. Ours is the responsibility to teach, to inspire, to motivate, and where we visit those who are not active, to bring



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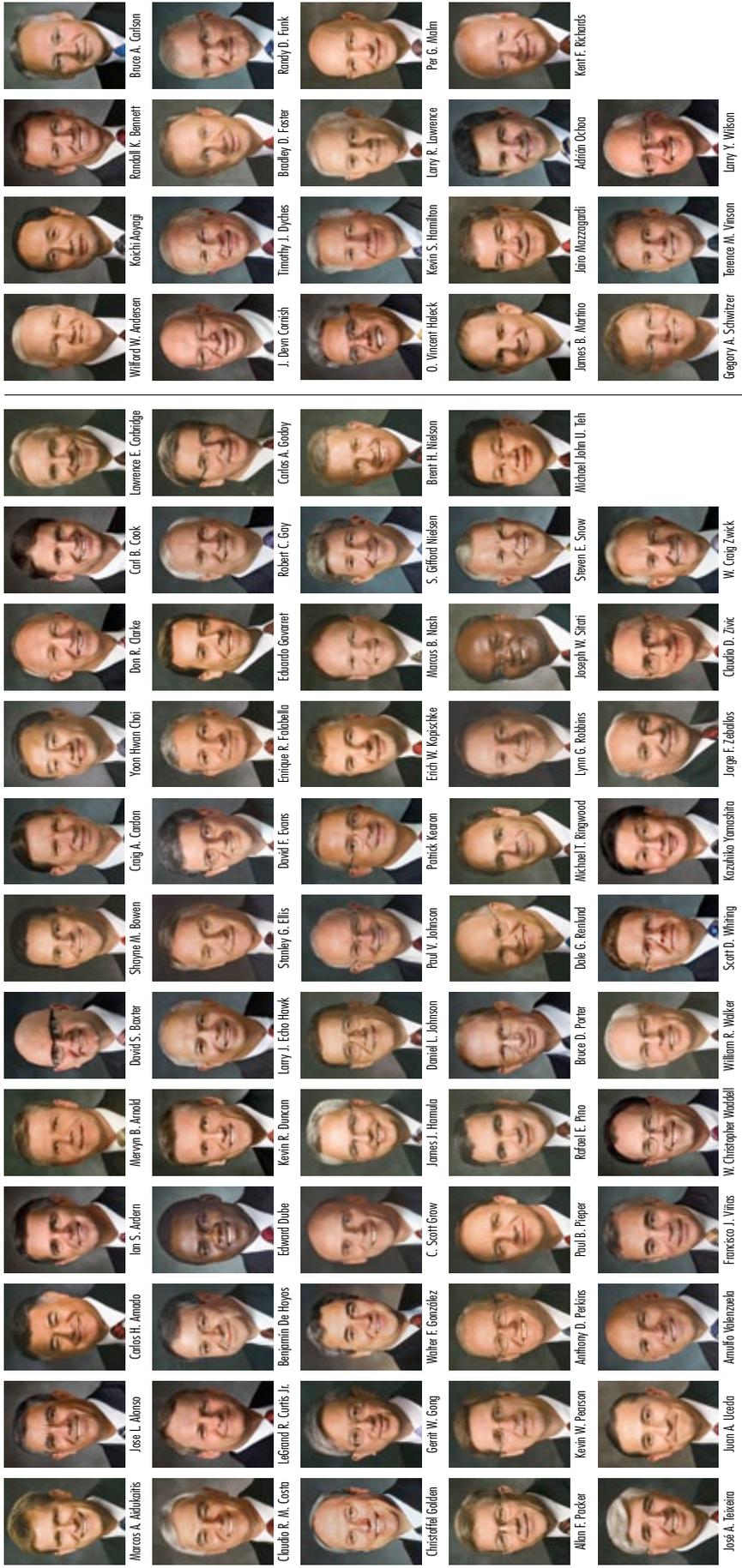
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**Coverage of general conference, in the words of President Thomas S. Monson, reached “across the continents to people everywhere.” Pictured clockwise from top left are members and missionaries in Rome, Italy; Cavite, Philippines; Lima, Peru; Colleyville, Texas, USA; Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil; London, England; Arraiján, Panama; and Lyon, France.**



to activity and to eventual exaltation the sons and daughters of God.

To assist in our efforts, I share this wise counsel which surely applies to home teachers. It comes from Abraham Lincoln, who said, "If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend."<sup>8</sup> President Ezra Taft Benson urged: "Above all, be a genuine friend to the individuals and families you teach. . . . A friend makes more than a dutiful visit each month. A friend is more concerned about helping people than getting credit. A friend cares. A friend [shows love]. A friend listens, and a friend reaches out."<sup>9</sup>

Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the transformations which can take place in people's lives.

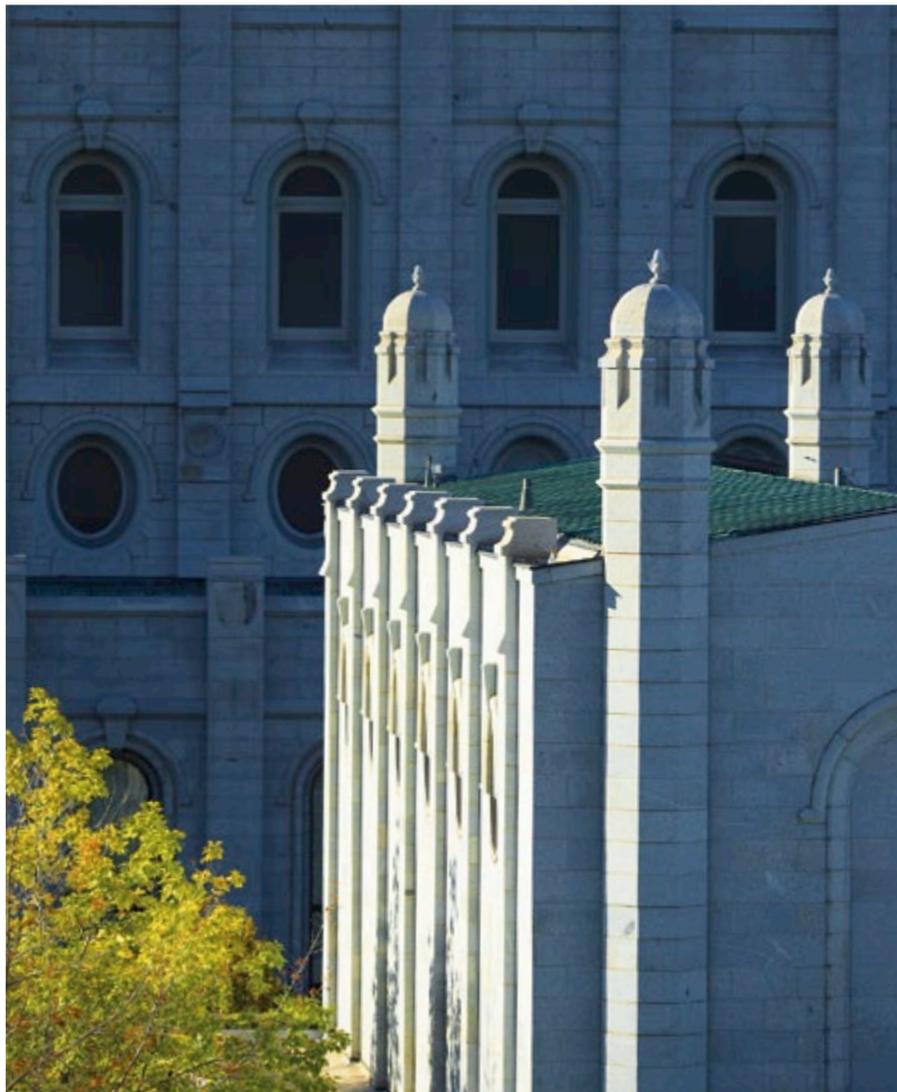
An example of this would be Dick Hammer, who came to Utah with the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression. He met and married a Latter-day Saint young woman. He opened Dick's Café in St. George, Utah, which became a popular meeting spot.

Assigned as home teacher to the Hammer family was Willard Milne, a friend of mine. Since I knew Dick Hammer as well, having printed the menus for his café, I would ask my friend Brother Milne when I visited St. George, "How is our friend Dick Hammer coming?"

The reply would generally be, "He's coming, but slowly."

When Willard Milne and his companion visited the Hammer home each month, they always managed to present a gospel message and to share their testimonies with Dick and the family.

The years passed by, and then one day Willard phoned me with good news. "Brother Monson," he began,



"Dick Hammer is converted and is going to be baptized. He is in his 90th year, and we have been friends all our adult lives. His decision warms my heart. I've been his home teacher for many years." There was a catch in Willard's voice as he conveyed his welcome message.

Brother Hammer was indeed baptized and a year later entered that beautiful St. George Temple and there received his endowment and sealing blessings.

I asked Willard, "Did you ever become discouraged as his home teacher for such a long time?"

He replied, "No, it was worth every effort. As I witness the joy which has come to the members of the Hammer family, my heart fills with gratitude for the blessings the gospel has brought

into their lives and for the privilege I have had to help in some way. I am a happy man."

Brethren, it will be our privilege through the years to visit and teach many individuals—those who are less active as well as those who are fully committed. If we are conscientious in our calling, we will have many opportunities to bless lives. Our visits to those who have distanced themselves from Church activity can be the key which will eventually open the doors to their return.

With this thought in mind, let us reach out to those for whom we are responsible and bring them to the table of the Lord to feast on His word and to enjoy the companionship of His Spirit and be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints,



and of the household of God.”<sup>10</sup>

If any of you has slipped into complacency concerning your home teaching visits, may I say that there is no time like the present to rededicate yourself to fulfilling your home teaching duties. Decide now to make whatever effort is necessary to reach those for whom you have been given responsibility. There are times when a little extra prodding may be needed, as well, to help your home teaching companion find the time to go with you, but if you are persistent, you will succeed.

Brethren, our efforts in home teaching are ongoing. The work will never be concluded until our Lord and Master says, “It is enough.” There are lives to brighten. There are hearts to touch. There are souls to save. Ours is the sacred privilege to brighten, to touch, and to save those precious souls entrusted to our care. We should do so faithfully and with hearts filled with gladness.

In closing I turn to one particular example to describe the type of home teachers we should be. There is one Teacher whose life overshadows all others. He taught of life and death, of duty and destiny. He lived not to be served but to serve, not to receive but to give, not to save His life but to sacrifice it for others. He described a love more beautiful than lust, a poverty richer than treasure. It was said of this Teacher that He taught with authority and not as did the scribes.<sup>11</sup> His laws were not inscribed upon stone but upon human hearts.

I speak of the Master Teacher, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. The biblical account says of Him, He “went about doing good.”<sup>12</sup> With Him as our unfailing guide and exemplar, we shall qualify for His divine help in our home teaching. Lives will be blessed. Hearts will be comforted. Souls will be saved. We

will become true shepherds. That this may be so, I pray in the name of that great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 1 Peter 2:9.
2. John 10:14.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:42, 47, 53–54.
4. David O. McKay, in *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook*, rev. ed. (1967), ii, iii.
5. Mosiah 23:17–18.
6. Quoted in Marion G. Romney, address given at a priesthood home teaching seminar, Aug. 9, 1963.
7. Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Home Teachers of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 50.
8. Abraham Lincoln, in David Decamp Thompson, *Abraham Lincoln, the First American* (1895), 226.
9. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1987, 50.
10. Ephesians 2:19.
11. See Matthew 7:28–29.
12. Acts 10:38.



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

## To My Grandchildren

*There is one overarching commandment that will help us to meet the challenges and lead to the heart of a happy family life.*

This year our first two grandchildren will be married. Within a few years as many as 10 of their cousins are likely to reach a point in their lives where they will follow into the wonderful world of family creation.

That happy prospect has caused me deep contemplation as they have asked me for advice. Essentially they have asked, “What choices could I make that will lead me to happiness?” And on the other hand, “What choices are likely to lead me to *un*happiness?”

Heavenly Father has made each of us unique. No two of us have exactly the same experiences. No two families are alike. So it is not surprising that advice about how to choose happiness in family life is hard to give. Yet a loving Heavenly Father has set the same path to happiness for all of His children. Whatever our personal characteristics or whatever will be our experiences, there is but one plan of happiness. That plan is to follow all the commandments of God.

For all of us, including my grandchildren contemplating marriage, there is one overarching commandment that will help us to meet the challenges and lead to the heart of a happy family life. It applies to all relationships

regardless of circumstances. It is repeated throughout the scriptures and in the teachings of the prophets in our day. Here is the Bible wording of the Lord’s advice to all who want to live together forever in loving happiness:

“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

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

“This is the first and great commandment.

“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.”<sup>1</sup>

From that simple statement it is not hard to summarize all I have learned about what choices lead to happiness in families. I start with the question, “What choices have led me toward loving the Lord with all my heart and soul and with all my mind?” For me it has been to choose to put myself where I felt the joy of forgiveness

through the Lord’s Atonement.

Years ago I baptized a young man in Albuquerque, New Mexico, whom my missionary companion and I had taught. I put the young man down into the water and brought him up. He must have been nearly as tall as me because he spoke directly into my ear. With water from the font and tears running down his face and with joy in his voice, he said, “I’m clean, I’m clean.”

I have seen those same tears of happiness in the eyes of someone who recounted the words of an Apostle of God. He had said to her, after a searching and tender interview, “I forgive you in the name of the Lord. He will give you the assurance of His forgiveness in His own time and in His own way.” And He did.

I have seen why the Lord can say that when sins are forgiven, He can remember them no more. By the power of the Atonement, people I know well and love became new, and the effects of sin were wiped away. My heart has been filled with love for the Savior and the loving Father who sent Him.

That great blessing has come by encouraging people I care for to go to the Savior for relief from pain, a relief only He can give. That is why I urge those I love to accept and to magnify every calling offered them in the Church. That choice is one of the great keys to family happiness.

The pressures at every stage of life can tempt us to reject or neglect calls to serve the Savior. That can put us in spiritual peril for ourselves, our spouse, and our families. Some of those calls may seem unimportant, but *my* life, and my family, was changed for the better by my accepting a call to teach a deacons quorum. I felt the love of those deacons for the Savior and His love for them.

I have seen that happen in the life of a former stake and mission president in his call to him to advise a teachers quorum. I know of another who has been a bishop and then an Area Seventy who was used by the Lord to succor a boy in a teachers quorum who was hurt in an accident. The miracles from that service touched many lives, including mine, and increased their love for the Savior.

While serving others, we are most likely to plead for the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Success in the Lord's service always produces miracles beyond our own powers. The parent facing a child in serious rebellion knows that is true, as does the visiting teacher approached by

a woman seeking comfort when her husband told her he was leaving her. Both servants are grateful they prayed that morning for the Lord to send the Holy Ghost as a companion.

It is only with the companionship of the Holy Ghost that we can hope to be equally yoked in a marriage free from discord. I have seen how that companionship is crucial for felicity in a marriage. The miracle of becoming one requires the help of heaven, and it takes time. Our goal is to live together forever in the presence of Heavenly Father and our Savior.

My father and my mother were very different from each other. My mother was a singer and an artist. My father loved chemistry. Once at

a symphony concert, my mother was surprised when my father stood up and began to leave before the applause began. My mother asked him where he was going. His response was, in all innocence: "Well, it's over, isn't it?" Only the gentle influence of the Holy Ghost got him there with her in the first place and brought him back to concerts time and time again.

My mother lived in New Jersey for 16 years so that my father could support the family by doing research and teaching chemistry. To her it was a sacrifice being separated from her widowed mother and her unmarried sister, who had cared for her in the old family farmhouse. They both died while Mother was far away in New Jersey. Those were the only times I ever saw my mother cry.

Years later my father was offered a job in Utah. He asked my mother, again in all innocence, "Mildred, what do you think I should do?"

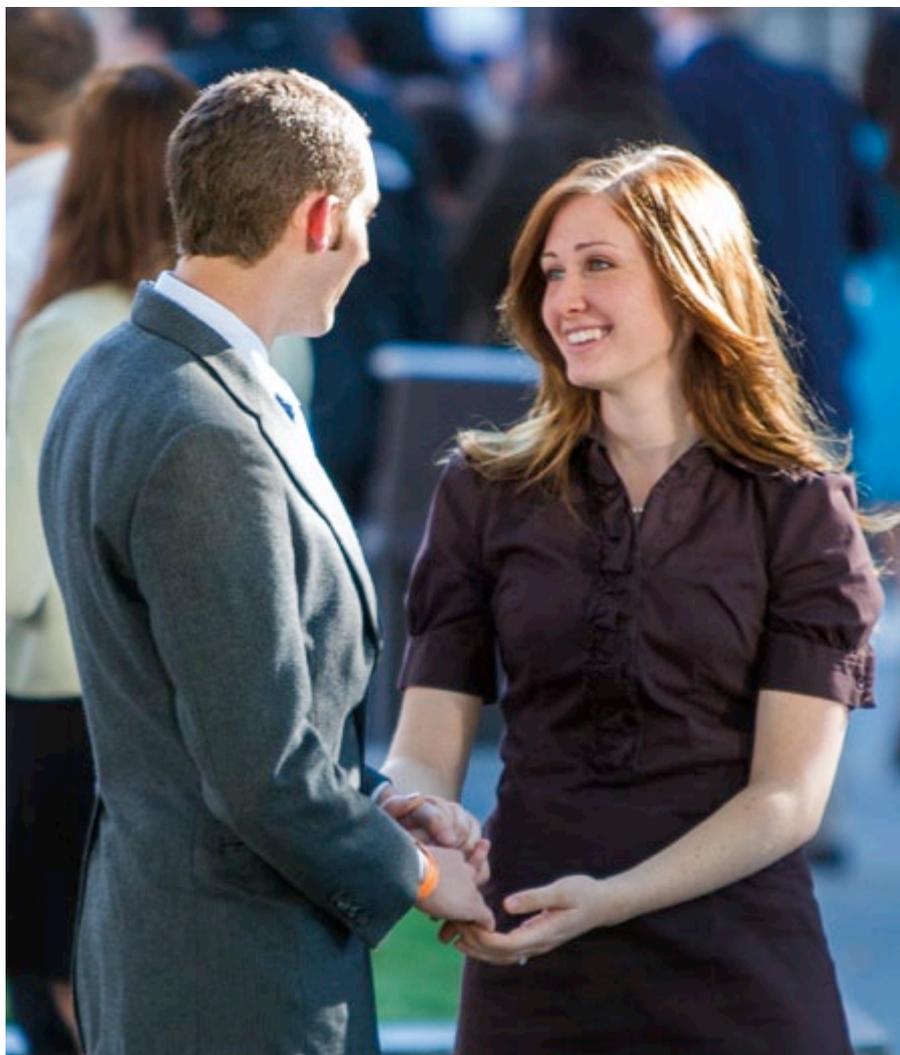
She said, "Henry, do whatever you think is best."

He turned down the offer. The next morning she wrote him a letter that I wish I still had. I remember that she told him, "Don't open it here. Go to the office and open it there." It began with a rebuke. He had promised her years before that if he ever could, he would take her to be near her family. He was surprised by her expression of irritation. He had not remembered the desire of her heart. He immediately sent a message accepting the job offer.

He said, "Mildred, why didn't you tell me?"

She said, "You were supposed to remember."

He always spoke of that choice to move to Utah as his own, never as a sacrifice of his professional career. They had received the miracle of becoming one. It would have been





better if Dad had been reminded by the Holy Ghost of the promise he had made years earlier. But he did allow the Holy Ghost to soften his heart so that her choice became his.

Heavenly Father has perfect foresight, knows each of us, and knows our future. He knows what difficulties we will pass through. He sent His Son to suffer so that He would know how to succor us in all our trials.

We know that Heavenly Father has spirit children in this world who sometimes choose sin and great unhappiness. That is why He sent His Firstborn to be our Redeemer, the greatest act of love in all creation. That is why we must expect that it will take the help of God and time to polish us for eternal life, to live with our Father.

Life in families will test us. That is one of God's purposes in giving us the gift of mortality—to strengthen us by passing through tests. That will be especially true in family life, where we will find great joy and great sorrow and challenges which may at times seem beyond our power to endure them.

President George Q. Cannon said this about how God has prepared you and me and our children for the tests we will face: "There is not one

of us but what God's love has been expended upon. There is not one of us that He has not cared for and caressed. There is not one of us that He has not desired to save, and that He has not devised means to save. There is not one of us that He has not given His angels charge concerning. We may be insignificant and contemptible in our own eyes, and in the eyes of others, but the truth remains that we are the children of God, and that He has actually given His angels—invisible beings of power and might—charge concerning us, and they watch over us and have us in their keeping."<sup>2</sup>

What President Cannon taught is true. You will need that assurance, as I have needed it and depended on it.

I have prayed with faith that someone I loved would seek and feel the power of the Atonement. I have prayed with faith that human angels would come to their aid, and they came.

God has devised means to save each of His children. For many, that involves being placed with a brother or a sister or a grandparent who loves them no matter what they do.

Years ago a friend of mine spoke of his grandmother. She had lived a full life, always faithful to the Lord and

to His Church. Yet one of her grandsons chose a life of crime. He was finally sentenced to prison. My friend recalled that his grandmother, as she drove along a highway to visit her grandson in prison, had tears in her eyes as she prayed with anguish, "I've tried to live a good life. Why, why do I have this tragedy of a grandson who seems to have destroyed his life?"

The answer came to her mind in these words: "I gave him to you because I knew you could and would love him no matter what he did."

There is a wonderful lesson for us all. The way for loving parents and grandparents and all of God's servants will not be easy in a decaying world. We cannot force God's children to choose the way to happiness. God cannot do that because of the agency He has given us.

Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son love all of God's children no matter what they choose to do or what they become. The Savior paid the price of all sins, no matter how heinous. Even though there must be justice, the opportunity for mercy is extended which will not rob justice.

Alma expressed that hope to his son Corianton in these words: "Therefore,

according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God.”<sup>3</sup>

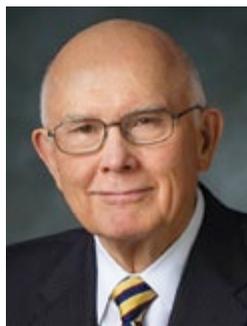
My message then to my grandchildren, and to all of us trying to forge eternal families, is that there is joy guaranteed for the faithful. From before the world was, a loving Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son loved and worked with those who They knew would wander. God will love them forever.

You have the advantage of knowing that they learned the plan of salvation from the teachings they received in the spirit world. They and you were faithful enough to be allowed to come into the world when many others were not.

With the help of the Holy Ghost, all truths will be brought to our remembrance. We cannot force that on others, but we can let them see it in our lives. We can always take courage from the assurance that we all once felt the joy of being together as a member of the beloved family of our Heavenly Father. With God’s help we can all feel that hope and that joy again. I pray that may be so for all of us in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 22:35–40.
2. George Q. Cannon, “Our Pre-existence and Present Probation,” *Contributor*, Oct. 1890, 476.
3. Alma 42:13.



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

# No Other Gods

*Are we serving priorities or gods ahead of the God we profess to worship?*

The Ten Commandments are fundamental to the Christian and Jewish faiths. Given by God to the children of Israel through the prophet Moses, the first two of these commandments direct our worship and our priorities. In the first, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Centuries later, when Jesus was asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” He answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:36–37).

The second of the Ten Commandments elaborates the direction to have no other gods and identifies what should be the ultimate priority in our lives as His children. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing” in the heavens or the earth (Exodus 20:4). The commandment then adds, “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them” (Exodus 20:5). More than merely forbidding physical idols, this states a fundamental priority for all time. Jehovah explains, “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, . . . shewing mercy unto . . . them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5–6). The meaning of *jealous* is revealing. Its Hebrew origin

means “possessing sensitive and deep feelings” (Exodus 20:5, footnote *b*). Thus we offend God when we “serve” other gods—when we have other first priorities.<sup>1</sup>

#### I.

What other priorities are being “served” ahead of God by persons—even religious persons—in our day? Consider these possibilities, all common in our world:

- Cultural and family traditions
- Political correctness
- Career aspirations
- Material possessions
- Recreational pursuits
- Power, prominence, and prestige

If none of these examples seems to apply to any one of us, we can probably suggest others that do. The principle is more important than individual examples. The principle is not whether we have other priorities. The question posed by the second commandment is “What is our *ultimate* priority?” Are we serving priorities or gods ahead of the God we profess to worship? Have we forgotten to follow the Savior who taught that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments? (see John 14:15). If so, our priorities have been



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turned upside down by the spiritual apathy and undisciplined appetites so common in our day.

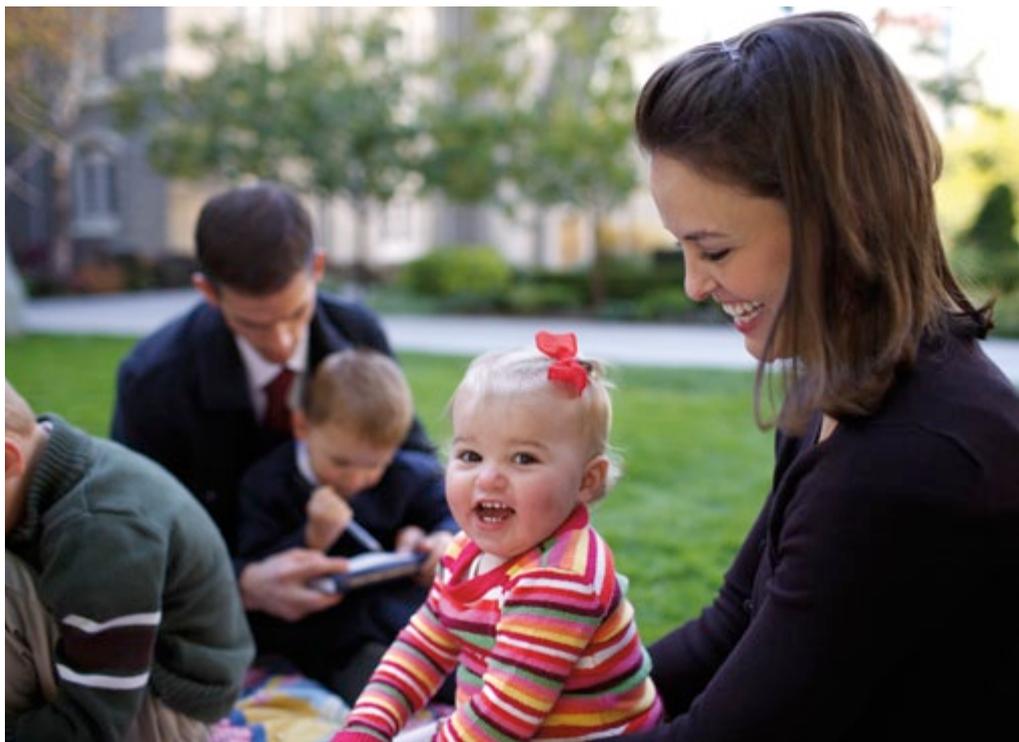
## II.

For Latter-day Saints, God's commandments are based on and inseparable from God's plan for His children—the great plan of salvation. This plan, sometimes called the “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), explains our origin and destiny as children of God—where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. The plan of salvation explains the purpose of creation and the conditions of mortality, including God's commandments, the need for a Savior, and the vital role of mortal and eternal families. If we Latter-day Saints, who have been given this knowledge, do not establish our priorities in accord with this plan, we are in danger of serving other gods.

Knowledge of God's plan for His children gives Latter-day Saints a unique perspective on marriage and family. We are correctly known as a family-centered church. Our theology begins with heavenly parents, and our highest aspiration is to attain the fulness of eternal exaltation. We know this is possible only in a family relationship. We know that the marriage of a man and a woman is necessary for the accomplishment of God's plan. Only this marriage will provide the approved setting for mortal birth and to prepare family members for eternal life. We look on marriage and the bearing and nurturing of children as part of God's plan and a sacred duty of those given the opportunity to do so. We believe that the ultimate treasures on earth and in heaven are our children and our posterity.

## III.

Because of what we understand about the potentially eternal role of



the family, we grieve at the sharply declining numbers of births and marriages in many Western countries whose historic cultures are Christian and Jewish. Responsible sources report the following:

- The United States now has the lowest birthrate in its history,<sup>2</sup> and in many European Union nations and other developed countries, birthrates are below the level necessary to maintain their populations.<sup>3</sup> This threatens the survival of cultures and even of nations.
- In America, the percentage of young adults ages 18 to 29 who are married fell from 59 percent in 1960 to 20 percent by 2010.<sup>4</sup> The median age for first marriage is now at its highest level in history: 26 for women and almost 29 for men.<sup>5</sup>
- In many countries and cultures (1) the traditional family of a married mother and father and children is coming to be the exception rather than the rule, (2) the pursuit of a career instead of marriage and the bearing of children is an increasing choice of many young women, and (3) the role and perceived necessity of fathers is diminishing.

In the midst of these concerning trends, we are also conscious that God's plan is for all of His children and that God loves all of His children, everywhere.<sup>6</sup> The first chapter of the Book of Mormon declares that God's “power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth” (1 Nephi 1:14). A later chapter declares that “he hath given [his salvation] free for all men” and that “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:27–28). Consequently, the scriptures teach that we are responsible to be compassionate and charitable (loving) toward all men (see 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John 3:17; D&C 121:45).

## IV.

We are also respectful of the religious beliefs of all people, even of those increasing numbers who profess no belief in God. We know that through the God-given power of choice, many will hold beliefs contrary to ours, but we are hopeful that others will be equally respectful of our religious beliefs and understand that our beliefs compel us to some different choices and behaviors than theirs. For example, we believe that, as an

essential part of His plan of salvation, God has established an eternal standard that sexual relations should occur only between a man and a woman who are married.

The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given to His children. Its use was mandated by God's first commandment to Adam and Eve (see Genesis 1:28), but other important commandments were given to forbid its misuse (see Exodus 20:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). The emphasis we place on the law of chastity is explained by our understanding of the purpose of our procreative powers in the accomplishment of God's plan. Outside the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman, all uses of our procreative powers are to one degree or another sinful and contrary to God's plan for the exaltation of His children.

The importance we attach to the law of chastity explains our commitment to the pattern of marriage that originated

with Adam and Eve and has continued through the ages as God's pattern for the procreative relationship between His sons and daughters and for the nurturing of His children. Fortunately, many persons affiliated with other denominations or organizations agree with us on the nature and importance of marriage, some on the basis of religious doctrine and others on the basis of what they deem best for society.

Our knowledge of God's plan for His children<sup>7</sup> explains why we are distressed that more and more children are born outside of marriage—currently 41 percent of all births in the United States<sup>8</sup>—and that the number of couples living together without marriage has increased dramatically in the past half century. Five decades ago, only a tiny percentage of first marriages were preceded by cohabitation. Now cohabitation precedes 60 percent of marriages.<sup>9</sup> And this is increasingly accepted, especially among teenagers. Recent survey data found about 50

percent of teenagers stating that out-of-wedlock childbearing was a “worthwhile lifestyle.”<sup>10</sup>

## V.

There are many political and social pressures for legal and policy changes to establish behaviors contrary to God's decrees about sexual morality and contrary to the eternal nature and purposes of marriage and child-bearing. These pressures have already authorized same-gender marriages in various states and nations. Other pressures would confuse gender or homogenize those differences between men and women that are essential to accomplish God's great plan of happiness.

Our understanding of God's plan and His doctrine gives us an eternal perspective that does not allow us to condone such behaviors or to find justification in the laws that permit them. And, unlike other organizations that can change their policies and even



their doctrines, our policies are determined by the truths God has identified as unchangeable.

Our twelfth article of faith states our belief in being subject to civil authority and “in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” But man’s laws cannot make moral what God has declared immoral. Commitment to our highest priority—to love and serve God—requires that we look to His law for our standard of behavior. For example, we remain under divine command not to commit adultery or fornication even when those acts are no longer crimes under the laws of the states or countries where we reside. Similarly, laws legalizing so-called “same-sex marriage” do not change God’s law of marriage or His commandments and our standards concerning it. We remain under covenant to love God and keep His commandments and to refrain from serving other gods and priorities—even those becoming popular in our particular time and place.

In this determination we may be misunderstood, and we may incur accusations of bigotry, suffer discrimination, or have to withstand invasions of our free exercise of religion. If so, I think we should remember our first priority—to serve God—and, like our pioneer predecessors, push our personal handcars forward with the same fortitude they exhibited.

A teaching of President Thomas S. Monson applies to this circumstance. At this conference 27 years ago, he boldly declared: “Let us have the courage to defy the consensus, the courage to stand for principle. Courage, not compromise, brings the smile of God’s approval. Courage becomes a living and an attractive virtue when it is regarded not only as a willingness to die manfully, but as the determination to live decently. A moral coward



is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh. Remember that all men have their fears, but those who face their fears with dignity have courage as well.”<sup>11</sup>

I pray that we will not let the temporary challenges of mortality cause us to forget the great commandments and priorities we have been given by our Creator and our Savior. We must not set our hearts so much on the things of the world and aspire to the honors of men (see D&C 121:35) that we stop trying to achieve our eternal destiny. We who know God’s plan for His children—we who have made covenants to participate in it—have a clear responsibility. We must never deviate from our paramount desire, which is to achieve eternal life.<sup>12</sup> We must never dilute our first priority—to have no other gods and to serve no other priorities ahead of God the Father and His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May God help us to understand this priority and to be understood by others as we seek to pursue it in a wise and loving way, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 124:84.

2. See Joyce A. Martin and others, “Births: Final Data for 2011,” *National Vital Statistics Reports*, vol. 62, no. 1 (June 28, 2013), 4; Gloria Goodale, “Behind a Looming Baby Bust,” *Christian Science Monitor Weekly*, Feb. 4, 2013, 21, 23.
3. See Population Reference Bureau, “2012 World Population Data Sheet,” [www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2012/world-population-data-sheet/data-sheet.aspx).
4. See D’Vera Cohn and others, “Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married—a Record Low,” Pew Research Center, Social and Demographic Trends, Dec. 14, 2011, available at [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low;RashRetreatfromMarriage](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low;RashRetreatfromMarriage),” *Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 2 and 9, 2012, 34.
5. U.S. Census Bureau, “Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present,” available at [www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls).
6. See Dallin H. Oaks, “All Men Everywhere,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 77–80.
7. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72–75.
8. See Martin, “Births: Final Data for 2011,” 4.
9. See *The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America*, 2012 (2012), 76.
10. See *The State of Our Unions*, 101, 102.
11. Thomas S. Monson, “Courage Counts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 41.
12. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Desire,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 42–45.



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**By Bonnie L. Oscarson**  
Young Women General President

## Be Ye Converted

*True conversion occurs as you continue to act upon the doctrines you know are true and keep the commandments, day after day, month after month.*

**B**rothers and sisters, what a humbling experience it is to stand at this pulpit where so many of the heroes of my life have stood. I would like to share with you some of the feelings of my heart and direct them especially to the youth.

One of the great heroes from the Old Testament was the prophet-warrior Joshua. He extended this invitation to the children of Israel, whom he led: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> Joshua’s declaration demonstrates true conversion to the gospel. For Joshua and all of us, conversion to gospel principles comes through righteously living the principles of the gospel and being true to our covenants with the Lord.

I would like to share a conversion story from my family history about another of my heroes. Her name is Agnes Hoggan, and she and her husband joined the Church in Scotland in 1861. Suffering great persecution in their homeland, they immigrated to America with their children. Several years later, Agnes became a widow with eight children to support and worked hard to keep them fed and clothed. Her 12-year-old daughter,

Isabelle, was lucky enough to find employment as a servant to a wealthy, non-LDS family.

Isabelle lived in their large home and helped look after their younger children. In exchange for her services, a small wage was paid each week to her mother. Isabelle was soon accepted as a member of the family and began to enjoy many of the same privileges, such as taking dance lessons, wearing beautiful clothing, and attending the theater. This arrangement continued for four years, until the family for whom Isabelle worked was transferred to another state. They had grown so fond of Isabelle that they approached her mother, Agnes, and asked for permission to legally adopt her. They promised they would provide her with a good education, see that she married well, and make her an heir to their estate with their own children. They would also continue to make payments to Agnes.

This struggling widow and mother had a hard decision to make, but she did not hesitate for a moment. Listen to the words of her granddaughter, written many years later: “If her love had not compelled [her] to say no, she had an even better reason—she had come all the way from Scotland and

had gone through tribulations and trials for the Gospel, and she did not intend, if humanly possible, to let a child of hers lose what she had come so far to gain.”<sup>2</sup> The wealthy family used every possible argument, and Isabelle herself cried and begged to be allowed to go, but Agnes remained firm. As you can imagine, 16-year-old Isabelle felt as if her life was ruined.

Isabelle Hoggan is my great-grandmother, and I am most grateful for the testimony and conviction that burned so brightly in her mother’s heart, which did not allow her to trade her daughter’s membership in the Church for worldly promises. Today, hundreds of her descendants who enjoy the blessings of membership in the Church are the beneficiaries of Agnes’s deep-seated faith and conversion to the gospel.

Young friends, we live in perilous times, and the decisions which you are called upon to make on a daily, or even hourly, basis have eternal consequences. The decisions you make in your daily life will determine what happens to you later. If you do not yet have a firmly rooted testimony and conviction that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on the earth, now is the time to do what it takes to gain that conviction. To delay making the effort required to earn that kind of conviction can be dangerous to your soul.

True conversion is more than merely having a knowledge of gospel principles and implies even more than just having a testimony of those principles. It is possible to have a testimony of the gospel without living it. Being truly converted means we are acting upon what we believe and allowing it to create “a mighty change in us, or in our hearts.”<sup>3</sup> In the booklet *True to the Faith*, we learn that “conversion is

a process, not an event. You become converted as a result of . . . righteous efforts to follow the Savior.”<sup>4</sup> It takes time, effort, and work. My great-great-grandmother had a strong conviction that the gospel was more important for her children than all that the world had to offer in the way of wealth and comfort because she had sacrificed, endured, and lived the gospel. Her conversion came through living the principles of the gospel and sacrificing for them.

We have to go through that same process if we want to gain that same kind of commitment. The Savior taught, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”<sup>5</sup> Sometimes we try to do it backward. For example, we may take this approach: I will be happy to live the law of tithing, but first I need to know that it’s true. Maybe we even pray to gain a testimony of the law of tithing and hope the Lord will bless us with that testimony before we have ever filled out a tithing slip. It just doesn’t work that way. The Lord expects us to exercise faith. We have to consistently pay a full and honest tithe in order to gain a testimony of tithing. This same pattern applies to all the principles of the gospel, whether it is the law of chastity, the principle of modesty, the Word of Wisdom, or the law of the fast.

I would like to share an example of how living a principle helps us become converted to that principle. I was a young woman in the ’60s and the only LDS girl in my high school. It was a revolutionary period characterized by the rejection of traditional morals, drug use, and an “anything goes” mentality. Many of my peers were good people but found it easy to get caught up in the excitement of



this new morality, which actually was just the old immorality. My parents and teachers at church had impressed upon me the value of treating my body with respect, keeping a clear mind, and most of all, learning to trust in the Lord’s commandments. I made the decision to avoid situations where I knew alcohol would be present and to stay clear of tobacco and drugs. It often meant I was not included at parties, and I rarely dated. Drug use was becoming more and more common among young people, and the dangers were not as well known as they are today. Many of my peers later suffered permanent damage from mind-altering drugs or got caught up in serious addictions. I was grateful to have been taught to live the Word of Wisdom in my home, and I gained a deep testimony of that principle of the gospel as I exercised faith and lived it. The good feeling that came to me from living a true gospel principle was the Spirit of the Holy Ghost confirming that the principle was true. That is when true conversion begins to take place.

The prophet Moroni, in the Book of Mormon, taught, “I would show unto

the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”<sup>6</sup> In our world where instant gratification is the expectation, we are often guilty of expecting the reward without having to work for it. I believe Moroni is telling us that we must do the work first and exercise faith by living the gospel, and then we will receive the witness that it is true. True conversion occurs as you continue to act upon the doctrines you know are true and keep the commandments, day after day, month after month.

This is a glorious time to be a youth in the Church. You are the first to participate in the youth curriculum *Come, Follow Me*, which has as one of its main purposes your conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is well to remember that no matter how inspired your parents and youth leaders may be, “you have [the] primary responsibility for your own conversion. No one can be converted for you, and no one can force you to be converted.”<sup>7</sup> Conversion takes place as we are diligent about saying



our prayers, studying our scriptures, attending church, and being worthy to participate in temple ordinances. Conversion comes as we act upon the righteous principles we learn in our homes and in the classroom. Conversion comes as we live pure and virtuous lives and enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Conversion comes as we understand the Atonement of Jesus Christ, acknowledge Him as our Savior and Redeemer, and allow the Atonement to take effect in our lives.

Your personal conversion will help you as you prepare to make covenants

in the temple, serve missions, and establish your own future homes. As you are converted, you will have a desire to share with others what you have learned, and your confidence and ability to testify to others with conviction and power will increase. This desire to share the gospel with others and the confidence to testify boldly are natural results of true conversion. The Savior taught Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>8</sup>

Remember Joshua, the prophet-warrior? He was not only converted himself, but he worked tirelessly to

the end of his life to bring the children of Israel to God. We read in the Old Testament, “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua.”<sup>9</sup> A person who has experienced true conversion draws upon the power of the Atonement and receives salvation for his or her own soul, then reaches out to exert a powerful influence upon all those who know him or her.

Living the gospel and standing in holy places is not always easy or comfortable, but I testify that it is worth it! The Lord counseled Emma Smith to “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better.”<sup>10</sup> I suspect we cannot begin to imagine just how magnificent those “things of a better” world are!

I testify that we have a loving Heavenly Father whose greatest desire is to help and bless us in our efforts to live the gospel and be converted. He has clearly stated that His main focus and work is our “immortality and eternal life.”<sup>11</sup> He desires to bring us home to His presence. I testify that as we act upon the doctrines of the gospel and put them into daily practice, we will become converted and will become the means of accomplishing much good in our families and in the world. May we all be blessed in our daily efforts to reach for that goal is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joshua 24:15.
2. Fuschia Stringham, “Sketch of the Life of Isabelle Hunter Hoggan Stringham” (unpublished personal history, 1934), 4.
3. Mosiah 5:2.
4. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 41.
5. John 7:17.
6. Ether 12:6.
7. *True to the Faith*, 43.
8. Luke 22:32.
9. Joshua 24:31.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 25:10.
11. Moses 1:39.



By **Elder Richard J. Maynes**  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# The Strength to Endure

*Our ability to endure to the end in righteousness will be in direct proportion to the strength of our testimony and the depth of our conversion.*

Every morning when we wake up, we face a new day filled with the challenges of life. These challenges come in many forms: physical challenges, financial setbacks, difficulties with relationships, emotional trials, and even struggles with one's faith.

Many of the challenges we face in life can be solved and overcome; however, others may be difficult to understand and impossible to overcome and will be with us until we pass on to the next life. As we temporarily endure the challenges we can solve and as we continue to endure the challenges we cannot solve, it is important to remember that the spiritual strength we develop will help us successfully endure all the challenges we face in life.

Brothers and sisters, we have a loving Heavenly Father who has designed our earthly existence so that we can individually learn the lessons we need to learn to qualify for eternal life in His presence.

An episode in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith illustrates this principle. The Prophet and several companions had been prisoners in Liberty, Missouri, for months. While suffering in jail, the Prophet Joseph pled with the Lord in humble prayer

that the Saints might be relieved from their current suffering. The Lord responded by teaching the Prophet Joseph, and all of us, that the challenges we face, if successfully endured, will be for our ultimate good. This is the Lord's response to Joseph's petition:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high."<sup>1</sup>

Heavenly Father has organized our journey through life to be a test of our character. We are exposed to both good and evil influences and then given the moral agency to choose for ourselves which path we will take. As the ancient Book of Mormon prophet Samuel taught, "Ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free."<sup>2</sup>

Heavenly Father also understood that due to our mortality we would not always make the correct or righteous choice. Because we are not perfect and because we make mistakes, we need help in returning to His presence. The necessary help is provided through the teachings, example, and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The

Savior's atoning sacrifice makes possible our future salvation and exaltation through the principle of repentance. If we honestly and sincerely repent, the Atonement can help us become clean, change our nature, and successfully endure our challenges.

Endurance is an important principle found within the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is important because the quality of our eternal future is proportional to our ability to endure in righteousness.

In 2 Nephi 31 the prophet Nephi teaches us that after we receive the same saving ordinance of baptism that Jesus Christ received and then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we must "press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, [and then] behold, thus saith the Father: [We] shall have eternal life."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in order to receive the greatest of all the blessings of our Heavenly Father, which is eternal life, we must complete the appropriate ordinance work and then continue to keep the associated covenants. In other words, we must successfully endure.

Our ability to endure to the end in righteousness will be in direct proportion to the strength of our testimony and the depth of our conversion. When our testimonies are strong and we are truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, our choices will be inspired by the Holy Ghost, they will be Christ-centered, and they will support our desire to endure in righteousness. If our testimonies are weak and our conversion superficial, the risk is much greater that we will be enticed by the false traditions of the world to make poor choices.

I would like to share an experience that illustrates the effort required to endure physically and then compare it to the effort required to endure



desire and ability to live the gospel. As an anonymous author once said, “You must become the rock the river cannot wash away.”

Because we face challenges every day, it is important that we work on our spiritual stamina every day. When we develop spiritual stamina, the false traditions of the world, as well as our personal daily challenges, will have little negative impact on our ability to endure in righteousness.

Great examples of spiritual stamina come from our own family histories. Among the many stories from our ancestors, we will be able to find examples that demonstrate the positive characteristics of endurance.

A story from my own family history illustrates this principle. My great-grandfather Joseph Watson Maynes was born in 1856 in Hull, Yorkshire, England. His family joined the Church in England and then made their way to Salt Lake City. He married Emily Keep in 1883, and they became the parents of eight children. Joseph was called to serve a full-time mission in June of 1910, when he was 53 years old. With the support of his wife and eight children, he returned to his native England to serve his mission.

spiritually. Upon returning from my mission, I had the opportunity to play basketball for a well-respected coach and author at a college in California. This coach was very serious about his players being in shape before the start of the basketball season. One of his training prerequisites before any of us could touch a basketball on the practice court was to run a cross-country course in the hills near the school in a specific and very aggressive time. I remember my very first attempt at running this cross-country course immediately upon my return from the mission field: I thought I was going to die.

It took weeks of serious training in order to finally beat the time that the coach set as a goal. It was a great feeling to not only be able to run the course but also to accelerate down the stretch to the finish line.

To play basketball successfully, you need to get into good shape. Being in good physical condition comes at a price, and that price is dedication, perseverance, and self-discipline. Spiritual endurance also comes at a price. It is the same price: dedication, perseverance, and self-discipline.

A testimony, like your body, needs to be in shape if you want it to endure. So how do we keep our testimonies in shape? We cannot get our bodies into good basketball shape by simply watching basketball on

television. Similarly, we won't be able to get our testimonies in shape by simply watching general conference on television. We need to study and learn the fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then we must do our very best to live them. That is how we become disciples of Jesus Christ, and that is how we build an enduring testimony.

When we face adversity in life and our desire is to emulate the attributes of Jesus Christ, it is essential to be spiritually prepared. Being spiritually prepared means we have developed spiritual stamina or strength—we will be in good shape spiritually. We will be in such good shape spiritually that we will consistently choose the right. We will become immovable in our



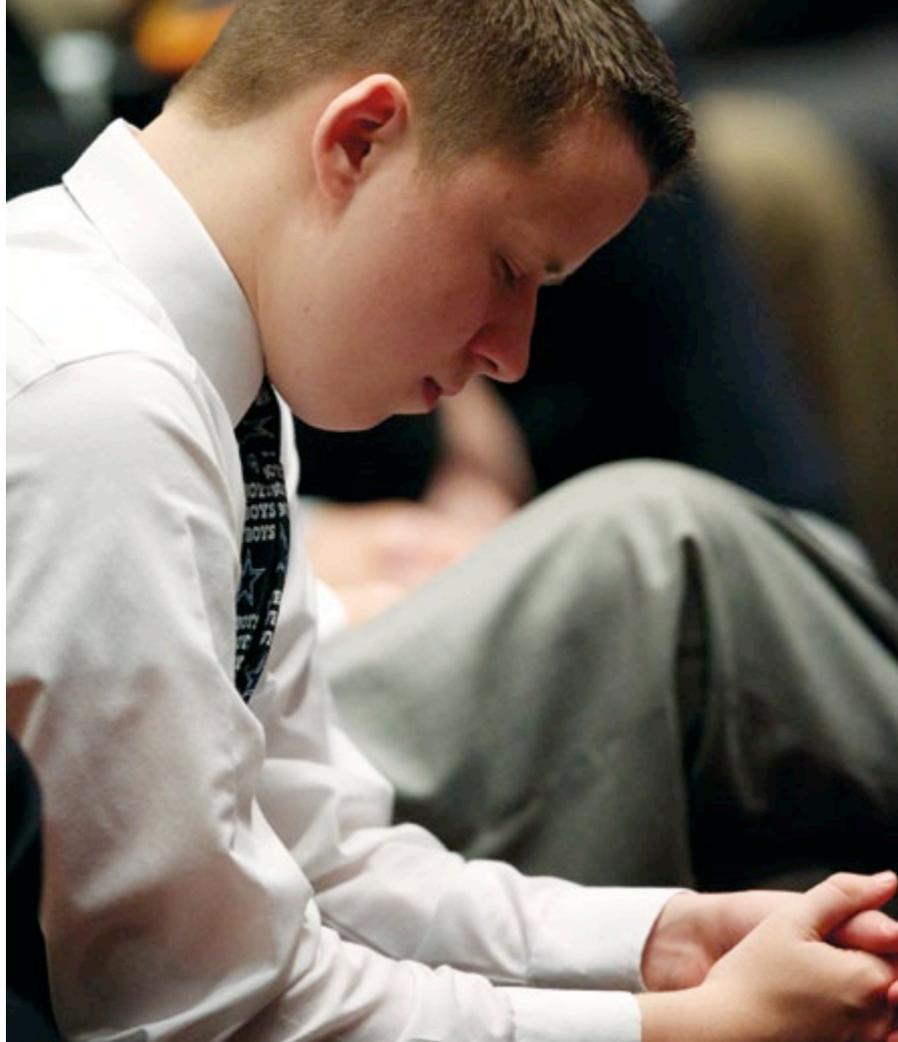
**Joseph Watson Maynes (right) with his companion, Gilpin S. Woolley**

After serving faithfully for approximately two years, he was riding his bicycle along with his companion to Sunday School services in Gloucester, England, when his tire burst. He got off his bicycle to assess the damage. When he saw that it was serious and would take a while to fix, he told his companion to go ahead and begin the Sunday service and he would be there shortly. Just as he finished saying this, he collapsed to the ground. He had died suddenly of a heart attack.

Joseph Watson Maynes never saw his wife and eight children again in this life. They were able to transport his body back to Salt Lake City and have his funeral service at the old Waterloo Assembly Hall. A statement made at his funeral service by Elder Anthony W. Ivins of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles teaches us an important lesson about life, death, and endurance: “This is what the gospel gives us—not immunity from death, but victory over it through the hope we have in a glorious resurrection. . . . It applies to [Joseph Maynes]. . . . It is a pleasure, and it is a satisfaction and joy to know that men lay down their lives in righteousness, in the faith, true to the faith.”<sup>4</sup>

This family story inspires me to try my very best to follow the example of endurance and spiritual stamina illustrated by my great-grandfather. I am equally inspired by the faith of his wife, Emily, whose life after Joseph’s death was certainly a heavy burden to bear. Her testimony was strong and her conversion complete as she spent the rest of her life true to the faith while supporting her eight children on her own.

The Apostle Paul stated, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before



us.”<sup>5</sup> The race that is set before us on this earth is an endurance race filled with obstacles. The obstacles in this race are the challenges we wake up to each morning. We are here on earth to run the race, to exercise our moral agency, and to choose between right and wrong. In order to honorably and successfully finish the race and return to our Heavenly Father, we will need to pay the price of dedication, perseverance, and self-discipline. We need to get into spiritual shape. We need to develop spiritual stamina. We need strong testimonies that will lead to true conversion, and as a result we will find within ourselves the inner peace and strength needed to endure whatever challenges we may face.

So whatever challenges you wake up to each morning, remember—with the spiritual strength you develop, coupled with the Lord’s help, at the end of the race you will be able to enjoy the confidence that the Apostle Paul expressed when he said:

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.”<sup>6</sup>

I bear you my testimony and my witness of the reality of a loving Heavenly Father and His great and eternal plan of happiness, which has brought us to this earth at this time. May the Spirit of the Lord inspire us all to develop within ourselves the strength to endure. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8.
2. Helaman 14:30.
3. 2 Nephi 31:20.
4. Anthony W. Ivins, remarks at funeral service for Joseph Watson Maynes (personal records of the Maynes family).
5. Hebrews 12:1.
6. 2 Timothy 4:6–8.



By **Elder Richard G. Scott**  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ

*Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, each of us can become clean and the burden of our rebellion will be lifted.*

Recently I was blessed to meet with a most impressive group of youth from the state of Idaho. One virtuous young woman asked me what I feel is the most important thing they should be doing in their lives right now. I suggested they learn to recognize the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives. Today I expound on one aspect of that power, which is the personal strength we can receive through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Mormon we read of Ammon and his brethren teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to a people who were “a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people.”<sup>1</sup> Many of the people were converted and chose to leave behind their sinful behavior. So complete was their conversion that they buried their weapons and covenanted with the Lord that they would never use them again.<sup>2</sup>

Later, many of their unconverted brethren came upon them and began to slay them. The now-faithful people

chose to succumb to the sword rather than risk their spiritual lives by taking up arms. Their righteous example helped even more people to be converted and to lay down their weapons of rebellion.<sup>3</sup>

Through Ammon, the Lord guided them to refuge among the Nephites, and they became known as the people of Ammon.<sup>4</sup> The Nephites protected them for many years, but eventually the Nephite army began to wear down, and reinforcements were gravely needed.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Ammon were at a critical moment of their spiritual lives. They had been true to their covenant never to take up arms. But they understood that fathers are responsible to provide protection to their families.<sup>6</sup> That need seemed great enough to merit consideration of breaking their covenant.<sup>7</sup>

Their wise priesthood leader, Helaman, knew that breaking a covenant with the Lord is never justified. He offered an inspired alternative.

He reminded them that their sons had never been guilty of the same sins and therefore had not needed to make the same covenant.<sup>8</sup> Though the sons were very young, they were physically strong and, more important, they were virtuous and pure. The sons were fortified by the faith of their mothers.<sup>9</sup> Under the direction of their prophet-leader, these young men took their fathers’ place in defense of their families and homes.<sup>10</sup>

The events surrounding this critical decision demonstrate how the Atonement of Jesus Christ brings personal strength to the lives of the children of God. Consider the tender feelings of those fathers. How must they have felt to know that the rebellious actions of their past prevented them from protecting their wives and children at that moment of need? Knowing personally of the atrocities their sons would now face, they must have privately wept. Fathers, not children, are supposed to protect their families!<sup>11</sup> Their sorrows must have been intense.

Why would their inspired priesthood leader fear their consideration to retrieve their weapons, “lest . . . they should lose their souls”?<sup>12</sup> The Lord has declared, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>13</sup> These faithful fathers had long since repented of their sins and become clean through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, so why were they counseled not to defend their families?

It is a fundamental truth that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can be cleansed. We can become virtuous and pure. However, sometimes our poor choices leave us with long-term consequences. One of the vital steps to complete repentance is to bear the short- and long-term

consequences of our past sins. Their past choices had exposed these Ammonite fathers to a carnal appetite that could again become a point of vulnerability that Satan would attempt to exploit.

Satan will try to use our memory of any previous guilt to lure us back into his influence. We must be ever vigilant to avoid his enticements. Such was the case of the faithful Ammonite fathers. Even after their years of faithful living, it was imperative for them to protect themselves spiritually from any attraction to the memory of past sins.

In between the many battles,

Captain Moroni directed fortification of the weakest cities. “He caused that they should build a breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch; and they cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers . . . until they had encircled the city . . . with a strong wall of timbers and earth, to an exceeding height.”<sup>14</sup> Captain Moroni understood the importance of fortifying the weak areas to create strength.<sup>15</sup>

These Ammonite fathers were much the same. They needed taller and wider fortifications between their faithful lives and the unrighteous

behavior of their past. Their sons, who were blessed with righteous traditions, were not as vulnerable to the same temptations. They were able to defend their families faithfully without compromising their spiritual well-being.

The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of past poor choices is that the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment,<sup>16</sup> when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.<sup>17</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is some allowance that the Ammonite fathers were taught the false traditions of their parents, but all of Father in Heaven’s children come to mortality with the Light of Christ. Regardless of the cause of their sinful deeds, the effect was the development of a spiritual vulnerability that Satan would attempt to exploit.

Mercifully, they were taught the gospel, repented, and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ became spiritually much stronger than Satan’s enticements. It is likely they had not felt the temptation to return to their brutal past, yet by following their prophet-leader, they didn’t give Satan the chance to “[cheat] their souls, and [to lead] them away carefully down to hell.”<sup>18</sup> The Savior’s Atonement not only cleansed them from sin, but because of their obedience to the counsel of their priesthood leader, the Savior was able to protect them from their weaknesses and strengthen them. Their humble, lifelong commitment to forsaking their sins did more to protect their families than anything they could have done on the battlefield. Their submission did not deprive them of blessings. It strengthened them and blessed them and blessed future generations.





The end of the story illuminates how the mercy of the Lord made “weak things become strong.”<sup>19</sup> These faithful fathers sent their sons off under the care of Helaman. Though the sons fought in fierce battles where all received at least some injury, not one life was lost.<sup>20</sup> The young men proved to be a vital boost to the weary Nephite army. They were faithful and spiritually stronger when they returned home. Their families were blessed, protected, and strengthened.<sup>21</sup> In our day, countless students of the Book of Mormon have been edified by the example of these pure and righteous sons.

Each of us has had times in our lives when we have made poor choices. We are all in desperate need of the redemptive power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Each of us must repent of any rebellion. “For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”<sup>22</sup> He cannot because He knows what it takes to become like Him.

Many of us have allowed weakness to develop in our character. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we, like the Ammonites, can build spiritual fortifications between ourselves and any past mistakes that Satan attempts to exploit. The spiritual protections built around the Ammonite fathers blessed and strengthened themselves, their families, their country, and future generations. The same can be true with us.

So how do we build these eternal fortifications? The first step must

be sincere, thorough, and complete repentance. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, each of us can become clean and the burden of our rebellion will be lifted. Remember, repentance is not punishment. It is the hope-filled path to a more glorious future.

Father in Heaven has provided us tools that help to build the fortifications between our vulnerabilities and our faithfulness. Consider the following suggestions:

- Make covenants and receive ordinances for yourself. Then steadily and consistently work to provide ordinances in the temple for your own ancestors.
- Share the gospel with nonmember or less-active family members or friends. Sharing these truths can bring a renewed enthusiasm into your life.
- Serve faithfully in all Church callings, especially home teaching and visiting teaching assignments. Don’t be just a 15-minutes-a-month home or visiting teacher. Rather, reach out to each individual member of the family. Get to know them personally. Be a real friend. Through acts of kindness, show them how very much you care for each of them.
- Most important, serve the members of your own family. Make the spiritual development of your spouse and children a very high priority. Be attentive to the things you can do to help each one. Give freely of your time and attention.

In each of these suggestions, there is a common theme: fill your life with service to others. As you lose your life in the service of Father in Heaven’s children,<sup>23</sup> Satan’s temptations lose power in your life.

Because your Father in Heaven loves you profoundly, the Atonement of Jesus Christ makes that strength possible. Isn’t it wonderful? Many of you have felt the burden of poor choices, and each of you can feel the elevating power of the Lord’s forgiveness, mercy, and strength. I have felt it, and I testify that it is available to each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Alma 17:14; see also Alma 17–27.
2. See Alma 23:4–7; 24:5–19.
3. See Alma 24:20–27.
4. See Alma 27.
5. See Alma 53:8–9; 56:10–17.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
7. See Alma 53:10–13.
8. See Alma 53:14–16.
9. See Alma 56:48.
10. See Alma 53:17–22; 56:3–10, 30–57.
11. See *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
12. Alma 53:15.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
14. Alma 53:4.
15. See Ether 12:27.
16. See 1 Samuel 12:15; Isaiah 1:20; 1 Nephi 2:23; Mosiah 15:26; Alma 9:24; Doctrine and Covenants 76:25; Moses 4:3.
17. See Proverbs 28:13; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 15:43; 2 Corinthians 13:4; James 3:17; 2 Nephi 3:13; Jacob 4:7; Alma 34:17; 3 Nephi 22:8; Ether 12:26–28; Doctrine and Covenants 24:11; 35:17; 38:14; 62:1.
18. 2 Nephi 28:21.
19. Ether 12:27.
20. See Alma 57:25; 58:39.
21. See Alma 58:40.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
23. See Matthew 16:25; Doctrine and Covenants 88:125.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

## “I Will Not Fail Thee, nor Forsake Thee”

*Our Heavenly Father . . . knows that we learn and grow and become stronger as we face and survive the trials through which we must pass.*

In my journal tonight, I shall write, “This has been one of the most inspiring sessions of any general conference I’ve attended. Everything has been of the greatest and most spiritual nature.”

Brothers and sisters, six months ago as we met together in our general conference, my sweet wife, Frances, lay in the hospital, having suffered a devastating fall just a few days earlier. In May, after weeks of valiantly struggling to overcome her injuries, she slipped into eternity. Her loss has been profound. She and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple on October 7, 1948. Tomorrow would have been our 65th wedding anniversary. She was the love of my life, my trusted confidant, and my closest friend. To say that I miss her does not begin to convey the depth of my feelings.

This conference marks 50 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by President David O. McKay. Through all these years I have felt nothing but the full and complete support of my sweet companion. Countless are the

sacrifices she made so that I could fulfill my calling. Never did I hear a word of complaint from her as I was often required to spend days and sometimes weeks away from her and from our children. She was an angel, indeed.

I wish to express my thanks, as well as those of my family, for the tremendous outpouring of love which has come to us since Frances’s passing. Hundreds of cards and letters were sent from around the world expressing admiration for her and condolences to our family. We received dozens of beautiful floral arrangements. We are grateful for the numerous contributions which have been offered in her name to the General Missionary Fund of the Church. On behalf of those of us whom she left behind, I express deep gratitude for your kind and heartfelt expressions.

Of utmost comfort to me during this tender time of parting have been my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the knowledge I have that my dear Frances lives still. I know that our separation is temporary. We

were sealed in the house of God by one having authority to bind on earth and in heaven. I know that we will be reunited one day and will never again be separated. This is the knowledge that sustains me.

Brothers and sisters, it may be safely assumed that no person has ever lived entirely free of suffering and sorrow, nor has there ever been a period in human history that did not have its full share of turmoil and misery.

When the pathway of life takes a cruel turn, there is the temptation to ask the question “Why me?” At times there appears to be no light at the end of the tunnel, no sunrise to end the night’s darkness. We feel encompassed by the disappointment of shattered dreams and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”<sup>1</sup> We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We become impatient for a solution to our problems, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

The difficulties which come to us present us with the real test of our ability to endure. A fundamental question remains to be answered by each of us: Shall I falter, or shall I finish? Some do falter as they find themselves unable to rise above their challenges. To finish involves enduring to the very end of life itself.

As we ponder the events that can befall all of us, we can say with Job of old, “Man is born unto trouble.”<sup>2</sup> Job was a “perfect and upright” man who “feared God, and eschewed evil.”<sup>3</sup> Pious in his conduct, prosperous in his fortune, Job was to face a test which could have destroyed anyone. Shorn



of his possessions, scorned by his friends, afflicted by his suffering, shattered by the loss of his family, he was urged to “curse God, and die.”<sup>4</sup> He resisted this temptation and declared from the depths of his noble soul:

“Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.”<sup>5</sup>

“I know that my redeemer liveth.”<sup>6</sup>

Job kept the faith. Will we do likewise as we face those challenges which will be ours?

Whenever we are inclined to feel burdened down with the blows of life, let us remember that others have passed the same way, have endured, and then have overcome.

The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer. The reason? They have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. We will still experience difficult challenges, but we will be able to face them, to meet them head-on, and to emerge victorious.

From the bed of pain, from the pillow wet with tears, we are lifted heavenward by that divine assurance and precious promise: “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”<sup>7</sup> Such comfort is priceless.

As I have traveled far and wide

throughout the world fulfilling the responsibilities of my calling, I have come to know many things—not the least of which is that sadness and suffering are universal. I cannot begin to measure all of the heartache and sorrow I have witnessed as I have visited with those who are dealing with grief, experiencing illness, facing divorce, struggling with a wayward son or daughter, or suffering the consequences of sin. The list could go on and on, for there are countless problems which can befall us. To single out one example is difficult, and yet whenever I think of challenges, my thoughts turn to Brother Brems, one of my boyhood Sunday School teachers. He was a faithful member of the Church, a man with a heart of gold. He and his wife, Sadie, had eight children, many of whom were the same ages as those in our family.

After Frances and I were married and moved from the ward, we saw Brother and Sister Brems and members of their family at weddings and funerals, as well as at ward reunions.

In 1968, Brother Brems lost his wife, Sadie. Two of his eight children also passed away as the years went by.

One day nearly 13 years ago, Brother Brems’s oldest granddaughter telephoned me. She explained that her grandfather had reached his 105th birthday. She said, “He lives in a small care center but meets with his entire

family each Sunday, where he delivers a gospel lesson.” She continued, “This past Sunday, Grandpa announced to us, ‘My dears, I am going to die this week. Will you please call Tommy Monson. He will know what to do.’”

I visited Brother Brems the very next evening. I had not seen him for a while. I could not speak to him, for he had lost his hearing. I could not write a message for him to read, because he had lost his sight. I was told that the family communicated with him by taking the finger of his right hand and then tracing on the palm of his left hand the name of the person visiting. Any message had to be conveyed in this same way. I followed the procedure by taking his finger and spelling T-O-M-M-Y M-O-N-S-O-N, the name by which he had always known me. Brother Brems became excited and, taking my hands, placed them on his head. I knew his desire was to receive a priesthood blessing. The driver who had taken me to the care center joined me as we placed our hands on the head of Brother Brems and provided the desired blessing. Afterward, tears streamed from his sightless eyes. He grasped our hands in gratitude. Although he had not heard the blessing we had given him, the Spirit was strong, and I believe he was inspired to know we had provided the blessing which he needed. This sweet man could no longer see. He could no longer hear. He was confined night and day to a small room in a care center. And yet the smile on his face and the words he spoke touched my heart. “Thank you,” he said. “My Heavenly Father has been so good to me.”

Within a week, just as Brother Brems had predicted, he passed away. Never did he dwell on what he was lacking; rather, he was always deeply grateful for his many blessings.

Our Heavenly Father, who gives us so much to delight in, also knows that we learn and grow and become stronger as we face and survive the trials through which we must pass. We know that there are times when we will experience heartbreaking sorrow, when we will grieve, and when we may be tested to our limits. However, such difficulties allow us to change for the better, to rebuild our lives in the way our Heavenly Father teaches us, and to become something different from what we were—better than we were, more understanding than we were, more empathetic than we were, with stronger testimonies than we had before.

This should be our purpose—to persevere and endure, yes, but also to become more spiritually refined as we make our way through sunshine and sorrow. Were it not for challenges to overcome and problems to solve, we would remain much as we are, with little or no progress toward our goal of eternal life. The poet expressed much the same thought in these words:

*Good timber does not grow with ease,  
The stronger wind, the stronger trees.  
The further sky, the greater length.  
The more the storm, the more the  
strength.  
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,  
In trees and men good timbers grow.*<sup>8</sup>

Only the Master knows the depths of our trials, our pain, and our suffering. He alone offers us eternal peace in times of adversity. He alone touches our tortured souls with His comforting words:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly



in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>9</sup>

Whether it is the best of times or the worst of times, He is with us. He has promised that this will never change.

My brothers and sisters, may we have a commitment to our Heavenly Father that does not ebb and flow with the years or the crises of our lives. We should not need to experience difficulties for us to remember Him, and we should not be driven to humility before giving Him our faith and trust.

May we ever strive to be close to our Heavenly Father. To do so, we must pray to Him and listen to Him every day. We truly need Him every hour, whether they be hours of sunshine or of rain. May His promise ever be our watchword: “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”<sup>10</sup>

With all the strength of my soul, I testify that God lives and loves us, that His Only Begotten Son lived and died for us, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ is that penetrating light which shines through the darkness of our lives. May it ever be so, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Jeremiah 8:22.
2. Job 5:7.
3. Job 1:1.
4. Job 2:9.
5. Job 16:19.
6. Job 19:25.
7. Joshua 1:5.
8. Douglas Malloch, “Good Timber,” in Sterling W. Sill, *Making the Most of Yourself* (1971), 23.
9. Matthew 11:28–30.
10. Joshua 1:5.



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

# Lamentations of Jeremiah: Beware of Bondage

*Our challenge is to avoid bondage of any kind, help the Lord gather His elect, and sacrifice for the rising generation.*

Early in our marriage my wife, Mary, and I decided that to the extent possible we would choose activities that we could attend together. We also wanted to be prudent with our budget. Mary loves music and was undoubtedly concerned that I might overemphasize sporting events, so she negotiated that for all paid events, there would be two musicals, operas, or cultural activities for each paid ball game.

Initially I was resistant to the opera component, but over time I changed my view. I particularly came to enjoy the operas by Giuseppe Verdi.<sup>1</sup> This week will be the 200th anniversary of his birth.

In his youth Verdi was intrigued with the prophet Jeremiah, and in 1842, at the age of 28, he achieved fame with the opera *Nabucco*, a shortened Italian form of the name Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This opera contains concepts

drawn from the books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Psalms in the Old Testament. The opera includes the conquest of Jerusalem and the captivity and bondage of the Jews. Psalm 137 is the inspiration for Verdi's moving and inspiring "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves." The heading of this psalm in our scriptures is very dramatic: "While in captivity, the Jews wept by the rivers of Babylon—Because of sorrow, they could not bear to sing the songs of Zion."

My purpose is to review many forms of bondage and subjugation. I will compare some circumstances of our day with those in the days of Jeremiah before the downfall of Jerusalem. In presenting this voice of warning, I am grateful that most Church members are righteously avoiding the conduct that was so offensive to the Lord in Jeremiah's time.

The prophecies and lamentations of Jeremiah are important to Latter-day

Saints. Jeremiah and the Jerusalem of his day are the backdrop to the beginning chapters in the Book of Mormon. Jeremiah was a contemporary of the prophet Lehi.<sup>2</sup> The Lord dramatically informed Jeremiah of his foreordination: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."<sup>3</sup>

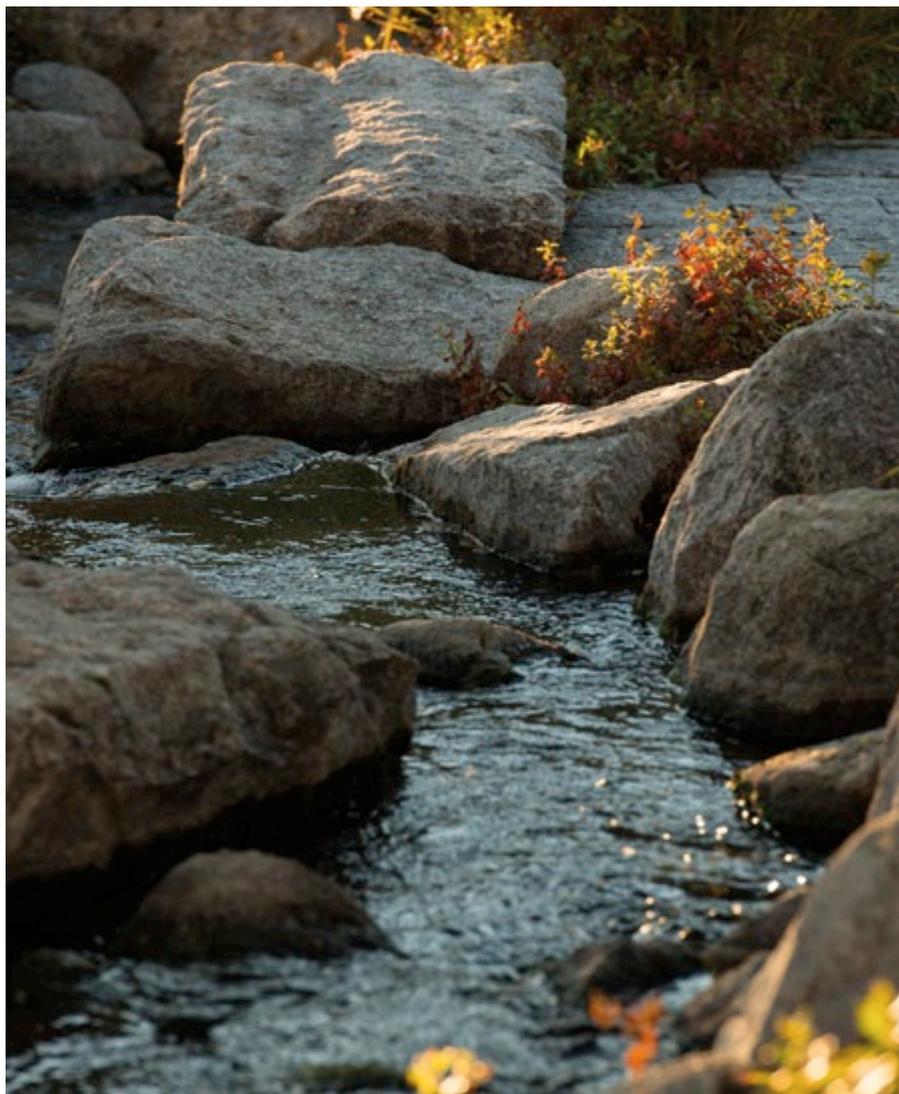
Lehi had a different calling, mission, and assignment from the Lord. He was not called in his youth but in his maturity. Initially his was a voice of warning, but after faithfully declaring the same message as Jeremiah, Lehi was commanded by the Lord to take his family and depart into the wilderness.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, Lehi blessed not only his family but also all people.

During the years before the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>5</sup> the messages the Lord gave to Jeremiah are haunting. He said:

"My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. . . .  
". . . They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed . . . out . . . broken cisterns, that can hold no water."<sup>6</sup>

Speaking of the calamities to come upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Lord lamented, "[For them] the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and [they] are not saved."<sup>7</sup>

God intended that men and women would be free to make choices between good and evil. When evil choices become the dominant characteristic of a culture or nation, there are serious consequences both in this life and the life to come. People can become enslaved or put themselves in bondage not only to harmful, addictive substances but also to harmful, addictive philosophies that detract from righteous living.



Turning from the worship of the true and living God and worshipping false gods like wealth and fame and engaging in immoral and unrighteous conduct result in bondage in all its insidious manifestations. These include spiritual, physical, and intellectual bondage and sometimes bring destruction. Jeremiah and Lehi also taught that those who are righteous must help the Lord establish His Church and kingdom and gather scattered Israel.<sup>8</sup>

These messages have echoed and been reinforced across the centuries in all dispensations. They are at the heart of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this, the final dispensation.

The captivity of the Jews and the scattering of the tribes of Israel,

including the ten tribes, are prominent doctrinal factors in the Restoration of the gospel. The ten lost tribes made up the Northern Kingdom of Israel and were carried away captive into Assyria in 721 B.C. They went to the north countries.<sup>9</sup> Our tenth article of faith states, “We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes.”<sup>10</sup> We also believe that as part of the covenant the Lord made with Abraham, not only the lineage of Abraham would be blessed but also all the people of the earth would be blessed. As Elder Russell M. Nelson has stated, the gathering “is not a matter of physical location; it is a matter of individual commitment. People can be ‘brought to the knowledge of the Lord’ [3 Nephi 20:13] without leaving their homelands.”<sup>11</sup>

Our doctrine is clear: “The Lord scattered and afflicted the twelve tribes of Israel because of their unrighteousness and rebellion. However, the Lord also [utilized] this scattering of his chosen people among the nations of the world to bless those nations.”<sup>12</sup>

We learn valuable lessons from this tragic period. We should do everything within our power to avoid the sin and rebellion that lead to bondage.<sup>13</sup> We also recognize that righteous living is a prerequisite for assisting the Lord in gathering His elect and in the literal gathering of Israel.

Bondage, subjugation, addictions, and servitude come in many forms. They can be literal physical enslavement but can also be loss or impairment of moral agency that can impede our progress. Jeremiah is clear that unrighteousness and rebellion were the main reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon.<sup>14</sup>

Other kinds of bondage are equally destructive of the human spirit. Moral agency can be abused in many ways.<sup>15</sup> I will mention four that are particularly pernicious in today’s culture.

First, addictions that impair agency, contradict moral beliefs, and destroy good health cause bondage. The impact of drugs and alcohol, immorality, pornography, gambling, financial subjugation, and other afflictions imposes on those in bondage and on society a burden of such magnitude that it is almost impossible to quantify.

Second, some addictions or predilections, while not inherently evil, can use up our precious allotment of time which could otherwise be used to accomplish virtuous objectives. These can include excessive use of social media, video and digital games, sports, recreation, and many others.<sup>16</sup>

How we preserve time for family is one of the most significant issues we

face in most cultures. At a time when I was the only member of the Church in our law firm, one woman lawyer explained to me how she always felt like a juggler trying to keep three balls in the air at the same time. One ball was her law practice, one was her marriage, and one was her children. She had almost given up on time for herself. She was greatly concerned that one of the balls was always on the ground. I suggested we meet as a group and discuss our priorities. We determined that the primary reason we were working was to support our families. We agreed that making more money wasn't nearly as important as our families, but we recognized that serving our clients to the best of our abilities was essential. The discussion then moved to what we did at work that was not necessary and was inconsistent with leaving time for family. Was there pressure to spend time in the workplace that was not essential?<sup>17</sup> We decided that our goal would be a family-friendly environment for both women and men. Let us be at the forefront in protecting time for family.

Third, the most universal subjugation in our day, as it has been throughout history, is ideology or political beliefs that are inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Substituting the philosophies of men for gospel truth can lead us away from the simplicity of the Savior's message. When the Apostle Paul visited Athens, he tried to teach of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of this effort we read in Acts, "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear *some new thing*."<sup>18</sup> When the crowd realized the simple religious nature of Paul's message, which was not new, they rejected it.

This is emblematic of our own day,

where gospel truths are often rejected or distorted to make them intellectually more appealing or compatible with current cultural trends and intellectual philosophies. If we are not careful, we can be captured by these trends and place ourselves in intellectual bondage. There are many voices now telling women how to live.<sup>19</sup> They often contradict each other. Of particular concern are philosophies that criticize or diminish respect for women who choose to make the sacrifices necessary to be mothers, teachers, nurturers, or friends to children.

A few months ago our two youngest granddaughters visited us—one each week. I was at home and answered the door. My wife, Mary, was in another room. In both cases, after a hug, they said almost the same thing. They looked around and then said, "I love to be in Grandma's house. Where is Grandma?" I didn't say it to them, but I was thinking, "Isn't this Grandpa's house too?" But I realized that when I was a boy, our family went to Grandma's house. The words of a familiar song came into my mind: "Over the river and through the woods

to Grandmother's house we go."

Now, let me say unequivocally that I am thrilled with the educational and other opportunities that are available to women. I treasure the fact that the backbreaking work and domestic drudgery required of women has been reduced in much of the world because of modern conveniences and that women are making such magnificent contributions in every field of endeavor. But if we allow our culture to reduce the special relationship that children have with mothers and grandmothers and others who nurture them, we will come to regret it.

Fourth, forces that violate sincerely held religious principles can result in bondage. One of the most invidious forms is when righteous people who feel accountable to God for their conduct are forced into activities that violate their conscience—for example, health providers forced to choose between assisting with abortions against their consciences or losing their jobs.

The Church is a relatively small minority even when linked with people who are like-minded. It will be hard to change society at large, but we must



work to improve the moral culture that surrounds us. Latter-day Saints in every country should be good citizens, participate in civic affairs, educate themselves on the issues, and vote.

Our primary emphasis, however, should always be to make any necessary sacrifices to protect our own family and the rising generation.<sup>20</sup> The vast majority of them are not yet in bondage to serious addictions or false ideologies. We must help inoculate them from a world that sounds a lot like the Jerusalem that Lehi and Jeremiah experienced. In addition, we need to prepare them to make and keep sacred covenants and to be the principal emissaries to help the Lord establish His Church and gather scattered Israel and the Lord's elect everywhere.<sup>21</sup> As the Doctrine and Covenants beautifully reads, "The righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy."<sup>22</sup>

Our challenge is to avoid bondage of any kind, help the Lord gather His elect, and sacrifice for the rising generation. We must always remember that we do not save ourselves. We are liberated by the love, grace, and atoning sacrifice of the Savior. When Lehi's family fled, they were led by the Lord's light. If we are true to His light, follow His commandments, and rely on His merits, we will avoid spiritual, physical, and intellectual bondage as well as the lamentation of wandering in our own wilderness, for He is mighty to save.

Let us avoid the despair and sorrow of those who fall into captivity and can no longer bear to sing the songs of Zion. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Many Verdi operas, like *Aida*, *La traviata*, and *Il trovatore*, are among the most popular



- operas performed across the world today.
2. See 1 Nephi 5:13; 7:14.
3. Jeremiah 1:5.
4. See 1 Nephi 2:2–3.
5. The destruction of Solomon's temple, the downfall of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the tribe of Judah occurred in about 586 B.C.
6. Jeremiah 2:11, 13.
7. Jeremiah 8:20. Jeremiah previously recorded the Lord crying for repentance, "I am pained at my very heart" (Jeremiah 4:19) and pleading, "Find a man . . . that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it" (Jeremiah 5:1).
8. See Jeremiah 31; 1 Nephi 10:14.
9. See 2 Kings 17:6; Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.
10. Articles of Faith 1:10; see also 2 Nephi 10:22.
11. Russell M. Nelson, "The Book of Mormon and the Gathering of Israel" (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2013).
12. Guide to the Scriptures, "Israel"; scriptures.lds.org.
13. The Lord, speaking in our day, said, "The whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin . . . because they come not unto me" (Doctrine and Covenants 84:49–50).
14. Innocent people can, of course, also be enslaved.
15. Doctrinal principles don't change, but the means of bondage, subjugation, and destruction have accelerated in an unprecedented fashion.
16. This was aptly and somewhat humorously noted on the cover of the *New York Times Magazine* last year (Apr. 8, 2012) referencing the addictive nature of digital games. It read, "The Hyperaddictive, Time-Sucking, Relationship-Busting, Mind-Crushing Power and Allure of Silly Digital Games." And then in small print: "(Which is not to say we don't love them too.)" This, in a lighthearted way, emphasizes the necessity of exercising

- wisdom in our use of the marvelous technological inventions of our age.
17. The common mantra in many work environments is "We work hard, and we play hard." While employee cohesion is important, when "work and play" crowd out family time, it is self-defeating.
18. Acts 17:21; emphasis added.
19. See Keli Goff, "Female Ivy League Graduates Have a Duty to Stay in the Workforce," *Guardian*, Apr. 21, 2013, [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/21/female-ivy-league-graduates-stay-home-moms](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/21/female-ivy-league-graduates-stay-home-moms); Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013); Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2012, [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020); Lois M. Collins, "Can Women 'Have It All' When It Comes to Work and Family Life?" *Deseret News*, June 28, 2012, A3; Judith Warner, "The Midcareer Timeout (Is Over)," *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 11, 2013, 24–29, 38; Scott Schieman, Markus Schafer, and Mitchell McIvor, "When Leaning In Doesn't Pay Off," *New York Times*, Aug. 11, 2013, 12.
20. The Church has encouraged bishoprics to assist families by spending more time with young men, young women, and young single adults. Bishoprics have been encouraged to delegate more responsibilities in ward council to the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, to auxiliaries, and to members who have special abilities to assist others appropriately.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 29:7.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 45:71.



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

# Power in the Priesthood

*A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings.*

## **Priesthood Blessings Are for All**

As the children in sacrament meeting happily sang the Primary song “Love Is Spoken Here,” everyone smiled with approval. A courageous mother raising five children listened attentively to the second verse: “Mine is a home where [every] hour is blessed by the strength of priesthood [power].”<sup>1</sup> Sadly she thought, “My children have never known such a home.”<sup>2</sup>

My message to this faithful woman and to all is that we can live every hour “blessed by the strength of priesthood power,” whatever our circumstance.

We sometimes overly associate the power of the priesthood with men in the Church. The priesthood is the power and authority of God given for the salvation and blessing of all—men, women, and children.

A man may open the drapes so the warm sunlight comes into the room, but the man does not own the sun or the light or the warmth it brings. The blessings of the priesthood are infinitely greater than the one who is asked to administer the gift.

To receive the blessings, power, and promises of the priesthood in this life and the next is one of the great opportunities and responsibilities

of mortality. As we are worthy, the ordinances of the priesthood enrich our lives on earth and prepare us for the magnificent promises of the world ahead. The Lord said, “In the ordinances . . . the power of godliness is manifest.”<sup>3</sup>

There are special blessings from God for every worthy person who is baptized, receives the Holy Ghost, and regularly partakes of the sacrament. The temple brings added light and strength, along with the promise of eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

All of the ordinances invite us to increase our faith in Jesus Christ and to make and keep covenants with God. As we keep these sacred covenants, we receive priesthood power and blessings.

Do we not feel this power of the priesthood in our own lives and see it among the covenant-keeping members of the Church? We see it in new converts as they step from the waters of baptism feeling forgiven and clean. We see our children and youth more sensitive to the promptings and guidance of the Holy Ghost. We see the ordinances of the temple becoming a beacon of strength and light for righteous men and women across the world.

This past month I watched a young couple draw enormous strength from the sealing promises of the temple as their precious baby boy was born but lived only one week. Through the ordinances of the priesthood, this young couple and all of us receive comfort, strength, protection, peace, and eternal promises.<sup>5</sup>

## **What We Know about the Priesthood**

Some may sincerely ask the question, “If the power and blessings of the priesthood are available to all, why are the ordinances of the priesthood administered by men?”

When an angel asked Nephi, “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” Nephi answered honestly, “I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.”<sup>6</sup>

When we speak of the priesthood, there are many things we do know.

## **All Are Alike**

We know that God loves all His children and is no respecter of persons. “He denieth none that come unto him, . . . male [or] female; . . . and all are alike unto God.”<sup>7</sup>

As surely as we know that God’s love is “alike” for His sons and His daughters, we also know that He did not create men and women exactly the same. We know that gender is an essential characteristic of both our mortal and eternal identity and purpose. Sacred responsibilities are given to each gender.<sup>8</sup>

## **From the Beginning**

We know that from the beginning the Lord established how His priesthood would be administered. “The Priesthood was first given to Adam.”<sup>9</sup> Noah, Abraham, and Moses all administered priesthood ordinances.

Jesus Christ was and is the Great High Priest. He called Apostles. “Ye have not chosen me,” He said, “but I have chosen you, and ordained you.”<sup>10</sup> In our day heavenly messengers were sent from God. John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John restored the priesthood to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith.<sup>11</sup> This is the way our Father in Heaven has administered His priesthood.<sup>12</sup>

### Many Gifts from God

We know that the power of the holy priesthood does not work independently of faith, the Holy Ghost, and spiritual gifts. The scriptures caution: “Deny not the gifts of God, for they are many. . . . And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh [them] all.”<sup>13</sup>

### Worthiness

We know that worthiness is central to performing and receiving priesthood ordinances. Sister Linda K.

Burton, general president of the Relief Society, has said, “Righteousness is the qualifier . . . to invite priesthood power into our lives.”<sup>14</sup>

For example, consider the plague of pornography sweeping across the world. The Lord’s standard of worthiness gives no allowance for pornography among those officiating in the ordinances of the priesthood. The Savior said:

“Repent of your . . . secret abominations.”<sup>15</sup>

“The light of the body is the eye. . . . If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.”<sup>16</sup>

“[For] whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>17</sup>

Unworthily administering or passing the sacrament, blessing the sick, or participating in other priesthood ordinances is, as Elder David A. Bednar has said, taking the name of God in vain.<sup>18</sup> If one is unworthy, he should withdraw from officiating in

priesthood ordinances and prayerfully approach his bishop as a first step in repenting and returning to the commandments.

### Humility

Another thing we know is that there is an abundance of priesthood blessings in families where a righteous mother and father are united in guiding their children. But we also know that God eagerly provides these same blessings to those in many other situations.<sup>19</sup>

A mother, carrying the weight of providing both spiritually and temporally for her family, sensitively explained that calling her home teachers to bless one of her children requires her humility. But she insightfully added that it requires no more humility than that of her home teachers as they prepare to bless her child.<sup>20</sup>

### The Keys of the Priesthood

We know that the keys of the priesthood, held by members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, direct the work of the Lord upon the earth. Specific priesthood keys are conferred upon stake presidents and bishops for their geographic responsibilities. And they call men and women by revelation who are sustained and set apart to exercise delegated authority to teach and administer.<sup>21</sup>

While there are many things we do know about the priesthood, seeing through the lens of mortality does not always give a complete understanding of the workings of God. But His gentle reminder, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,”<sup>22</sup> reassures us that with time and eternal perspective we will see things “as they really are”<sup>23</sup> and more completely understand His perfect love.





We all willingly serve. Sometimes we feel underwhelmed with our calling and wish we were asked to do more. Other times we are grateful when it is time for our release. We do not determine the callings we receive.<sup>24</sup> I learned this lesson early in my marriage. As a young couple, my wife, Kathy, and I lived in Florida. One Sunday a counselor in the stake presidency explained to me that they felt impressed to call Kathy as an early-morning seminary teacher.

“How will we do it?” I asked. “We have small children, seminary begins at 5:00 a.m., and I am the ward Young Men president.”

The counselor smiled and said, “It will be OK, Brother Andersen. We will call her, and we will release you.”

And that is what happened.

### The Contribution of Women

Sincerely asking for and listening to the thoughts and concerns voiced by women is vital in life, in marriage, and in building the kingdom of God.

Twenty years ago in general conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard related a conversation he had with the general president of the Relief Society. There was a question raised about strengthening the worthiness of youth preparing to serve missions. Sister

Elaine Jack said with a smile, “You know, Elder Ballard, the [women] of the Church may have some good suggestions . . . if they [are] asked. After all, . . . we *are* their mothers!”<sup>25</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson has a lifelong history of asking for and responding to the concerns of women. The woman who has influenced him the most is Sister Frances Monson. We miss her very much. Also, just this past Thursday, President Monson reminded the General Authorities how much he learned as a bishop from the 84 widows of his ward. They greatly influenced his service and his entire life.

Not surprisingly, before President Monson’s prayerful decision about the age change for missionary service, there were many discussions with the general Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies.

Bishops, as you follow the example of President Monson, you will feel



**Vany Parrella**

even more abundantly the guiding hand of the Lord blessing your sacred work.

We lived several years in Brazil. Soon after arriving, I met Adelson Parrella, who was serving as a Seventy, and his brother Adilson, who was serving in our stake presidency. Later I met their brother Adalton, serving as a stake president in Florianopolis, and another brother Adelmo, serving as a bishop. I was impressed by the faith of these brothers, and I asked about their parents.

The family was baptized in Santos, Brazil, 42 years ago. Adilson Parrella said, “At first, Father seemed very excited about joining the Church. However, he [soon] became less active and asked our mother not to attend church.”

Adilson told me that his mother sewed clothing for the neighbors to pay for her children’s bus fare to church. The four little boys walked together over a mile to another town, boarded the bus for 45 minutes, and then walked another 20 minutes to the chapel.

Although unable to go to church with her children, Sister Parrella read the scriptures with her sons and daughters, taught them the gospel, and prayed with them. Their humble

home was filled with the rich blessings of priesthood power. The little boys grew up, served missions, were educated, and married in the temple. The blessings of the priesthood filled their homes.

Years later, as a single sister, Vany Parrella entered the temple for her own endowment and, later still, served three missions in Brazil. She is now 84 years old, and her faith continues to bless the generations that have followed her.

### Testimony and Promise

The power of God's holy priesthood is found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I testify that as you worthily participate in the ordinances of the priesthood, the Lord will give you greater strength, peace, and eternal perspective. Whatever your situation, your home will be "blessed by the strength of priesthood power" and those close to you will more fully desire these blessings for themselves.

As men and women, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters of God, we move forward together. This is our opportunity, our responsibility, and our blessing. This is our destiny—to

prepare the kingdom of God for the return of the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. "Love Is Spoken Here," *Children's Songbook*, 190–91.
2. Personal email, Aug. 5, 2013.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:37, 51.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:35; 109:22.
6. 1 Nephi 11:16–17.
7. 2 Nephi 26:33.
8. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 104; see also Doctrine and Covenants 84:16; 107:40–53; 128:18, 21; Russell M. Nelson, "Lessons from Eve," *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 86–89.
10. John 15:16.
11. See Joseph Smith—History 1:72; see also Doctrine and Covenants 13; 27.
12. See M. Russell Ballard, "Let Us Think Straight" (BYU Campus Education Week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013); speeches.byu.edu. Elder Ballard stated: "Why are men ordained to priesthood offices and not women? President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that it was the Lord, not man, 'who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood' and that it was also the Lord who endowed women with 'capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God' ('Women of the Church,' *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 70). When all is said and done, the Lord has not revealed why He has organized His Church as He has."
13. Moroni 10:8.
14. Linda K. Burton, "Priesthood: 'A Sacred Trust to Be Used for the Benefit of Men, Women, and Children'" (Brigham Young University Women's Conference address, May 3, 2013); ce.byu.edu/cw/womensconference/pdf/archive/2013/lindaBurtonTalk.pdf.
15. 3 Nephi 30:2.
16. Matthew 6:22–23.
17. Matthew 5:28; see also Alma 39:9. President Thomas S. Monson said: "Pornography is especially dangerous and addictive. Curious exploration of pornography can become a controlling habit, leading to coarser material and to sexual transgression. Avoid pornography at all costs" ("Preparation Brings Blessings," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 65). "Extremely alarming . . . are the reports of the number of individuals who are utilizing the Internet for evil and degrading purposes, the viewing of pornography being the most prevalent of these purposes. My brothers and sisters, involvement in such will literally destroy the spirit. Be strong. Be clean. Avoid such degrading and destructive types of content at all costs—wherever they may be! I sound this warning to everyone, everywhere" ("Until We Meet Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 113). "Avoid any semblance of pornography. It will desensitize the spirit and erode the conscience. We are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, 'That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness' [Doctrine and Covenants 50:23]" ("True to the Faith," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 18–19).
18. See David A. Bednar, *Act in Doctrine* (2012), 53.
19. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 24–27.
20. Personal email, Aug. 5, 2013; see James 5:14.
21. See Hebrews 5:4.
22. Isaiah 55:8.
23. Jacob 4:13.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:4–5. President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence" ("This Is the Work of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1995, 71).
25. M. Russell Ballard, "Strength in Counsel," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 76.



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**By David M. McConkie**  
First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

# Teaching with the Power and Authority of God

*The Lord has provided the way for every worthy Latter-day Saint to teach in the Savior's way.*

We are grateful beyond any measure of expression for teachers throughout the Church. We love you and have great confidence in you. You are one of the great miracles of the restored gospel.

There is indeed a secret to becoming a successful gospel teacher, to teaching with the power and authority of God. I use the word *secret* because the principles upon which a teacher's success rests can be understood only by those who have a testimony of what took place on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of 1820.

In response to a 14-year-old boy's humble prayer, the heavens were opened. God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared and spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The long-awaited restitution of all things had begun, and the principle of revelation was everlastingly established in our dispensation. Joseph's message, and our message to the world, can be summarized in

two words: "God speaks." He spoke anciently, He spoke to Joseph, and He will speak to you. This is what sets you apart from all other teachers in the world. This is why you cannot fail.

You have been called by the spirit of prophecy and revelation and have been set apart by priesthood authority. What does this mean?

First, it means that you are on the Lord's errand. You are His agent, and

## **Rome, Italy**



you are authorized and commissioned to represent Him and to act on His behalf. As His agent, you are entitled to His help. You must ask yourself, "What would the Savior say if He were teaching my class today, and how would He say it?" You must then do likewise.

This responsibility may cause some to feel inadequate or even somewhat fearful. The pathway is not difficult. The Lord has provided the way for every worthy Latter-day Saint to teach in the Savior's way.

Second, you are called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. You must not teach your own ideas or philosophy, even mingled with scriptures. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation,"<sup>1</sup> and it is only through the gospel that we are saved.

Third, you are commanded to teach the principles of the gospel as they are found in the standard works of the Church, to teach the words of modern-day apostles and prophets, and to teach that which is taught you by the Holy Ghost.

So where do we begin?

Our first and foremost responsibility is to live so that we can have the Holy Ghost as our guide and companion. When Hyrum Smith sought to become engaged in this latter-day work, the Lord said, "Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength."<sup>2</sup> This is the starting point. The counsel, provided by the Lord to Hyrum, is the same counsel He has provided to the Saints in every age.

Speaking to teachers today, the First Presidency stated: "The most important part of your service will be your own daily spiritual preparation, including prayer, scripture study, and obedience to the commandments. We encourage you to dedicate yourself to



**Arraiján, Panama**

living the gospel with greater purpose than ever before.”<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that the First Presidency did not say that the most important part of your service is to prepare your lesson well or to master various teaching techniques. Of course, you must diligently prepare for each lesson and strive to learn how you can teach so as to help your students exercise their agency and allow the gospel to enter into their hearts, but the first and most important part of your service is your personal, spiritual preparation. As you follow this counsel, the First Presidency has promised: “The Holy Ghost will help you to know what to do. Your own testimony will grow, your conversion will be deepened, and you will be strengthened to meet the challenges of life.”<sup>4</sup>

What greater blessings could a teacher desire?

Next, the Lord has commanded that before we seek to declare His word,

we must seek to obtain it.<sup>5</sup> You must become men and women of sound understanding by diligently searching the scriptures and by treasuring them up in your hearts. Then as you ask for the Lord’s help, He will bless you with His Spirit and His word. You will have the power of God unto the convincing of men.

Paul tells us that the gospel comes to men in two ways, in word and in power.<sup>6</sup> The word of the gospel is written in the scriptures, and we can obtain the word by diligently searching. The power of the gospel comes into the lives of those who so live that the Holy Ghost is their companion and who follow the promptings they receive. Some focus their attention only on obtaining the word, and they become experts in delivering information. Others neglect their preparation and hope that the Lord in His goodness will somehow help them get through the class period. You cannot

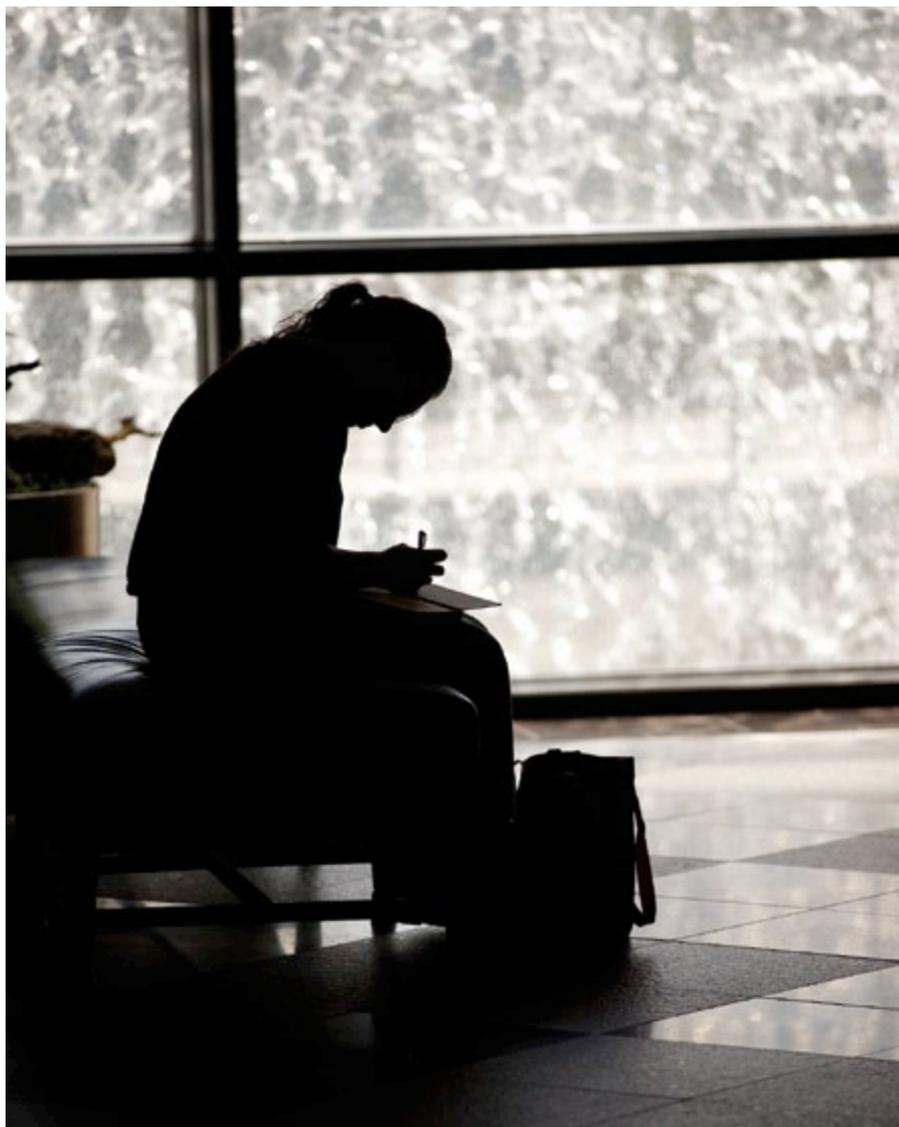
expect the Spirit to help you remember the scriptures and principles you have not studied or considered. In order to successfully teach the gospel, you must have both the word and the power of the gospel in your life.

Alma understood these principles when he rejoiced in the sons of Mosiah and how they taught with the power and authority of God. We read:

“They were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had . . . the spirit of revelation.”<sup>7</sup>

Next, you must learn to listen. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught this principle to missionaries. I will quote from Elder Holland’s remarks but have taken the liberty of replacing the terms *missionaries* and *investigators* with the terms *teachers* and *students* respectively:



“Second only to the responsibility [teachers] have to listen to the Spirit, is the responsibility they have to listen to the [student]. . . . If we’ll listen with spiritual ears, . . . [our students] will tell us what lessons they need to hear!”

Elder Holland continued: “The fact of the matter is [teachers] are still too focused on delivering comfortable, repetitious lesson content rather than focusing on their [students] as individuals.”<sup>8</sup>

After you have prepared yourself and your lesson to the very best of your ability, you must be willing to let go. When the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost come, you must have the courage to set aside your outlines and your notes and go where those promptings take you. When you

do this, the lesson you deliver is no longer your lesson, but it becomes the Savior’s lesson.

As you dedicate yourself to living the gospel with greater purpose than ever before and search the scriptures, treasuring them up in your heart, the same Holy Ghost, who revealed these words to apostles and prophets anciently, will testify to you of their truthfulness. In essence, the Holy Ghost will reveal them anew to you. When this happens, the words that you read are no longer only the words of Nephi or Paul or Alma, but they become your words. Then, as you teach, the Holy Ghost will be able to bring all things to your remembrance. Indeed, “it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment,

what ye shall say.”<sup>9</sup> When this happens, you will find yourself saying something that you did not plan to say. Then, if you will pay attention, you will learn something from the things that you say when you teach. President Marion G. Romney said, “I always know when I am speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost because I always learn something from what I’ve said.”<sup>10</sup> Remember, a teacher is also a student.

Finally, you must stand as an independent witness of the things you teach and not just be an echo of the words in a manual or the thoughts of others. As you feast upon the words of Christ and strive to live the gospel with greater purpose than ever before, the Holy Ghost will manifest unto you that the things you are teaching are true. This is the spirit of revelation, and this same spirit will carry your message into the hearts of those who desire and are willing to receive it.

Let us now end where we started—in the Sacred Grove. Because of what took place on that beautiful spring morning not so long ago, you are entitled to teach with the power and authority of God. Of this I bear my solemn and independent witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Romans 1:16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 11:20.
3. First Presidency, in *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior’s Way* (a guide to *Come, Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth*, 2012), 2.
4. First Presidency, in *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior’s Way*, 2.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 11:21.
6. See 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
7. Alma 17:2–3.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Divine Companionship” (address given at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 26, 2009), 7, 8, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; emphasis in original.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 100:6.
10. Marion G. Romney, in Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (1975), 304.



By **Elder Kevin S. Hamilton**  
Of the Seventy

# Continually Holding Fast

*May we continually hold fast to the iron rod that leads to the presence of our Heavenly Father.*

My father could remember the very day, even the very hour, that his family—father, mother, and four children—left the Church, many never to return again in this life. He was 13 years old, a deacon, and in those days families attended Sunday School in the morning and then sacrament meeting in the afternoon. On a beautiful spring day, after returning home from Sunday morning worship services and having a midday family meal together, his mother turned to his father and asked simply, “Well, dear, do you think we should go to sacrament meeting this afternoon, or should we take the family for a ride in the country?”

The idea that there was an option to sacrament meeting had never occurred to my father, but he and his three teenage siblings all sat up and paid careful attention. That Sunday afternoon ride in the country was probably an enjoyable family activity, but that small decision became the start of a new direction which ultimately led his family away from the Church with its safety, security, and blessings and onto a different path.

As a lesson to those of our day

who might be tempted to choose a different path, the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi shared a vision with his family where he “saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which [he] stood.

“And . . . they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree.

“And . . . there arose a mist of darkness; . . . insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.”<sup>1</sup>

Lehi then saw a second group that was “pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.” Unfortunately, “after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed” because of those in “a great and spacious building” that “were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come . . . and were partaking of the

fruit.” These people then “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>2</sup> They were unable, or perhaps unwilling, to endure to the end.

There was, however, a third group that was not only successful in reaching the tree of life, but they afterward did not fall away. Of these, the scriptures say that they pressed “forward, *continually holding fast* to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.”<sup>3</sup> The rod of iron represented for this group of people the only safety and security that they could find, and they held fast continually; they refused to let go, even for something as simple as a Sunday afternoon ride in the country.

About this group of people, Elder David A. Bednar has taught: “The key phrase in this verse is ‘continually





holding fast' to the rod of iron. . . . Perhaps this third group of people *consistently* read *and* studied *and* searched the words of Christ. . . . This is the group you and I should strive to join."<sup>4</sup>

Those of us who are members of God's Church today have made covenants to follow Jesus Christ and to obey God's commandments. At baptism we covenanted to stand as a witness of the Savior,<sup>5</sup> to succor the weak and the needy,<sup>6</sup> to keep the commandments of God, and to repent as needed, for as the Apostle Paul taught, "All have sinned, and [fall] short of the glory of God."<sup>7</sup>

Each week we have the opportunity to attend a sacrament meeting, where we can renew these covenants by partaking of the bread and water of the sacrament ordinance. This simple act allows us to once again pledge ourselves to follow Jesus Christ and to repent when we do fall short. God's promise to us in return is His Spirit as a guide and protection.

From *Preach My Gospel*, our missionaries teach that revelation

and testimony come when we attend our Sunday Church meetings: "As we attend Church services and worship together, we strengthen each other. We are renewed by our association with friends and family. Our faith is strengthened as we study the scriptures and learn more about the restored gospel."<sup>8</sup>

One might ask why we have three separate meetings on Sunday and why the need for each. Let's briefly look at these three meetings:

- Sacrament meeting provides the opportunity to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. We renew our covenants, receive an increased measure of the Spirit, and have the additional blessing of being instructed and edified by the Holy Ghost.
- Sunday School allows us to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom,"<sup>9</sup> that all might be "edified and rejoice together."<sup>10</sup> Great power and personal peace come as we understand the doctrines of the restored gospel.

- Priesthood meetings are a time for men and young men to "learn [their] duty"<sup>11</sup> and to "be instructed more perfectly,"<sup>12</sup> and Relief Society meetings provide the women of the Church an opportunity to "increase their faith . . . , strengthen [their] families and homes, and help those in need."<sup>13</sup>

Likewise, our young women and children have their own meetings and classes where they are taught the gospel as they prepare for important responsibilities that will come to them. In each of these unique but connected meetings, we learn the doctrine, feel the Spirit, and serve one another. While there may be exceptions due to distance, travel cost, or health, we should strive to attend all of our Sunday meetings. I promise that blessings of great joy and peace will come from worship during our three-hour Sunday meeting schedule.

Our family has committed to attend all of our Sunday meetings. We have found that this strengthens our faith and deepens our understanding of

the gospel. We have learned that we feel good about our decision to attend our Church meetings, especially as we return to our home and continue to observe the Sabbath. We even attend all of our Sunday meetings when we are on vacation or traveling. One of our daughters recently wrote to say that she had attended church in a city where she was traveling and then added, “Yes, Dad, I did attend all three of the Sunday meetings.” We know that she was blessed for this righteous decision.

We each have many choices to make as to how we observe the Sabbath day. There will always be some “good” activity that can and should be sacrificed for the better choice of Church meeting attendance. This is in fact one of the ways that the adversary “cheateth [our] souls, and leadeth [us carefully] away.”<sup>14</sup> He uses “good” activities as substitutes for “better” or even “best” activities.<sup>15</sup>

Continually holding fast to the rod means that whenever possible we attend our Sunday meetings: sacrament meeting, Sunday School, and priesthood or Relief Society meetings. Our children and youth attend their respective meetings in Primary, Young Men, and Young Women. We should never pick or choose which meetings we attend. We simply hold fast to the word of God by worshipping and attending our Sabbath meetings.

Continually holding fast to the rod means that we strive to keep all of God’s commandments, to have daily personal and family prayer, and to study the scriptures daily.

Continually holding fast is part of the doctrine of Christ as taught in the Book of Mormon. We exercise faith in Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, change our hearts, and then follow Him down into the waters of baptism and



receive the confirming gift of the Holy Ghost, which serves as a guide and comforter. And then, as Nephi taught, we “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ” until the very end of our lives.<sup>16</sup>

My brothers and sisters, we are a covenant people. We willingly make and keep covenants, and the promised blessing is that we will receive “all that [the] Father hath.”<sup>17</sup> As we continually hold fast to the rod by keeping our covenants, we will be strengthened to resist the temptations and perils of the world. We will be able to navigate this mortal life with all of its challenges until we actually reach the tree with the fruit “most precious and most desirable above all other.”<sup>18</sup>

My father was fortunate to marry a good woman who encouraged him to come back to the church of his youth and begin again to progress along the path. Their faithful lives have blessed all of their children, the next generation of grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren.

Just as the simple decision to attend or not attend one of their Sabbath day worship meetings made a significant difference in the lives of my grandparents’ family, our everyday decisions

will impact our lives in significant ways. A seemingly small decision such as whether or not to attend a sacrament meeting can have far-reaching, even eternal, consequences.

May we choose to be diligent and gain the great blessings and protections that come from gathering together and keeping covenants. May we continually hold fast to the iron rod that leads to the presence of our Heavenly Father is my prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 8:21–23.
2. 1 Nephi 8:24–28.
3. 1 Nephi 8:30; emphasis added.
4. David A. Bednar, “A Reservoir of Living Water” (Church Educational System fireside address, Feb. 4, 2007), 8–9; speeches.byu.edu.
5. See Mosiah 18:9.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
7. Romans 3:23.
8. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 74.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 88:77.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:22.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 88:78.
13. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 9.1.1.
14. 2 Nephi 28:21.
15. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–8.
16. 2 Nephi 31:20.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
18. 1 Nephi 15:36.



By **Elder Adrián Ochoa**  
Of the Seventy

## Look Up

*Today is the time to look to the Source of truth  
and ensure that our testimonies are strong.*

When I was eight, two cousins and I were sent to a nearby town to get groceries for the next 15 days. Looking back, I am amazed at how much confidence my grandmother and my aunt and uncle had in us. The morning skies were bright and shiny as we departed in our small caravan of three horses.

In the middle of the prairie, we had a brilliant idea that we should dismount and play marbles. So we did—for a long time. We were so absorbed in our game that we did not see the “signs of the times” above our heads as dark clouds covered the sky. By the time we realized what was happening, we didn’t even have time to mount our horses. The heavy rain was hitting us so hard, and hail was hitting our faces, so we could not think of anything to do but unsaddle the horses and take cover under the saddle blankets.

Horseless, wet, and cold, we continued our journey, now trying to move as fast as we could. As we approached our destination, we saw that the wide street that entered the town had flooded and was like a river heading toward us. Now our only choice was to drop our covers and climb the barbed-wire fence that surrounded the town. It was late at night

when, tired and sore and soaked, we sought shelter in the first home we saw as we entered the town. The good young family there dried us off, fed us delicious bean burritos, and then put us to bed in a room of our own. Soon we discovered that the room had a flat dirt floor, so we had another brilliant idea. We drew a circle on the floor and continued our marbles game until we collapsed to the floor in sleep.

As children we were just thinking about ourselves. We never thought about the loved ones who were desperately searching for us back home—if we had, we would have never delayed our journey in such a useless pursuit. And if we had been wiser, we would have looked at the sky, spotted the clouds forming, and accelerated our pace to stay ahead of the storm. Now that I have a little more experience, I always remind myself, “Don’t forget to look up.”

My experience with my cousins taught me to pay attention to the signs of our times. We live in the stormy, perilous days that Paul described: “Men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . false accusers, incontinent, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:2–4).

Speaking of these times, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: “We need to make both temporal and spiritual preparation. . . . And the preparation most likely to be neglected is the one less visible and more difficult—the spiritual” (“Preparation for the Second Coming,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 9). In other words, don’t neglect to look up.

Given the urgent need for spiritual preparation in a time of such peril, I want to extend a word of warning about one very strong sign of the times. My professional life put me on the forefront of technology, so I recognize the value it has, especially in communication. So much information of man is now at our fingertips. But the Internet is also full of much that is filthy and misleading. Technology has augmented our freedom of speech, but it also gives an unqualified blogger false credibility based on the number of viewers. This is why now, more than ever, we must remember this eternal principle: “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

In particular, I caution you not to view filthy images or give your attention to the false accusers of Christ and the Prophet Joseph Smith. Both actions create the same effect: the loss of the Holy Ghost and His protecting, sustaining power. Vice and unhappiness always follow.

My dear brothers and sisters, if you ever come across anything that causes you to question your testimony of the gospel, I plead with you to look up. Look to the Source of all wisdom and truth. Nourish your faith and testimony with the word of God. There are those in the world who seek to undermine your faith by mixing lies with half-truths. This is why it is absolutely critical that you remain constantly worthy of the Spirit. The



**Brasília, Brazil**

companionship of the Holy Ghost is not just a pleasant convenience—it is essential to your spiritual survival. If you will not treasure up the words of Christ and listen closely to the promptings of the Spirit, you will be deceived (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37). We must do these things.

Jesus Christ, who was perfect, and Joseph Smith, who admitted that he himself was not, were both killed by false accusers who would not accept their testimony. How can we know that their testimony is true—that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Joseph Smith is a true prophet?

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” Can good fruit grow from a bad tree? I know for myself that my Redeemer has forgiven my sins and freed me of my personal yoke, bringing me to a state of happiness that I did not know existed. And I know for myself that Joseph Smith was a prophet because I have applied the simple promise in the Book of Mormon: “Ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ” (Moroni 10:4). In simple words, look up.

There are some who might suggest that you must have physical evidence in order to believe in the Resurrection of Christ or the veracity of His restored

gospel. To them I quote the words of Alma to Korihor, who was trying to persuade others not to believe: “Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee” (Alma 30:44).

You and I are living evidence of the redeeming power of the Savior. We are living evidence of the ministry of the Prophet Joseph and the faithfulness of those early Saints who remained strong in their testimony. The Church of Jesus Christ has now expanded all over the world and is growing like never before—embraced, as in the times of Christ, by humble people who do not need to see and touch to believe.

No one knows when the Lord will come again. But the perilous times are now upon us. Today is the time to look to the Source of truth and ensure that our testimonies are strong.

Returning to my account, my cousins and I woke in the morning to a bright sun and beautiful sky. A man knocked on the door looking for the three lost boys. He put us on horses, and we started back home through the same prairie. I will never forget

what we saw on our way home—a multitude of people who had been searching for us throughout the night, their tractors and trucks stuck in the mud. They had found a saddle here and a horse there, and when they saw us returning home, I could feel their relief and their love. At the entrance to town, many people were waiting for us, and in front of them all were my loving grandmother and my uncle and aunt. They embraced us and cried, overjoyed that they had found their lost children. What a great reminder this is to me that our loving Heavenly Father is mindful of us. He is anxiously awaiting our return home.

Yes, there are signs of storms forming all around us. Let us look up and prepare ourselves. There is safety in a strong testimony. Let us cherish and strengthen our testimonies every day.

I know we can live together as families for eternity, that our loving Heavenly Father is waiting for us, His children, with His arms extended. I know that Jesus Christ, our Rescuer, lives. As with Peter, no flesh and blood has revealed it to me, but my Father who is in heaven (see Matthew 16:15–19). In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



By **Elder Terence M. Vinson**  
Of the Seventy

## Drawing Closer to God

*Our Savior wants us to really love Him to the point that we want to align our will with His.*

Our six-year-old grandson, Oli, who affectionately calls me “Poppy,” had to get something from the car. His dad stood inside the house and, without Oli being aware, unlocked the car door remotely as Oli approached it, then locked it again when he was done. Oli then ran inside with a big smile!

All the family asked him, “How did you get the car door to unlock for you, then to lock again?” He just smiled.

Our daughter, his mother, said, “Maybe it’s like when Poppy does it—maybe you have magic powers like him!”

When it happened a second time a few minutes later, his response to further questions about his newfound abilities was: “It’s amazing! I think it’s because Poppy loves me and is one of my best friends, and he takes care of me!”

I have been blessed to know of truly miraculous things that have occurred in the lives of faithful Saints throughout Africa, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, and the islands of the Pacific. I agree with Oli—I think it’s because those faithful people feel the same way about Heavenly Father and the Savior as Oli feels about me. They love God as a close friend, and He takes care of them.

Members of this Church are entitled to, and many receive, a spiritual witness and make sacred covenants to follow the Lord. Yet despite that, some move toward Him while others do not. In which category are you?

God should be the center of our universe—our literal focal point. Is He? Or is He sometimes far from the thoughts and intents of our hearts? (see Mosiah 5:13). Notice that it’s not just the thoughts of our hearts that are important but the “intents.” How do our behavior and actions reflect the integrity of our intents?

Our son Ben, when he was 16 and speaking in stake conference, asked the question, “How would you feel if someone promised you something every week and never kept the promise?” He continued, “Do we take seriously the promise we make when we partake of the sacrament and covenant to keep His commandments and always remember Him?”

The Lord gives us ways to help remember Him and His sustaining powers. One way is through that common lot we all share—adversity (see Alma 32:6). As I look back at the trials I have faced, it is clear that they have resulted in my growth, understanding, and empathy. They have drawn me closer to my Heavenly Father and His

Son with experiences and refining engraved into my heart.

The Lord’s guidance and instruction are essential. He helped the faithful brother of Jared by solving one of his two challenges when He told him how to get fresh air into the barges that had been faithfully built (see Ether 2:20). But, pointedly, the Lord not only left temporarily unsolved the challenge of how to provide light, but He then made it clear that He, the Lord, would allow the buffetings and trials that necessitated its solving. He it would be who would send forth the winds, the rains, and the floods (see Ether 2:23–24).

Why would He do that? And why does He warn any of us to remove ourselves from a source of danger when He could simply stop the danger from happening? President Wilford Woodruff told the story of being spiritually warned to move the carriage that he, his wife, and child slept in, only to discover that a whirlwind shortly thereafter uprooted a large



tree and dropped it exactly where the carriage had previously stood (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 47).

In both of these instances, the weather could have been adjusted to eliminate the dangers. But here is the point—rather than solve the problem Himself, the Lord wants us to develop the faith that will help us rely upon Him in solving our problems and trust Him. Then we can feel His love more constantly, more powerfully, more clearly, and more personally. We become united with Him, and we can become like Him. For us to be like Him is His goal. In fact, it is His glory as well as His work (see Moses 1:39).

A young boy was trying to smooth out the dirt area behind his house so he could play there with his cars. There was a large rock obstructing his work. The boy pushed and pulled with all his might, but no matter how hard he tried, the rock wouldn't budge.

His father watched for a while, then came to his son and said, "You need to use all your strength to move a rock this large."

The boy responded, "I have used all my strength!"

His father corrected him: "No you haven't. You haven't had my help yet!"

They then bent down together and moved the rock easily.

The father of my friend Vaiba Rome, Papua New Guinea's first stake president, was also taught that he could turn to his Father in Heaven in times of need. He and his fellow villagers could survive only through the crops they grew. One day he lit a fire to clear his portion of the village farmland for planting. However, the fire had been preceded by a long hot period, and the vegetation was very dry. So his fire became of the



**Colleyville, Texas, USA**

President Thomas S. Monson variety, as our prophet himself described at the last general conference (see "Obedience Brings Blessings," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 89–90). It began to spread to the grassland and bushes, and in the words of his son, "a big monster of fire" resulted. He feared for his fellow villagers and the possible loss of their crops. If they were destroyed, he would be subject to village justice. Being unable to extinguish the fire, he then remembered the Lord.

I now quote from his son, my friend: "He knelt on the hill in the bushes and started to pray to Heavenly Father to stop the fire. Suddenly there appeared a big black cloud above where he was praying, and it rained so hard—but only where the fire was burning. When he looked around, there was clear sky everywhere except where the flames

burned. He couldn't believe the Lord would answer a simple man like him, and he again knelt down and cried like a child. He said it was the sweetest feeling" (see Alma 36:3).

Our Savior wants us to really love Him to the point that we want to align our will with His. We can then feel His love and know His glory. Then He can bless us as He wants to. This happened to Nephi the son of Helaman, who reached the stage where the Lord trusted him implicitly and, because of that, was able to bless him with all that he asked (see Helaman 10:4–5).

In *Life of Pi*, the fictional book by Yann Martel, the hero voices his feelings about Christ: "I couldn't get Him out of my head. Still can't. I spent three solid days thinking about Him. The more He bothered me, the less I could forget Him. And the more I learned about Him, the less I wanted to leave Him" ([2001], 57).

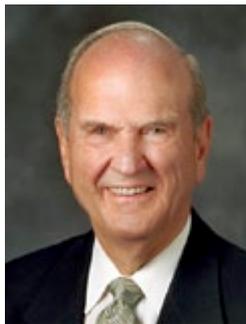
That's exactly how I feel about the Savior. He is always near, especially in sacred places and in times of need; and sometimes, when I least expect, I feel almost like He taps me on the shoulder to let me know He loves me. I can return that love in my own imperfect way by giving Him my heart (see D&C 64:22, 34).

Just a few months ago I sat with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland as he assigned missionaries to their missions. As we left he waited for me, and as we walked he draped his arm around my shoulder. I commented to him on his doing the same thing once before in Australia. He said, "That's because I love you!" And I knew that was true.

I believe that if we could have the privilege of walking physically with the Savior, that we would feel His arm draped over our shoulder just like that. Like the disciples heading toward Emmaus, our hearts would "burn within us" (Luke 24:32). This is His message: "Come and see" (John 1:39). It is personal, inviting, and embracing in its invitation to walk with His arm around our shoulders.

May we all feel as confident as Enos, as reflected in the last verse of his short but profound book: "I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father" (Enos 1:27).

Because of the multiplicity of experiences and the power with which the Spirit has witnessed to me, I testify with absolute surety that God lives. I feel His love. It is the sweetest feeling. May we do what is needed to align our will with His and truly love Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

## Decisions for Eternity

*The wise use of your freedom to make your own decisions is crucial to your spiritual growth, now and for eternity.*

My dear brothers and sisters, each day is a day of decision. President Thomas S. Monson has taught us that "decisions determine destiny."<sup>1</sup> The wise use of your freedom to make your own decisions is crucial to your spiritual growth, now and for eternity. You are never too young to learn, never too old to change. Your yearnings to learn and change come from a divinely instilled striving for eternal progression.<sup>2</sup> Each day brings opportunity for decisions for eternity.

We are eternal beings—spirit children of heavenly parents. The Bible records that "God created man in his own image, . . . male and female created he them."<sup>3</sup> Recently I heard a chorus of children sing the beloved song "I Am a Child of God."<sup>4</sup> I wondered, "Why haven't I heard that song rendered more often by singing mothers or faithful fathers?" Are we not *all* children of God? In truth, not one of us can *ever stop* being a child of God!

As children of God, we should love Him with all our heart and soul, even more than we love our earthly parents.<sup>5</sup> We should love our neighbors as brothers and sisters. No other commandments are greater than these.<sup>6</sup> And we should ever revere the worth of human life, through each of its many stages.

Scripture teaches that the body and the spirit are the soul of man.<sup>7</sup> As a dual being, each of you can thank God for His priceless gifts of your body and your spirit.

### The Human Body

My professional years as a medical doctor gave me a profound respect for the human body. Created by God as a gift to you, it is absolutely amazing! Think of your eyes that see, ears that hear, and fingers that feel all the wondrous things around you. Your brain lets you learn, think, and reason. Your heart pumps tirelessly day and night, almost without your awareness.<sup>8</sup>

Your body protects itself. Pain comes as a warning that something is wrong and needs attention. Infectious illnesses strike from time to time, and when they do, antibodies are formed that increase your resistance to subsequent infection.

Your body repairs itself. Cuts and bruises heal. Broken bones can become strong once again. I have cited but a tiny sample of the many amazing God-given qualities of your body.

Even so, it seems that in every family, if not in every person, some physical conditions exist that require special care.<sup>9</sup> A pattern for coping with such a challenge has been



given by the Lord. He said, “I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves . . . and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”<sup>10</sup>

Stellar spirits are often housed in imperfect bodies.<sup>11</sup> The gift of such a body can actually strengthen a family as parents and siblings willingly build their lives around that child born with special needs.

The aging process is also a gift from God, as is death. The eventual death of your mortal body is essential to God’s great plan of happiness.<sup>12</sup> Why? Because death will allow your spirit to return home to Him.<sup>13</sup> From an eternal perspective, death is only premature for those who are not prepared to meet God.

With your body being such a vital part of God’s eternal plan, it is little wonder that the Apostle Paul described it as a “temple of God.”<sup>14</sup> Each time you look in the mirror, see your body as your temple. That truth—refreshed gratefully each day—can positively influence your decisions about how you will care for your body and how you will use it. And those decisions will determine your destiny. How could this be? Because your body is the temple for your spirit. And how you use your body affects your spirit. Some of the decisions that will determine your eternal destiny include:

- How will you choose to care for and use your body?
- What spiritual attributes will you choose to develop?

### The Human Spirit

Your spirit is an eternal entity. The Lord said to His prophet Abraham: “Thou wast chosen before thou wast born.”<sup>15</sup> The Lord said something similar about Jeremiah<sup>16</sup> and many others.<sup>17</sup> He even said it about you.<sup>18</sup>

Your Heavenly Father has known you for a very long time. You, as His son or daughter, were chosen by Him to come to earth at this precise time, to be a leader in His great work on earth.<sup>19</sup> You were chosen *not* for your bodily characteristics but for your *spiritual* attributes, such as bravery, courage, integrity of heart, a thirst for truth, a hunger for wisdom, and a desire to serve others.

You developed some of these attributes premortally. Others you can develop here on earth<sup>20</sup> as you persistently seek them.<sup>21</sup>

A pivotal spiritual attribute is that of self-mastery—the strength to place reason over appetite. Self-mastery builds a strong conscience. And your conscience determines your moral responses in difficult, tempting, and trying situations. Fasting helps your spirit to develop dominance over your physical appetites. Fasting also increases your access to heaven’s help, as it intensifies your prayers. Why the need for self-mastery? God implanted strong appetites within us for nourishment and love, vital for the human family to be perpetuated.<sup>22</sup> When we master our appetites within the bounds of God’s laws, we can enjoy longer life, greater love, and consummate joy.<sup>23</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that most temptations to stray from God’s plan of happiness come through the misuse of those essential, God-given appetites. Controlling our appetites is not always easy. Not one of us manages them perfectly.<sup>24</sup> Mistakes happen.



Errors are made. Sins are committed. What can we do then? We can learn from them. And we can truly repent.<sup>25</sup>

We can change our behavior. Our very desires can change. How? There is only one way. True change—permanent change—can come only through the healing, cleansing, and enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> He loves you—each of you!<sup>27</sup> He allows you to access His power as you keep His commandments, eagerly, earnestly, and exactly. It is that simple and certain. The gospel of Jesus Christ *is* a gospel of change!<sup>28</sup>

A strong human spirit with control over appetites of the flesh is master over emotions and passions and not a slave to them. That kind of freedom is as vital to the spirit as oxygen is to the body! Freedom from self-slavery is true liberation!<sup>29</sup>

We are “free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death.”<sup>30</sup> When we choose the loftier path toward liberty and eternal life, that path includes marriage.<sup>31</sup> Latter-day Saints proclaim that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” We

also know that “gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.”<sup>32</sup>

Marriage between a man and a woman is fundamental to the Lord’s doctrine and crucial to God’s eternal plan. Marriage between a man and a woman is God’s pattern for a fulness of life on earth and in heaven. God’s marriage pattern cannot be abused, misunderstood, or misconstrued.<sup>33</sup> Not if you want true joy. God’s marriage pattern protects the sacred power of procreation and the joy of true marital intimacy.<sup>34</sup> We know that Adam and Eve were married by God before they ever experienced the joy of uniting as husband and wife.<sup>35</sup>

In our day civil governments have a vested interest in protecting marriage because strong families constitute the best way of providing for the health, education, welfare, and prosperity of rising generations.<sup>36</sup> But civil governments are heavily influenced by social trends and secular philosophies as they write, rewrite, and enforce laws. Regardless of what civil legislation may be enacted, the doctrine of the Lord regarding marriage and morality *cannot be changed*.<sup>37</sup> Remember: sin,

even if legalized by man, is still sin in the eyes of God!

While we are to emulate our Savior’s kindness and compassion, while we are to value the rights and feelings of all of God’s children, we cannot change His doctrine. It is not ours to change. His doctrine is ours to study, understand, and uphold.

The Savior’s way of life is good. His way includes chastity before marriage and total fidelity within marriage.<sup>38</sup> The Lord’s way is the only way for us to experience enduring happiness. His way brings sustained comfort to our souls and perennial peace to our homes. And best of all, His way leads us home to Him and our Heavenly Father, to eternal life and exaltation.<sup>39</sup> This is the very essence of God’s work and glory.<sup>40</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, each day is a day of decision, and our decisions determine our destiny. One day each of us will stand before the Lord in judgment.<sup>41</sup> We will each have a personal interview with Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup> We will account for decisions that we made about our bodies, our spiritual attributes, and how we honored God’s pattern for marriage and family. That we may choose wisely each day’s

decisions for eternity is my earnest prayer in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny” (Church Educational System fireside, Nov. 6, 2005), 3; speeches.byu.edu.
2. The concept of eternal progression was captured well by W. W. Phelps in his text to the hymn “If You Could Hie to Kolob” (*Hymns*, no. 284). Verse 4 reads: “There is no end to virtue; / There is no end to might; / There is no end to wisdom; / There is no end to light. / There is no end to union; / There is no end to youth; / There is no end to priesthood; / There is no end to truth.” Verse 5 concludes: “There is no end to glory; / There is no end to love; / There is no end to being; / There is no death above.”
3. Genesis 1:27; see also Colossians 3:10; Alma 18:34; Ether 3:15; Moses 6:9.
4. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
5. See Matthew 10:37.
6. See Mark 12:30–31.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
8. Other God-given mechanisms are also at work in your body. Elements like sodium, potassium, and calcium and compounds like water, glucose, and proteins are essential for survival. The body deals with gases like oxygen and carbon dioxide. It makes hormones like insulin, adrenalin, and thyroxin. Levels of each of these and many other constituents in the body are auto-regulated within certain bounds. Servo-regulatory relationships exist between glands of the body. For example, the pituitary gland at the base of the brain emits a hormone to stimulate the cortex of the adrenal glands to produce adrenal cortical hormones. Rising levels of cortical hormones in turn suppress the pituitary’s output of the stimulating hormone and vice versa. Your body temperature is maintained at a normal range of 98.6°F (or 37°C), whether you’re at the equator or at the North Pole.
9. Some conditions are easily evident; others are latent. Some are familial; others are not. Some people are predisposed to cancer, others have allergies, and so on. Each of us can be alert to his or her own area of weakness and humbly learn what the Lord would teach, that the weakness may become a strength.
10. Ether 12:27.
11. Some conditions won’t be fully corrected until the Resurrection, when “all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23).
12. See Alma 42:8.
13. The Psalmist wrote, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15). Death is precious because it is a “homecoming” for the Saint with the Lord.
14. 1 Corinthians 3:16; see also 6:19.
15. Abraham 3:23.
16. See Jeremiah 1:5.
17. See Alma 13:2–3.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56.
19. See Alma 13:2–3; Doctrine and Covenants 138:38–57.
20. Attributes of “faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:6) are among the spiritual gifts we can develop and be given. Gratitude is another spiritual attribute that can be developed. Gratitude shapes mood and productivity. And when you have “spiritually been born of God,” you may gratefully receive His image in your countenance (see Alma 5:14).
21. See 1 Corinthians 12; 14:1–12; Moroni 10:8–19; Doctrine and Covenants 46:10–29.
22. Some are tempted to eat too much. “Obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally, with at least 2.8 million people dying each year as a result of being overweight” (“10 Facts on Obesity,” World Health Organization, Mar. 2013, www.who.int/features/factfiles/obesity/en). Others are tempted to eat too little. Anorexia and bulimia devastate many lives, marriages, and families. And some are tempted by sexual appetites forbidden by our Creator. Clarification is found in *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, which states: “The Lord’s law of chastity is abstinence from sexual relations outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. . . . Adultery, fornication, homosexual or lesbian relations, and every other unholy, unnatural, or impure practice are sinful.” Still quoting from the handbook: “Homosexual behavior violates the commandments of God, is contrary to the purposes of human sexuality, and deprives people of the blessings that can be found in family life and in the saving ordinances of the gospel. . . . While opposing homosexual behavior, the Church reaches out with understanding and respect to individuals who are attracted to those of the same gender” ([2010], 21.4.5; 21.4.6).
23. See 1 Corinthians 6:9–20; James 1:25–27; Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21. And we should always remember that “men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).
24. Mortality is a period of testing, as explained in scripture: “We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25).
25. See Mosiah 4:10; Alma 39:9; Helaman 15:7. *Handbook 2* includes this message: “Homosexual behavior can be forgiven through sincere repentance” (21.4.6).
26. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, all mankind may be saved (see Doctrine and Covenants 138:4; Articles of Faith 1:3).
27. See Ether 12:33–34; Moroni 8:17.
28. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
29. See Romans 8:13–17; Galatians 5:13–25; Doctrine and Covenants 88:86.
30. 2 Nephi 2:27.
31. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.
32. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
33. See Matthew 19:4–6; Mosiah 29:26–27; Helaman 5:2.
34. Each person is born with unique identity, chromosomes, and DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). DNA is a molecule that encodes genetic instructions used in the development and function of living cells. Each person’s DNA is created when the DNA from a father and a mother combine to create the DNA of a new body—a partnership between father, mother, and child.
35. See Genesis 2:24–25; 3:20–21; 4:1–2, 25.
36. Dr. Patrick F. Fagan wrote: “The indispensable building block upon which the fortunes of the economy depends [is] the married-parent household—especially the child-rich family that worships weekly. . . . Every marriage creates a new household, an independent economic unit that generates income, spends, saves, and invests” (“The Family GDP: How Marriage and Fertility Drive the Economy,” *The Family in America*, vol. 24, no. 2 [Spring 2010], 136).
37. See Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:18; Matthew 5:27–28; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 1:26–27; 13:9; Mosiah 13:22; 3 Nephi 12:27–28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6.
38. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “This Thing Was Not Done in a Corner,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 49.
39. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
40. See Moses 1:39.
41. See 2 Nephi 9:41, 46; Mosiah 16:10.
42. We will be judged according to our deeds and the desire of our hearts (see Doctrine and Covenants 137:9; see also Hebrews 4:12; Alma 18:32; Doctrine and Covenants 6:16; 88:109).



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By President Thomas S. Monson

# Till We Meet Again

*May we show increased kindness toward one another, and may we ever be found doing the work of the Lord.*

My brothers and sisters, my heart is full as we bring to a close this wonderful general conference of the Church. We have been spiritually fed as we have listened to the counsel and testimonies of those who have participated in each session.

We have been blessed to meet here in the magnificent Conference Center in peace and safety. We have had unprecedented coverage of the conference, reaching across the continents to people everywhere. Though we are physically far

removed from many of you, we feel of your spirit.

To our Brethren who have been released at this conference, may I express the heartfelt thanks of the entire Church for your years of devoted service. Countless are those who have been blessed by your contributions to the work of the Lord.

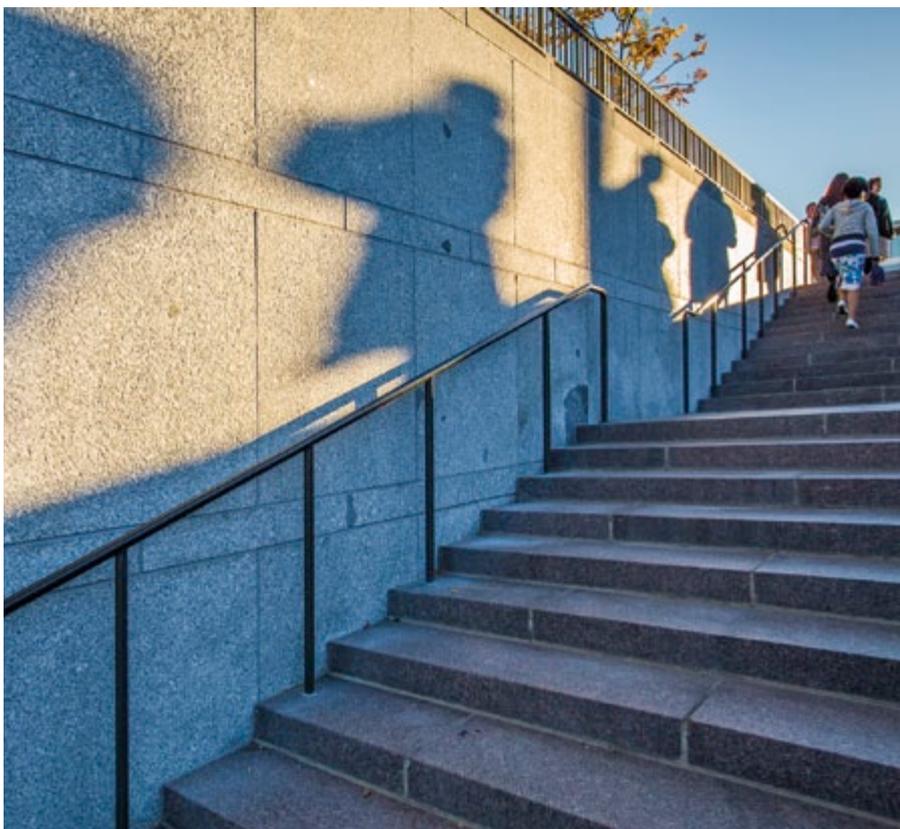
I express gratitude to the Tabernacle Choir and to the other choirs which participated in this conference. The music has been beautiful and has added greatly to the Spirit we have felt at each session.

I thank you for your prayers in my behalf and in behalf of all the General Authorities and general officers of the Church. We are strengthened by them.

May heaven's blessings be with you. May your homes be filled with love and courtesy and with the Spirit of the Lord. May you constantly nourish your testimonies of the gospel that they will be a protection to you against the buffetings of the adversary.

Conference is now over. As we return to our homes, may we do so safely. May the Spirit we have felt here be and abide with us as we go about those things which occupy us each day. May we show increased kindness toward one another, and may we ever be found doing the work of the Lord.

My brothers and sisters, may God bless you. May His promised peace be with you now and always. I bid you farewell until we meet again in six months' time. In the name of our Savior, even Jesus Christ the Lord, amen. ■



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**By Linda K. Burton**  
Relief Society General President

# The Power, Joy, and Love of Covenant Keeping

*I invite each of us to evaluate how much we love the Savior, using as a measure how joyfully we keep our covenants.*

I'd like to begin by sharing a story that touches my heart.

One evening a man called his five sheep to come into the shelter for the night. His family watched with great interest as he simply called, "Come on," and immediately all five heads lifted and turned in his direction. Four sheep broke into a run toward him. With loving-kindness he gently patted each of the four on the head. The sheep knew his voice and loved him.

But the fifth sheep didn't come running. She was a large ewe that a few weeks earlier had been given away by her owner, who reported that she was wild, wayward, and always leading the other sheep astray. The new owner accepted the sheep and staked her in his own field for a few days so she would learn to stay put. He patiently taught her to love him and the other sheep until eventually she had only a short rope around her neck but was no longer staked down.

That evening as his family watched, the man approached the ewe, which stood at the edge of the field, and again he gently said, "Come on. You aren't tied down anymore. You are free." Then lovingly he reached out, placed his hand on her head, and walked back with her and the other sheep toward the shelter.<sup>1</sup>

In the spirit of that story, I pray that the Holy Ghost will help us learn together tonight about covenant keeping. Making and keeping covenants means choosing to bind ourselves to our Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ. It is committing to follow the Savior. It is trusting Him and desiring to show our gratitude for the price He paid to set us free through the infinite gift of the Atonement.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained that "a covenant is a binding spiritual contract, a solemn promise to God our Father that we will live and think and act in a certain way—the way of His

Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In return, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost promise us the full splendor of eternal life."<sup>2</sup> In that binding contract, the Lord sets the terms and we agree to keep them. Making and keeping our covenants is an expression of our commitment to become like the Savior.<sup>3</sup> The ideal is to strive for the attitude best expressed in a few phrases of a favorite hymn: "I'll go where *you* want me to go. . . . I'll say what *you* want me to say. . . . I'll be what *you* want me to be."<sup>4</sup>

## Why Make and Keep Covenants?

### 1. Covenant keeping strengthens, empowers, and protects.

Nephi saw in vision the significant blessings the Lord bestows upon covenant keepers: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended . . . upon the covenant people of the Lord, . . . and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."<sup>5</sup>

I recently met a dear new friend. She testified that after she had received her temple endowment, she felt strengthened with the power to resist temptations she had previously struggled with.

As we keep our covenants, we also receive courage and strength to help us bear one another's burdens. A heartbroken sister had a son who was experiencing a difficult mortal challenge. Because of her faith in her Relief Society sisters as covenant keepers, she courageously invited them to fast and pray for her son. Another sister expressed how she wished she had asked for similar prayers from her sisters. Years before, her own son was struggling. She wished she had invited them to help her family bear this burden. The Savior said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if



really expect eight-year-olds to keep their covenants? As we counseled together, it was suggested that one way to prepare children to make and keep sacred baptismal covenants is to help them learn to make and keep a simple promise.

Faithful parents are entitled to know how to best teach to meet the needs of their children. As parents seek and act on personal revelation, counsel together, minister and teach the simple principles of the gospel, they will have power to strengthen and protect their families. Other family members can also help. My cute grandpa taught us the importance of keeping promises through a simple song. It went something like this: “Before you make a promise, consider well its importance. Then when made, engrave it upon your heart. Engrave it upon your heart.” That little song was taught with love, conviction, and power because Grandpa engraved his own promises on his heart.

A wise mother I know intentionally includes her children in her efforts to keep her covenants. She joyfully bears the burdens of neighbors, friends, and ward members—and comforts those who stand in need of comfort. It was not surprising when her young daughter recently came asking for help to know how to best comfort her friend whose father had just passed away. That was a perfect setting to teach that her desire to comfort her friend was one way to keep her baptismal covenant. How can we expect children to make and keep temple covenants if we don’t expect them to keep their first covenant—their baptismal covenant?

Elder Richard G. Scott observed, “One of the greatest blessings we can offer to the world is the power of a Christ-centered home where the

ye have love one to another.”<sup>6</sup>

Oh, sisters, we all have burdens to bear and burdens to share. An invitation to bear one another’s burdens is an invitation to keep our covenants. Lucy Mack Smith’s counsel to the first Relief Society sisters is more relevant today than ever before: “We must cherish one another, watch over one another, comfort one another and gain instruction, that we may all sit down in heaven together.”<sup>7</sup> This is covenant keeping and visiting teaching at its finest!

The Book of Mormon reminds us that even the prophet Alma had to bear the burden of having a rebellious son. But Alma was blessed with covenant-keeping brothers and sisters

in the gospel who were deeply converted unto the Lord and had learned what it meant to bear each other’s burdens. We are familiar with the verse in Mosiah that speaks of the great faith of Alma’s prayers in behalf of his son. But the record states that “the Lord . . . heard the prayers *of his people*, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma.”<sup>8</sup>

We know that the Lord always rejoices “in the soul that repenteth,”<sup>9</sup> but we desire above all to have our children follow the counsel of President Henry B. Eyring to “start early and be steady” in making and keeping covenants.<sup>10</sup> Not long ago a thought-provoking and sincere question was raised in a council of priesthood and auxiliary leaders: do we

gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds.”<sup>11</sup> What are some ways we can create such a home to prepare our children to make and keep temple covenants?

- We can discover together what it means to be worthy of a temple recommend.
- We can discover together how to listen to the Holy Ghost. Because the temple endowment is received by revelation, we need to learn that vital skill.
- We can discover together how to learn through the use of symbols, beginning with the sacred symbols of baptism and the sacrament.
- We can discover together why the body is sacred, why it is sometimes referred to as a temple, and how modest dress and grooming relates to the sacred nature of temple clothing.
- We can discover the plan of happiness in the scriptures. The more familiar we are with Heavenly Father’s plan and the Atonement in the scriptures, the more meaningful temple worship will be.
- We can learn the stories of our ancestors together, research family history, index, and perform vicarious temple work for deceased loved ones.
- We can discover together the meaning of terms such as *endowment*, *ordinance*, *sealing*, *priesthood*, *keys*, and other words related to temple worship.
- We can teach that we go to the temple to make covenants with Heavenly Father—we return home to keep them!<sup>12</sup>

Let us remember the concept of “good, better, and best” as we teach.<sup>13</sup> It is good to teach our children about

the temple. It is better to prepare and expect them to make and keep covenants. It is best to show them by example that we cheerfully cleave to our own baptismal and temple covenants! Sisters, do we realize our vital role in the work of salvation as we nurture, teach, and prepare children to progress along the covenant path? The power to do so will come as we honor and keep our covenants.

## **2. Keeping covenants is essential for true happiness.**

President Thomas S. Monson taught, “Sacred covenants are to be revered by us, and faithfulness to them is a requirement for happiness.”<sup>14</sup> In 2 Nephi we read, “And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness.”<sup>15</sup> Earlier in this same chapter we learn that Nephi and his people had just built a temple. Surely they were joyful covenant keepers! And in Alma we read, “But behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni.”<sup>16</sup> Why? Again we learn in a previous verse that they “were faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord.”<sup>17</sup> Covenant keepers are commandment keepers!

I love the scripture that reads: “And now when the people had heard these words [meaning the words describing the baptismal covenant], they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.”<sup>18</sup> I love the desire of their hearts. They cheerfully desired to make and keep their covenants!

One Sunday a young sister joyfully exclaimed, “I get to take the sacrament today!” When was the last time we rejoiced in that privilege? And how do we demonstrate it? We do this by *always* remembering the Savior and *always* keeping His commandments,

which include keeping His Sabbath day holy. We do it by *always* remembering Him as we *always* have our personal and family prayers, daily scripture study, and weekly family home evenings. And when we get distracted or casual with these important things, we repent and begin again.

Making and cheerfully keeping our covenants gives validity and life to the vital sacred and saving ordinances we need to receive in order to obtain “all that [the] Father hath.”<sup>19</sup> Ordinances and covenants are the “spiritual milestones” President Henry B. Eyring referred to when he taught: “The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us. He *always* keeps His promises offered through His authorized servants, but it is the crucial test of our lives to see if *we* will make and keep our covenants with Him.”<sup>20</sup>





He kept His covenants with love. The question then is, will we? May we go forth with faith, cheerful hearts, and a great desire to be covenant keepers. This is how we demonstrate our love for our Father in Heaven and our Savior, both of whom I testify with great love in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See D. Todd Christofferson, "You Are Free," *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 38, 40; or *Liahona*, Mar. 2013, 16, 18.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Keeping Covenants: A Message for Those Who Will Serve a Mission," *New Era*, Jan. 2012, 3; or *Liahona*, Jan. 2012, 49.
3. See "Understanding Our Covenants with God," *Ensign*, July 2012, 25; or *Liahona*, July 2012, 23.
4. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270; emphasis added.
5. 1 Nephi 14:14.
6. John 13:35.
7. Lucy Mack Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 25.
8. Mosiah 27:14; emphasis added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 18:13.
10. See Henry B. Eyring, "Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 37–40.
11. Richard G. Scott, "For Peace at Home," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 30.
12. See D. Todd Christofferson, "The Gospel Answers Life's Problems and Challenges" (worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 2012); [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts).
13. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Good, Better, Best," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104.
14. Thomas S. Monson, "Happiness—the Universal Quest," *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 4; or *Liahona*, Mar. 1996, 5.
15. 2 Nephi 5:27.
16. Alma 50:23.
17. Alma 50:22.
18. Mosiah 18:11.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
20. Henry B. Eyring, "Witnesses for God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 30; emphasis added.
21. Genesis 29:20.
22. John 3:16.
23. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Importance of the Sacrament Meeting," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1943, 592.
24. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The First Great Commandment," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 84.
25. John 14:21.
26. John 10:11.

### 3. Keeping our covenants demonstrates our love for the Savior and our Father in Heaven.

Of all the reasons we ought to be more diligent in our covenant keeping, this reason is more compelling than all—love. A verse in the Old Testament is one that touches my heart as we consider the principle of love. Who of us is not moved by Jacob and Rachel's biblical love story as we read, "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her?"<sup>21</sup> Sisters, do we keep our covenants with that kind of deep and devoted love?

Why was the Savior willing to keep His covenant with the Father and fulfill His divine mission to atone for the sins of the world? It was His love for His Father and His love for us. Why was the Father willing to allow His Only Begotten and perfect Son to suffer pain beyond description to bear the sins, heartaches, sicknesses, and infirmities of the world and all that is unfair in this life? We find the answer in these words: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."<sup>22</sup>

"If we fully appreciated the many blessings which are ours through the redemption made for us, there is nothing that the Lord could ask of us that we would not anxiously and willingly

do."<sup>23</sup> According to this statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith, covenant keeping is one way to express our love for the incomprehensible, infinite Atonement of our Savior and Redeemer and the perfect love of our Father in Heaven.

Elder Holland movingly suggested, "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?'"<sup>24</sup> Tonight I invite each of us to evaluate how much we love the Savior, using as a measure how joyfully we keep our covenants. The Savior said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."<sup>25</sup> How we all need a regular manifestation of the Savior in our daily lives!

Let us remember that even those who have been wayward in the past or who are currently struggling can feel the touch of the Good Shepherd's hand upon their heads and hear His voice saying: "Come on. You aren't tied down anymore. You are free." The Savior said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."<sup>26</sup> He can say that because



**By Carole M. Stephens**  
First Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# We Have Great Reason to Rejoice

*When you love, watch over, and serve others in small and simple ways, you are actively participating in the work of salvation.*

When my father-in-law passed away, our family gathered together to greet others who came to pay their respects. Throughout the evening, as I visited with family and friends, I often noticed our 10-year-old grandson, Porter, standing near my mother-in-law—his “granny.” Sometimes he was standing behind her, watching over her. Once I noticed his arm linked with hers. I watched him pat her hands, give her little hugs, and stand by her side.

For several days after that experience, I couldn’t get this image out of my mind. I was prompted to send Porter a note, telling him what I had observed. I emailed him and told him what I had seen and felt. I reminded Porter of the covenants he had made when he was baptized, quoting Alma’s words in Mosiah chapter 18:

“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 that ye may be in, even until death, . . . that ye may have eternal life—

“ . . . 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?”<sup>1</sup>

I explained to Porter that Alma taught that those who want to be baptized need to be willing to serve the Lord by serving others—for your whole life! I said: “I don’t know if you realized it, but the way you showed love and concern for Granny was keeping your covenants. We keep our covenants every day as we are kind, show love, and take care of each other. I just wanted you to know I’m proud of you for being a covenant keeper! As you keep the covenant you made when you were baptized, you will be prepared to be ordained to the priesthood. This additional covenant will give you more opportunities to bless and serve others and help you to prepare for the covenants you will make in the temple. Thank you for being such a good example to me! Thank you for showing me what it looks like to be a covenant keeper!”

Porter replied back: “Grandma, thanks for the message. When I was always hugging Granny, I didn’t know that I was keeping my covenants, but I felt warm in my heart and felt really good. I know that it was the Holy Ghost in my heart.”



**Porter (right) with his great-grandmother**

I also felt warm in my heart when I realized that Porter had connected keeping his covenants with the promise to “always have his Spirit to be with [us]”<sup>2</sup>—a promise made possible by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Sisters, as I have visited you around the world, I have observed that many of you are like Porter. You quietly stand as witnesses of God, mourn with those that mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort without realizing that you are keeping your covenants—the covenants you made in the waters of baptism and in the temple. When you love, watch over, and serve others in small and simple ways, you are actively participating in the work of salvation, God’s work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>3</sup>

As “daughters in [the Lord’s] kingdom,”<sup>4</sup> we have made sacred covenants. We are walking in what Nephi called the “strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life.”<sup>5</sup> We’re all at different places on the path. But we can work together to help each other “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.”<sup>6</sup>

Jeanne serves as a Young Women adviser. Several months ago she learned about an upcoming activity for the youth in the ward: hiking to a place called Malan’s Peak. She was excited because she had recently set a goal to make that climb.

When she arrived at the trailhead, her good friend Ashley approached her. Linking arms with Jeanne, she offered to hike with her, saying, “I’ll go with you.” Ashley, who was 16 years old at the time, had some physical challenges that made it difficult for her to climb very fast. So she and Jeanne walked slowly, noticing Heavenly Father’s creations: the rocks on the

mountain peak above them and the flowers all around them. Jeanne later said, “It really didn’t take me long to forget about my goal of hiking to the peak, for it soon became an adventure of another kind—an adventure to point out the beauties along the path, many of which I would have missed had I just hiked to reach the goal of Malan’s Peak.”

As Jeanne and Ashley continued hiking, far behind the rest of the group, they were joined by Emma, another young woman in the ward, who had decided to wait and walk with them. Emma added to their enjoyment. She taught them a song and provided extra support and encouragement. Jeanne recalled: “We sat and rested, we sang, we talked, and we laughed. I was able to get to know Ashley and Emma in a way I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise. It wasn’t about the mountain that night—it was about much, much more. It was about helping each other along the path, one step at a time.”

As Jeanne, Ashley, and Emma hiked and sang and rested and laughed together, they probably weren’t thinking, “Hey, we are keeping our covenants right now.” But they were keeping their covenants. They were serving each other with love, compassion, and commitment. They were strengthening each other’s faith as they encouraged and ministered to one another.

Elder Russell M. Nelson taught: “When we realize that we are children of the covenant, we know who we are and what God expects of us. His law is written in our hearts.”<sup>7</sup>

Maria Kuzina is a covenant daughter of God who knows who she is and what God expects of her. When she welcomed me into her home in

Omsk, Russia, I thought I was there to serve her, but I soon realized that I was there to learn from her. A convert to the Church, Maria lives by the direction found in Luke 22: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>8</sup> She has faith in the words of our living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who said:

“Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him. . . .

“ . . . When we act in faith the Lord will show us how to strengthen His Church in the wards and branches in which we live. He will be with us and will become an active partner in our missionary labors.

“ . . . Exercise your faith . . . as you prayerfully consider which of your family, your friends, your neighbors, and your acquaintances you would like to invite to your home to meet with the missionaries, that they might hear the message of the Restoration.”<sup>9</sup>

Maria follows this counsel by watching over and ministering to the sisters she has been asked to visit teach and also reaching beyond this assignment. She has many friends who are less active or who have not yet heard the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Each day she exercises her faith and prays to know who needs her help, and then she acts on the prompting she receives. She makes phone calls, expresses her love, and tells her friends, “We need you.” She has family home evening in her apartment every week and invites neighbors, members, and missionaries to come—and she feeds them. She invites them to come to church, watches for them, and sits by them when they arrive.

Maria understands Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s recent reminder that “an



invitation that is born of our love for others and for the Lord Jesus Christ . . . will never be seen as offensive or judgmental.”<sup>10</sup> She keeps a list of people who say they have been offended; she continues to minister to them. Because they know that she loves them, she can tell them, “Don’t be offended. That’s ridiculous!”

Maria is a covenant-keeping disciple of Jesus Christ. Although she does not have a priesthood holder in her home, she feels God’s power each day in fulfillment of her temple covenants as she presses forward on the path, enduring to the end and helping others participate in the work of salvation along the way.

As I shared these experiences with you, did you see yourself in the work of salvation? Take a moment to think of another daughter of God who needs encouragement to get back on the covenant path or who needs a little help to stay on the path. Ask your Father in Heaven about her. She is His daughter. He knows her by name. He also knows you, and He will tell you what she needs. Be patient and continue in faith and prayer on her behalf, and act on the promptings you receive. As you act on these promptings, the Spirit will confirm that your

offering is acceptable to the Lord.

“Sister Eliza R. Snow . . . gratefully acknowledged sisters’ efforts to strengthen one another. . . . She told them that although the Church did not keep a record of every donation they made to help those in need, the Lord kept a perfect record of their saving work:

“ . . . President Joseph Smith said this society was organized to save souls. What [are we doing] to win back those who have gone astray?—to warm up the hearts of those who have grown cold in the gospel?—Another book is kept of your faith, your kindness, your good works, and [your] words. Another record is kept. Nothing is lost.”<sup>11</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, Ammon speaks of the great reason we have to rejoice. He says: “And now, I ask, what great blessings has [God] bestowed upon us? Can ye tell?”

In his excitement, Ammon doesn’t wait for an answer. He says, “Behold, I answer for you; . . . this is the blessing which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.”<sup>12</sup>

We are covenant daughters in the Lord’s kingdom, and we have the

opportunity to be instruments in His hands. As we participate in the work of salvation each day in small and simple ways—watching over, strengthening, and teaching one another—we will be able to join with Ammon, who declared:

“Behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.

“Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things.”<sup>13</sup>

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Mosiah 18:8–10.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
3. Moses 1:39.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 25:1.
5. 2 Nephi 31:18.
6. 2 Nephi 31:20.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 88.
8. Luke 22:32.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Faith in the Work of Salvation” (worldwide leadership training broadcast, June 2013); [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts).
10. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Our Responsibility to Invite” (worldwide leadership training broadcast, June 2013); [lds.org/broadcasts](http://lds.org/broadcasts).
11. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 83.
12. Alma 26:2–3.
13. Alma 26:11–12.



**By Linda S. Reeves**

Second Counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency

# Claim the Blessings of Your Covenants

*As we renew and honor our covenants, our burdens can be lightened and we can continually become purified and strengthened.*

**S**isters, how wonderful it is to be with you again.

I recently met a woman who was preparing to be baptized. This particular Sunday she arrived at church having walked two miles (3 km) in heavy mud. She immediately went into the restroom, removed her muddy clothes, washed, and put on clean Sunday clothes. In the Relief Society meeting she told of her conversion. I was touched by her overwhelming desire to be washed clean and pure through repentance and the atoning sacrifice of the Savior and her willingness to give up her “old life” in order to make sacred covenants with our Father in Heaven. She had separated from her boyfriend, was overcoming addictions in order to live the Word of Wisdom, quit her Sunday job, and lost the friendship of loved ones when she announced her plans to be baptized. She was so anxious to give away all of her sins that she might be washed clean and feel the redeeming love of the Savior. I was inspired that morning by her desire to become both physically and spiritually clean.

We know that many of you have

made similar sacrifices as you have felt the witness of the Holy Ghost and have longed to repent, be baptized, and be made clean. Perhaps at no other time do we feel the divine love of the Savior as abundantly as we do when we repent and feel His loving arms outstretched to embrace us and assure us of His love and acceptance.

A few Sundays ago as I listened to the sacrament prayer, I was moved by the way that the priest pronounced each word with great feeling. Later I called that priest to thank him for

helping make the sacrament a deep spiritual experience for me and the congregation. He was not at home, but his mother responded, “Oh, he will be so happy that you called! This was his first time giving the sacrament prayer, and we have been preparing together, talking about the importance of the sacrament and worthily renewing our baptismal covenants with the Savior.” How I love this dear mother for teaching her son about the power of baptismal covenants and how he can help the members of the ward feel that power.

Another mother I know of has sat alone at church for a number of years with her four young children. Seldom able to concentrate on the Savior during the sacrament, she formed a plan. Now she tries to spend time each Saturday reviewing her week and thinking about her covenants and what she needs to repent of. “Then,” she says, “no matter what kind of an experience I have with my children on Sunday, I am prepared to partake of the sacrament, renew my covenants, and feel of the cleansing power of the Atonement.”

Why does the Savior put so much importance upon the sacrament, dear sisters? What importance does this weekly renewal of our baptismal covenants play in our lives? Do we recognize the ability of the Savior to completely cleanse us every week as we worthily and thoughtfully partake of the sacrament? President Boyd K. Packer has testified, “That is the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Atonement: . . . that at the end of [our lives, we] can go through the veil having repented of [our] sins and having been washed clean through the blood of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Our presidency feels great joy as our sisters and their families make and keep covenants, but our hearts





ache for those of you who are experiencing great adversity in your lives because of the covenant-breaking of loved ones. The prophet Jacob, brother to Nephi, was charged by the Lord to speak to his brethren concerning the righteous women and children of his day. I testify that his words have been preserved specifically for our day. He speaks to us as if the Savior Himself were speaking. Jacob was “weighed down with much . . . anxiety” as he testified to husbands and fathers:

“It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech . . . before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate. . . .

“ . . . The sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God. . . . Many hearts [have] died, pierced with deep wounds.”<sup>2</sup>

To the covenant-keeping women and children of his and our day, Jacob promises:

“Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions. . . .

“ . . . Lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love.”<sup>3</sup>

Sisters, I testify of the strength and power of prayer as we express our deepest pains and desires to our Heavenly Father and of the answers that are received as we “feast upon” the scriptures and the words of the living prophets.

Almost three years ago a devastating fire gutted the interior of the beloved, historic tabernacle in Provo, Utah. Its loss was deemed a great tragedy by both the community and Church members. Many wondered, “Why did the Lord let this happen? Surely He could have prevented the fire or stopped its destruction.”

Ten months later, during the October 2011 general conference, there was an audible gasp when President Thomas S. Monson announced that the nearly destroyed tabernacle was to become a holy temple—a house of the Lord! Suddenly we could see what the Lord had always known! He didn’t cause the fire, but He allowed the fire to strip away the interior. He saw the tabernacle as a magnificent temple—a

permanent home for making sacred, eternal covenants.<sup>4</sup>

My dear sisters, the Lord allows us to be tried and tested, sometimes to our maximum capacity. We have seen the lives of loved ones—and maybe our own—figuratively burned to the ground and have wondered why a loving and caring Heavenly Father would allow such things to happen. But He does not leave us in the ashes; He stands with open arms, eagerly inviting us to come to Him. He is building our lives into magnificent temples where His Spirit can dwell eternally.

In Doctrine and Covenants 58:3–4, the Lord tells us:

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

“For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory.”

Sisters, I testify that the Lord has a plan for each of our lives. Nothing that happens is a shock or a surprise



to Him. He is all-knowing and all-loving. He is eager to help us, to comfort us, and to ease our pain as we rely on the power of the Atonement and honor our covenants. The trials and tribulation that we experience may be the very things that guide us to come unto Him and cling to our covenants so that we might return to His presence and receive all that the Father hath.

This past year I have needed and wanted to feel the love of the Lord more deeply, to receive personal revelation, to better understand my temple covenants, and to have my burdens lightened. As I have prayed specifically for these blessings, I have felt the Spirit directing me to go to the temple and listen more closely to each word of the blessings pronounced upon me. I testify that as I have listened more intently and tried to exercise my faith, the Lord has been merciful to me and has helped make my burdens light. He has helped me to feel great peace

about prayers that have not yet been answered. We bind the Lord to keep His promises when we keep our covenants and exercise our faith.<sup>5</sup> Come to the temple, dear sisters, and claim your blessings!

I want to touch upon another way that can instill us with confidence and faith. We sometimes, as women, have a tendency to be very critical of ourselves. During these times we need to seek the Spirit and ask, “Is this what the Lord wants me to think about myself, or is Satan trying to beat me down?” Remember the nature of our Heavenly Father, whose love is perfect and infinite.<sup>6</sup> He wants to build us up, not tear us down.

As members of the Church, we may sometimes feel that we need to be part of a “perfect LDS family” in order to be accepted by the Lord. We often feel “less-than” or like misfits in the kingdom if we feel we do not fit that picture. Dear sisters, when all is said and done, what will matter

to our Father in Heaven will be how well we have kept our covenants and how much we have tried to follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. Because of His atoning sacrifice, we can be washed clean weekly as we worthily partake of His sacrament. As we renew and honor our covenants, our burdens can be lightened and we can continually become purified and strengthened so that at the end of our lives we will be counted worthy to receive exaltation and eternal life. I testify of these things in the name of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 77.
2. Jacob 2:3, 7, 35.
3. Jacob 3:1–2.
4. See Mosiah 23:21–22.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–25; *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 12–17.



By President Thomas S. Monson

# We Never Walk Alone

*You will one day stand aside and look at your difficult times, and you will realize that He was always there beside you.*

**M**y dear sisters, the spirit we feel this evening is a reflection of your strength, your devotion, and your goodness. To quote the Master: “Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

As I have contemplated my opportunity to address you, I have been reminded of the love my dear wife, Frances, had for Relief Society. During her lifetime she served in many positions in Relief Society. When she and I were both just 31 years of age, I was called to be president of the Canadian Mission. During the three years of that assignment, Frances presided over all of the Relief Societies in that vast area, which encompassed the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Some of her closest friendships came as a result of that assignment, as well as from the many callings she later filled in our own ward Relief Society. She was a faithful daughter of our Heavenly Father, my beloved companion, and my dearest friend. I miss her more than words can express.

I too love Relief Society. I testify to you that it was organized by inspiration and is a vital part of the Lord’s Church here upon the earth. It would be impossible to calculate all the good which has come from this

organization and all the lives which have been blessed because of it.

Relief Society is made up of a variety of women. There are those of you who are single—perhaps in school, perhaps working—yet forging a full and rich life. Some of you are busy mothers of growing children. Still others of you have lost your husbands because of divorce or death and are struggling to raise your children without the help of a husband and father. Some of you have raised your children but have realized that their need for your help is ongoing. There are many of you who have aging parents who require the loving care only you can give.

Wherever we are in life, there are times when all of us have challenges and struggles. Although they are different for each, they are common to all.

Many of the challenges we face exist because we live in this mortal world, populated by all manner of individuals. At times we ask in desperation, “How can I keep my sights firmly fixed on the celestial as I navigate through this telestial world?”

There will be times when you will walk a path strewn with thorns and marked by struggle. There may be times when you feel detached—even isolated—from the Giver of every good gift. You worry that you walk

alone. Fear replaces faith.

When you find yourself in such circumstances, I plead with you to remember prayer. I love the words of President Ezra Taft Benson concerning prayer. Said he:

“All through my life the counsel to depend on prayer has been prized above almost any other advice I have . . . received. It has become an integral part of me—an anchor, a constant source of strength, and the basis of my knowledge of things divine. . . .

“ . . . Though reverses come, in prayer we can find reassurance, for God will speak peace to the soul. That peace, that spirit of serenity, is life’s greatest blessing.”<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul admonished:

“Let your requests be made known unto God.

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

What a glorious promise! Peace is that which we seek, that for which we yearn.

We were not placed on this earth to walk alone. What an amazing source of power, of strength, and of comfort is available to each of us. He who knows us better than we know ourselves, He who sees the larger picture and who knows the end from the beginning, has assured us that He will be there for us to provide help if we but ask. We have the promise: “Pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good.”<sup>4</sup>

As our prayers ascend heavenward, let us not forget the words taught to us by the Savior. When He faced the excruciating agony of Gethsemane and the cross, He prayed to the Father, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”<sup>5</sup> Difficult as it may at times be, it is for us, as well, to trust our Heavenly



Father to know best how and when and in what manner to provide the help we seek.

I cherish the words of the poet:

*I know not by what methods rare,  
But this I know, God answers prayer.  
I know that He has given His Word,  
Which tells me prayer is always heard,  
And will be answered, soon or late.  
And so I pray and calmly wait.  
I know not if the blessing sought  
Will come in just the way I thought;  
But leave my prayers with Him alone,  
Whose will is wiser than my own,  
Assured that He will grant my quest,  
Or send some answer far more blest.<sup>6</sup>*

Of course, prayer is not just for times of trouble. We are told repeatedly in the scriptures to “pray always”<sup>7</sup> and to keep a prayer in our hearts.<sup>8</sup> The words of a favorite and familiar hymn pose a question which we would do well to ask ourselves daily: “Did you think to pray?”<sup>9</sup>

Allied with prayer in helping us cope in our often difficult world is scripture study. The words of truth and inspiration found in our four standard works are prized possessions to

me. I never tire of reading them. I am lifted spiritually whenever I search the scriptures. These holy words of truth and love give guidance to my life and point the way to eternal perfection.

As we read and ponder the scriptures, we will experience the sweet whisperings of the Spirit to our souls. We can find answers to our questions. We learn of the blessings which come through keeping God’s commandments. We gain a sure testimony of our Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of Their love for us. When scripture study is combined with our prayers, we can of a certainty know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

Said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “May the Lord bless each of us to feast upon his holy [words] and to draw from [them] that strength, that peace, [and] that knowledge ‘which passeth all understanding’ (Philip. 4:7).”<sup>10</sup>

As we remember prayer and take time to turn to the scriptures, our lives will be infinitely more blessed and our burdens will be made lighter.

May I share with you the account of how our Heavenly Father answered the prayers and pleadings of one woman and provided her the peace and

assurance she so desperately sought?

Tiffany’s difficulties began last year when she had guests at her home for Thanksgiving and then again for Christmas. Her husband had been in medical school and was now in the second year of his medical residency. Because of the long work hours required of him, he was not able to help her as much as they both would have liked, and so most of that which needed to be accomplished during this holiday season, in addition to the care of their four young children, fell to Tiffany. She was becoming overwhelmed, and then she learned that one who was dear to her had been diagnosed with cancer. The stress and worry began to take a heavy toll on her, and she slipped into a period of discouragement and depression. She sought medical help, and yet nothing changed. Her appetite disappeared, and she began to lose weight, which her tiny frame could ill afford. She sought peace through the scriptures and prayed for deliverance from the gloom which was overtaking her. When neither peace nor help seemed to come, she began to feel abandoned by God. Her family and friends prayed for her and tried desperately to help. They delivered her favorite foods in an attempt to keep her physically healthy, but she could take only a few bites and then would be unable to finish.

On one particularly trying day, a friend attempted in vain to entice her with foods she had always loved. When nothing worked, the friend said, “There must be *something* that sounds good to you.”

Tiffany thought for a moment and said, “The only thing I can think of that sounds good is homemade bread.”

But there was none on hand.

The following afternoon Tiffany's doorbell rang. Her husband happened to be home and answered it. When he returned, he was carrying a loaf of homemade bread. Tiffany was astonished when he told her it had come from a woman named Sherrie, whom they barely knew. She was a friend of Tiffany's sister Nicole, who lived in Denver, Colorado. Sherrie had been introduced to Tiffany and her husband briefly several months earlier when Nicole and her family were staying with Tiffany for Thanksgiving. Sherrie, who lived in Omaha, had come to Tiffany's home to visit with Nicole.

Now, months later, with the delicious bread in hand, Tiffany called her sister Nicole to thank her for sending Sherrie on an errand of mercy. Instead, she learned Nicole had not instigated the visit and had no knowledge of it.

The rest of the story unfolded as Nicole checked with her friend Sherrie to find out what had prompted her to deliver that loaf of bread. What she learned was an inspiration to her, to Tiffany, to Sherrie—and it is an inspiration to me.

On that particular morning of the bread delivery, Sherrie had been prompted to make two loaves of bread instead of the one she had planned to make. She said she felt impressed to take the second loaf with her in her car that day, although she didn't know why. After lunch at a friend's home, her one-year-old daughter began to cry and needed to be taken home for a nap. Sherrie hesitated when the unmistakable feeling came to her that she needed to deliver that extra loaf of bread to Nicole's sister Tiffany, who lived 30 minutes away on the other side of town and whom she barely knew. She tried to rationalize away the

thought, wanting to get her very tired daughter home and feeling sheepish about delivering a loaf of bread to people who were almost strangers. However, the impression to go to Tiffany's home was strong, so she heeded the prompting.

When she arrived, Tiffany's husband answered the door. Sherrie reminded him that she was Nicole's friend whom he'd met briefly at Thanksgiving, handed him the loaf of bread, and left.

And so it happened that the Lord sent a virtual stranger across town to deliver not just the desired homemade bread but also a clear message of love to Tiffany. What happened to her cannot be explained in any other way. She had an urgent need to feel

that she wasn't alone—that God was aware of her and had not abandoned her. That bread—the very thing she wanted—was delivered to her by someone she barely knew, someone who had no knowledge of her need but who listened to the prompting of the Spirit and followed that prompting. It became an obvious sign to Tiffany that her Heavenly Father was aware of her needs and loved her enough to send help. He had responded to her cries for relief.

My dear sisters, your Heavenly Father loves you—each of you. That love never changes. It is not influenced by your appearance, by your possessions, or by the amount of money you have in your bank account. It is not changed by your



talents and abilities. It is simply there. It is there for you when you are sad or happy, discouraged or hopeful. God's love is there for you whether or not you feel you deserve love. It is simply always there.

As we seek our Heavenly Father through fervent, sincere prayer and earnest, dedicated scripture study, our testimonies will become strong and deeply rooted. We will know of God's love for us. We will understand that we do not ever walk alone. I promise you that you will one day stand aside and look at your difficult times, and you will realize that He was always there beside you. I know this to be true in the passing of my eternal companion—Frances Beverly Johnson Monson.

I leave with you my blessing. I leave with you my gratitude for all the good you do and for the lives you lead. That you may be blessed with every good gift is my prayer in the name of our Savior and Redeemer, even Jesus Christ the Lord, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. Matthew 5:13–14.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, "Pray Always," *Ensign*, Feb. 1990, 4–5; or *Tambuli*, June 1990, 4–5, 6.
3. Philippians 4:6–7.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 90:24.
5. Luke 22:42.
6. Eliza M. Hickok, "Prayer," in James Gilchrist Lawson, ed., *The Best Loved Religious Poems* (1933), 160.
7. Luke 21:36; see also 2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 18:15; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5; 19:38; 20:33; 31:12; 61:39; 88:126; 93:49.
8. See 3 Nephi 20:1.
9. "Did You Think to Pray?" *Hymns*, no. 140.
10. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Feasting upon the Scriptures," *Ensign*, Dec. 1985, 45; or *Tambuli*, June 1986, 4.



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# General Auxiliary Presidencies

## RELIEF SOCIETY



Carole M. Stephens  
First Counselor



Linda K. Burton  
President



Linda S. Reeves  
Second Counselor

## YOUNG WOMEN



Carol F. McConkie  
First Counselor



Bonnie L. Oscarson  
President



Neill F. Marriott  
Second Counselor

## PRIMARY



Jean A. Stevens  
First Counselor



Rosemary M. Wixom  
President



Cheryl A. Esplin  
Second Counselor

## YOUNG MEN



Larry M. Gibsons  
First Counselor



David L. Beck  
President



Randall L. Ridd  
Second Counselor

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



David M. McConkie  
First Counselor



Russell T. Osguthorpe  
President

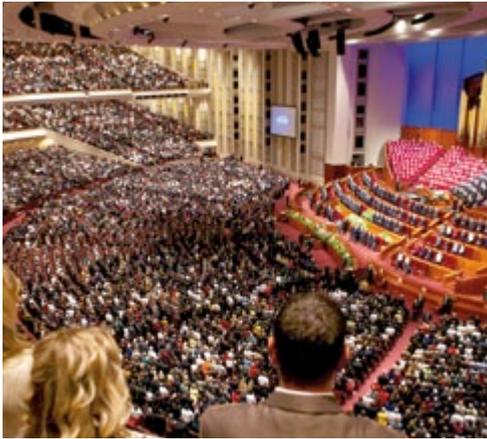


Matthew O. Richardson  
Second Counselor

## 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.

<b>SPEAKER</b>	<b>STORY</b>
Neil L. Andersen	(92) A faithful Brazilian mother, prohibited by her husband from attending church, sends her children to church.
M. Russell Ballard	(43) A family enjoys missionary success after taking to heart the challenge to hasten the work of salvation.
David A. Bednar	(17) The family of Susan Bednar (then a young woman) is blessed by living the law of tithing.
Gérald Caussé	(49) Gérald Caussé and his family find living in a new city easier due to the warm reception from Latter-day Saints.
D. Todd Christofferson	(29) Anna Daines joins a volunteer group and helps her community overcome prejudice toward Latter-day Saints.
Quentin L. Cook	(88) Quentin L. Cook and other attorneys at his firm decide to create a family-friendly work environment.
Edward Dube	(15) Young Edward Dube's mother tells him to look ahead, not behind, as they work together in a field.
Timothy J. Dyches	(37) Corrie ten Boom forgives a former Nazi soldier who had been one of her guards at a concentration camp.
Henry B. Eyring	(58) Young Henry B. Eyring is blessed as he accompanies his bishop on visits to members in need. (69) Mildred and Henry Eyring become unified in their decision to move back to Utah, near her family.
Randy D. Funk	(52) After hearing the account of Joseph Smith in a language she cannot understand, an investigator in India asks for baptism.
Kevin S. Hamilton	(99) A family begins to leave the Church with a decision to take a Sunday ride rather than attend sacrament meeting.
Jeffrey R. Holland	(40) A sister finds purpose as a mother after being severely injured in a plane crash.
Richard J. Maynes	(79) The great-grandfather of Richard J. Maynes suffers a fatal heart attack while serving a mission.
Thomas S. Monson	(61) A faithful home teacher is filled with gratitude when someone he visited for years joins the Church. (85) Thomas S. Monson gives a priesthood blessing to an elderly brother who can no longer see or hear.
S. Gifford Nielsen	(33) A stake president has a successful missionary's worn-out shoes bronzed.
Adrián Ochoa	(102) Family members rejoice when young Adrián Ochoa and two cousins return home after a severe storm.
Bonnie L. Oscarson	(76) Agnes Hoggan refuses to allow her 16-year-old daughter to be adopted into a non-LDS family.
Boyd K. Packer	(26) Boyd K. Packer is counseled to urge members of a struggling stake to read the scriptures.
L. Tom Perry	(46) As a boy, L. Tom Perry and other Primary children hike to a favorite canyon spot with their teacher.
Linda S. Reeves	(118) A woman progressing toward baptism walks two miles (3 km) in mud to attend church.
Ulisses Soares	(9) Moses Mahlangu and others in South Africa sit outside a church and listen to services through a window.
Carole M. Stephens	(12) Faithful sisters in Honduras receive priesthood blessings from their Church leaders. (115) A 10-year-old boy keeps his covenant to mourn with others as he comforts his widowed great-grandmother.
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	(21) A man has a dream in which a Latter-day Saint couple explain opportunities for service in the Church. (55) Dieter F. Uchtdorf falls while skiing and has trouble getting up until his grandson helps him.
Arnulfo Valenzuela	(35) A less-active sister returns to church after feeling the Holy Ghost while singing a hymn with her visiting teachers.
Terence M. Vinson	(104) The prayer of a faithful Church member in Papua New Guinea is answered when rain suddenly puts out a fire that threatens village crops.



## Growth in Membership and in Number of Missionaries Announced at General Conference

The membership of the Church has reached 15 million, President Thomas S. Monson announced at the opening session of the 183rd Semiannual General Conference on October 5, 2013. He also announced that since the lowering of the age for missionary service in October 2012, the number of full-time missionaries serving around the world has grown dramatically—from 58,500 to 80,333.

“The Church continues to grow steadily and to change the lives of more and more people every year,” President Monson said. “It is spreading across the earth as our missionary force seeks out those who are searching for the truth.”

He encouraged members and missionaries to join with one another in sharing the gospel. “Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together, to labor in the Lord’s vineyard to bring souls unto Him,” said President Monson, who has been serving as an Apostle for 50 years.

At the Saturday afternoon session, three members of the First Quorum of the Seventy—Elders John B. Dickson, Paul E. Koelliker, and F. Michael Watson—were honorably

released and given emeritus status, and Elder Kent D. Watson of the Second Quorum of the Seventy was also honorably released. In addition, Julio A. Angulo, 45, of Bogotá, Colombia; Peter F. Evans, 54, of Salt Lake City, Utah, USA; and Gennady N. Podvodov, 47, of Donetsk, Ukraine, were sustained as

Area Seventies. It was announced that César H. Hooker and Craig T. Wright had been released as Area Seventies.

Millions throughout the world watched or listened to the conference via television, Internet, radio, and satellite broadcasts. For the first time, the Saturday evening priesthood session was available on broadcast television and in real time on the Internet. More than 100,000 people attended the five sessions at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 5 and 6. The conference was also available through various media in 95 languages and broadcast to 197 countries and territories.

President Monson concluded the conference with an appeal for Church members to show increased kindness toward one another and to “ever be found doing the work of the Lord.” ■



### PRESIDENT MONSON AN APOSTLE FOR 50 YEARS

The October 2013 semiannual general conference marked the 50th anniversary of President Thomas S. Monson’s call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He was sustained as an Apostle on October 4, 1963, at the age of 36.

For additional information about President Monson’s life of service, see [lds.org/go/monson50years](http://lds.org/go/monson50years). ■

*Thomas S. Monson at the Tabernacle on Temple Square in 1963, moments before he was sustained as a General Authority.*

# Social Media Pages Created for Church Leaders

By Eric Murdock

LDS.org News and Events

The Church has created official social media pages for members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on Facebook and Google Plus. These pages will act as an official social media presence for each of the Brethren, who will direct the pages as they are maintained on their behalf by the Church.

The official Facebook and Google Plus accounts can be found by searching on [facebook.com/lds](http://facebook.com/lds) and [plus.google.com](http://plus.google.com). To know whether or not a social media site or page is official, look for the Church's logo.

Those following these pages will receive regular updates on the ministry of each of the Brethren. "The Church will post links to talks, articles, videos, and other relevant content on their behalf," said Dale Jones, a spokesperson for the Church.

These pages will allow people to more easily find the words of living prophets, and "liking" the pages will cause their content to be in the liker's Facebook feed, where it can be readily viewed and shared with others.

Creating official pages helps members know which pages are maintained by the Church and protects individuals from fake pages. ■



PHOTOGRAPH BY NICOLAS CARRASCO, COURTESY OF CHURCH NEWS



## Temple News

### Ground Broken for First Temple in Connecticut

Construction began on the first Latter-day Saint temple in Connecticut, USA, following groundbreaking ceremonies led by President Thomas S. Monson in Hartford on Saturday, August 17. The Hartford Connecticut Temple will be the second in New England (the other is in Boston, Massachusetts) and one of 170 LDS temples in use, under construction, or in the planning stages around the world.

### Second Temple in Colorado

On Saturday, August 24, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy officiated at groundbreaking ceremonies for the second temple in Colorado, USA, the Fort Collins Colorado Temple. The other temple is in Denver, some 59 miles (95 km) south of Fort Collins. ■

## Stakes Organized in Rome and Paris

Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles organized the second stake in Rome, Italy, and the third stake in the Paris, France, area during a visit in September 2013 that also included meetings in Leeds and Manchester, England, and Madrid, Spain. A temple is under construction in Rome, and one will soon be built in Paris.

“The Church is alive and well and progressing impressively in Europe,” said Elder Oaks. Elder Ballard told the European members that the Church should “recognize the Lord is hastening His work of salvation and that we all have to be engaged.” ■

### Teachings for Our Time

From October 2013 through March 2014, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays should be prepared from one or more talks given in the October 2013 general conference. In April 2014, talks may be selected from either the October 2013 or the April 2014 conference. Stake and district presidents should choose which talks will be used in their areas, or they may delegate this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents.

Learn more by reviewing the “Teachings for Our Time” article in the May 2013 *Liahona* or *Ensign*. ■



## Randall L. Ridd

*New Second Counselor  
in Young Men General  
Presidency*

As the son of a builder, Randall L. Ridd learned early the importance of doing a job the right way. On several occasions, young Randall would complete a task, only to hear his father, Leon Ridd, declare, “You’re not done yet.”

Such exactness left a lasting impression on the man who now serves as the second counselor in the Young Men general presidency. To this day he sometimes hears his father’s firm but loving words as he performs his professional, family, and ecclesiastical duties: “You’re not done yet; do it right.”

Brother Ridd said his family’s work ethic has been a blessing in his life. So have mentors and priesthood leaders who have sometimes nudged him along the gospel path. While many of his classmates from high school accepted mission calls at age 19, Randall opted to enroll in college and enlist in the army. He later took a job as an X-ray technician while continuing his studies at the University of Utah. A few wise men were bold enough to tell him that his place was in the mission field. He followed their direction and put in his application to serve. Soon he was sharing the gospel in the Mexico North Mission. “I can’t imagine what my life would be like if I had not served a mission,” he says.

He returned home, continued his education, and married Tamina Roark in the Salt Lake Temple in 1975. The Ridds raised four children as Brother Ridd developed his professional career in commercial real estate and other business enterprises.

His love for missionary work remains. He presided over the Ecuador Guayaquil North Mission from 2005 to 2008 and again witnessed the change a full-time mission can have in the life of a young man or young woman.

Brother Ridd was serving as a member of the Young Men general board when he was called to the Young Men general presidency in May 2013. ■



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*A Peaceful Heart*, by Michael T. Malm

*“And the Spirit giveth light to every man [and woman] that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man [and woman] through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit” (D&C 84:46).*



“May we ever strive to be close to our Heavenly Father,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the Sunday morning session of the 183rd Semiannual General Conference of the Church. “To do so, we must pray to Him and listen to Him every day. We truly need Him every hour, whether they be hours of sunshine or of rain. May His promise ever be our watchword: ‘I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’”

