

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2013

Liahona



General Conference Addresses

**New Seventies
and Young Women
General Presidency
Called**

**Two New Temples
Announced**



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Seeking Shiloah, by Joseph Brickey

The Pool of Shiloah (Siloam) in Jerusalem is fed by a spring located outside the city walls. As the only source of fresh water in the area, the waters of Shiloah have long been a symbol of God's protection and sustaining power. As recorded in Isaiah 8:6–8, Isaiah prophesied that the kingdom of Israel would reject the Lord in favor of two kings. This came to pass. Unlike those in the time of Isaiah, however, this woman is seeking the fresh waters of Shiloah—hence symbolically seeking God's ongoing love and protection.

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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.



Summary for the 183rd Annual General Conference

SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 2013, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Randall K. Bennett.
Benediction: Jean A. Stevens. Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: “Redeemer of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 6; “In Hymns of Praise,” *Hymns*, no. 75; “Hark, All Ye Nations!” *Hymns*, no. 264, arr. Wilberg; “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243; “Faith,” *Children’s Songbook*, 96, arr. Elliott, unpublished; “My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 135, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 6, 2013, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Russell T. Osguthorpe.
Benediction: Elder J. Devn Cornish. Music by a combined choir from Brigham Young University; Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 141, arr. Staheli, pub. Jackman; “Did You Think to Pray?” *Hymns*, no. 140, arr. Johnson, pub. Johnson; “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” *Hymns*, no. 66; “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Staheli, pub. Jackman.

SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 6, 2013, PRIESTHOOD SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Elder Ronald A. Rasband.
Benediction: Larry M. Gibson. Music by a priesthood choir from young single adult stakes in Salt Lake City, Utah; Justin Bills, director; Clay Christiansen, organist: “Arise, O God, and Shine,” *Hymns*, no. 265, arr. Wilberg, pub. Oxford; “Nearer, My God, to Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 100, arr. Bills, unpublished; “Hope of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 259; “Ye Elders of Israel,” *Hymns*, no. 319, arr. Bills, unpublished.

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 2013, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.
Invocation: Elder Steven E. Snow.
Benediction: Elder O. Vincent Haleck.
Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: “Go Forth with Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 263; “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. Kasen, pub. Jackman; “Come, Follow Me,” *Hymns*, no. 116, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah,” *Hymns*, no. 83; “Where Love Is,” *Children’s Songbook*, 138, arr. Cardon, unpublished; “Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, no. 30, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 7, 2013, GENERAL SESSION

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.
Invocation: Carole M. Stephens. Benediction: Elder Larry Y. Wilson. Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe, organists: “Come, Ye Children of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 58, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus,” *Children’s Songbook*, 57, arr. Murphy, unpublished; “Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, no. 3; “Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing,” *Hymns*, no. 163, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

SATURDAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 2013, GENERAL YOUNG WOMEN MEETING

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.
Conducting: Elaine S. Dalton. Invocation: Ella Edgley. Benediction: Emily Maxwell.
Music by a Young Women choir from stakes in Highland, Utah; Merrilee Webb, director; Linda Margetts, organist: “High on the Mountain Top,” *Hymns*, no. 5, with “Arise” descant; “In That Holy Place,” DeFord, pub. DeFord; “More Holiness Give Me,” *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Goates, unpublished; “O Thou Rock of Our Salvation,” *Hymns*, no. 258, arr.

Kasen, pub. Jackman; “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” *Hymns*, no. 41, arr. Webb, unpublished.

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By President Thomas S. Monson

Welcome to Conference

I urge you to be attentive and receptive to the messages which we will hear. That we may do so is my prayer.

My beloved brothers and sisters, how pleased I am to welcome you to the 183rd Annual General Conference of the Church.

During the six months since last we met, it has been my opportunity to travel a bit and to meet with some of you in your own areas. Following general conference in October, I traveled to Germany, where it was my privilege to meet with our members at several locations in that country as well as in parts of Austria.

At the end of October, I dedicated the Calgary Alberta Temple in Canada, with the assistance of Elder and Sister M. Russell Ballard, Elder and Sister Craig C. Christensen, and Elder and Sister William R. Walker. In November, I rededicated the Boise Idaho Temple. Also traveling with me and participating in the dedication were Elder and Sister David A. Bednar, Elder and Sister Craig C. Christensen, and Elder and Sister William R. Walker.

The cultural celebrations held in conjunction with both of these dedications were outstanding. I did not personally attend the cultural

celebration in Calgary, inasmuch as it was Sister Monson's 85th birthday and I felt I should be with her. However, she and I were privileged to watch the celebration in our living room over closed-circuit television, and then I flew to Calgary the following morning for the dedication. In Boise over 9,000 youth from the temple district participated in the cultural celebration. There were so many young people involved that there was not room for family members to attend in the arena in which they performed.

Just last month President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, accompanied by Sister Uchtdorf, Elder and Sister Jeffrey R. Holland, and Elder and Sister Gregory A. Schwitzer, traveled to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to dedicate our newly completed temple there. A magnificent youth celebration took place the evening prior to the dedication.

There are other temples which have been announced and which are at various stages in the preliminary process or which are under construction.



It is my privilege this morning to announce two additional temples, which in coming months and years will be built in the following locations: Cedar City, Utah, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Brothers and sisters, temple building continues unabated.

As you know, in the October general conference I announced changes in the ages at which young men and young women might serve as full-time missionaries, with the young men now



being able to serve at age 18 and the young women at 19.

The response of our young people has been remarkable and inspiring. As of April 4—two days ago—we have 65,634 full-time missionaries serving, with over 20,000 more who have received their calls but who have not yet entered a missionary training center and over 6,000 more in the interview process with their bishops and stake presidents. It has been necessary for us to create 58 new missions to

accommodate the increased numbers of missionaries.

To help maintain this missionary force, and because many of our missionaries come from modest circumstances, we invite you, as you are able, to contribute generously to the General Missionary Fund of the Church.

Now, brothers and sisters, we will hear inspired messages today and tomorrow. Those who will address us have sought prayerfully to know that

which the Lord would have us hear at this time.

I urge you to be attentive and receptive to the messages which we will hear. That we may do so is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, amen. ■



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr13Conf1 to watch or share a short video clip of this message.



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

These Things I Know

*Of all that I have read and taught and learned,
the one most precious and sacred truth that I have
to offer is my special witness of Jesus Christ.*

In 1992, having served nine years as an Assistant to the Twelve and 22 years as a member of the Twelve, I reached the age of 68. I felt impressed to start what I called an “Unfinished Composition.” The first part of that work goes like this:

*I had a thought the other night,
A thought profound and deep.
It came when I was too worn down,
Too tired to go to sleep.*

*I'd had a very busy day
And pondered on my fate.
The thought was this:
When I was young, I wasn't 68!*

*I could walk without a limp;
I had no shoulder pain.
I could read a line through twice
And quote it back again.*

*I could work for endless hours
And hardly stop to breathe.
And things that now I cannot do
I mastered then with ease.*

*If I could now turn back the years,
If that were mine to choose,
I would not barter age for youth,
I'd have too much to lose.*

*I am quite content to move ahead,
To yield my youth, however grand.
The thing I'd lose if I went back
Is what I understand.*

Ten years later, I decided to add a few more lines to that poem:

*Ten years have flown to who knows
where
And with them much of pain.
A metal hip erased my limp;
I walk quite straight again.*

*Another plate holds neck bones fast—
A wonderful creation!
It backed my polio away;
I've joined the stiff-necked generation.*

*The signs of aging can be seen.
Those things will not get better.
The only thing that grows in strength
With me is my forgetter.*

*You ask, “Do I remember you?”
Of course, you're much the same.
Now don't go getting all upset
If I can't recall your name.*

*I would agree I've learned some things
I did not want to know,
But age has brought those precious truths
That make the spirit grow.*

*Of all the blessings that have come,
The best thing in my life
Is the companionship and comfort
I get from my dear wife.*

*Our children all have married well,
With families of their own,
With children and grandchildren,
How soon they all have grown.*

*I have not changed my mind one bit
About regaining youth.
We're meant to age, for with it
Comes a knowledge of the truth.*

*You ask, “What will the future
bring?
Just what will be my fate?”
I'll go along and not complain.
Ask when I'm 88!*

And last year I added these lines:

*And now you see I'm 88.
The years have flown so fast.
I walked, I limped, I held a cane,
And now I ride at last.*

*I take a nap now and again,
But priesthood power remains.
For all the physical things I lack
There are great spiritual gains.*

*I have traveled the world a million
miles
And another million too.
And with the help of satellites,
My journeys are not through.*

*I now can say with all certainty
That I know and love the Lord.
I can testify with them of old
As I preach His holy word.*

*I know what He felt in Gethsemane
Is too much to comprehend.
I know He did it all for us;
We have no greater Friend.*

*I know that He will come anew
With power and in glory.
I know I will see Him once again
At the end of my life's story.*

*I'll kneel before His wounded feet;
I'll feel His Spirit glow.
My whispering, quivering voice will say,
"My Lord, my God, I know."¹*

And I do know!

The back windows of our home overlook a small flower garden and the woods which border a small stream. One wall of the house borders on the garden and is thickly covered with English ivy. Most years this ivy has been the nesting place for house finches. The nests in the vines are safe from foxes and raccoons and cats that are about.

One day there was a great commotion in the ivy. Desperate cries of distress came as 8 or 10 finches from the surrounding woods came to join in this cry of alarm. I soon saw the source of the commotion. A snake had slid partway down out of the ivy and hung in front of the window just long enough for me to pull it out. The middle part of the snake's body had two bulges—clear evidence convicting it of taking two fledglings from the nest. Not in the 50 years we had lived in our home had we seen anything like that. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience—or so we thought.

A few days later there was another commotion, this time in the vines covering our dog run. We heard the same cries of alarm, the gathering of the neighborhood finches. We knew what the predator was. A grandson climbed onto the run and pulled out another snake that was still holding on tightly to the mother bird it had caught in the nest and killed.



I said to myself, "What is going on? Is the Garden of Eden being invaded again?"

There came into my mind the warnings spoken by the prophets. We will not always be safe from the adversary's influence, even within our own homes. We need to protect our nestlings.

We live in a very dangerous world that threatens those things that are most spiritual. The family, the fundamental organization in time and eternity, is under attack from forces seen and unseen. The adversary is about. His objective is to cause injury. If he can weaken and destroy the family, he will have succeeded.

Latter-day Saints recognize the transcendent importance of the family and strive to live in such a way that the adversary cannot steal into our homes. We find safety and security for ourselves and our children in honoring the covenants we have made and living up to the ordinary acts of obedience required of the followers of Christ.

Isaiah said, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of

righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."²

That peace is also promised in the revelations in which the Lord declares, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear."³

The consummate power of the priesthood has been given to protect the home and its inhabitants. The father has the authority and responsibility to teach his children and to bless and to provide for them the ordinances of the gospel and every other priesthood protection necessary. He is to demonstrate love and fidelity and honor to the mother so that their children can see that love.

I have come to know that faith is a real power, not just an expression of belief. There are few things more powerful than the faithful prayers of a righteous mother.

Teach yourself and teach your families about the gift of the Holy Ghost and the Atonement of Jesus Christ. You will do no greater eternal work than within the walls of your own home.

We know that we are spirit children of heavenly parents, here on earth to receive our mortal bodies and to be



tested. We who have mortal bodies have the power over the beings who do not.⁴ We are free to choose what we will and to pick and choose our acts, but we are not free to choose the consequences. They come as they will come.

Agency is defined in the scriptures as “moral agency,” which means that we can choose between good and evil. The adversary seeks to tempt us to misuse our moral agency.

The scriptures teach us “that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.”⁵

Alma taught that “the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”⁶ In order to understand this, we must separate the sin from the sinner.

For example, when they brought before the Savior a woman taken in adultery, obviously guilty, He dismissed the case with five words: “Go, and sin no more.”⁷ That is the spirit of His ministry.

Tolerance is a virtue, but like all virtues, when exaggerated, it transforms itself into a vice. We need to be careful of the “tolerance trap” so that we are not swallowed up in it. The permissiveness afforded by the weakening of the laws of the land to tolerate legalized acts of immorality does not reduce the serious spiritual consequence that is the result of the violation of God’s law of chastity.

All are born with the Light of Christ, a guiding influence which permits each person to recognize right from wrong. What we do with that light and how we respond to those promptings to live righteously is part of the test of mortality.

“For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.”⁸

Each of us must stay in condition to respond to inspiration and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. The Lord has a way of pouring pure

intelligence into our minds to prompt us, to guide us, to teach us, and to warn us. Each son or daughter of God can know the things they need to know instantly. Learn to receive and act on inspiration and revelation.

Of all that I have read and taught and learned, the one most precious and sacred truth that I have to offer is my special witness of Jesus Christ. He lives. I know He lives. I am His witness. And of Him I can testify. He is our Savior, our Redeemer. Of this I am certain. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Unfinished Composition,” 2012.
2. Isaiah 32:17.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.
4. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
6. Alma 45:16.
7. John 8:11.
8. Moroni 7:16.



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By Bishop Dean M. Davies
Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

A Sure Foundation

*Let us accept the Savior's invitation to come unto Him.
Let us build our lives upon a safe and a sure foundation.*

On October 17, 1989, while driving home after work, I was approaching a stoplight at the intersection of Market and Beale Streets in San Francisco, California. At that moment I felt the car shake and thought, “I must have a flat tire.” As the car continued to shake, I noticed a bus quite close to me and thought, “That bus just hit me!” Then the car shook more and more, and I thought, “I must have four flat tires!” But it wasn’t flat tires or the bus—it was a powerful earthquake! As I stopped at the red light, there were ripples in the pavement like waves of the sea rolling down Market Street. In front of me a tall office building was swaying from side to side, and bricks began falling from an older building to my left as the earth continued to shake.

The Loma Prieta earthquake struck the San Francisco Bay Area at 5:04 p.m. that day and left as many as 12,000 people homeless.

The earthquake caused severe damage in the San Francisco Bay Area, most notably on unstable soil in San Francisco and Oakland. In San Francisco, the Marina District had been “built on a landfill made of a mixture of sand, dirt, rubble, . . . and other materials containing a high percentage of groundwater. Some

of the fill was rubble dumped into San Francisco Bay after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.”¹

In about 1915, apartment buildings were erected on the landfill. In the 1989 earthquake, the water-saturated unconsolidated mud, sand, and rubble converted to a liquid-like mass, causing the buildings to collapse. The buildings were not built on a sure foundation.

The Loma Prieta earthquake impacted many lives, including my own. Pondering the events of that day reaffirms in my mind and heart that

in order to successfully withstand the tempests, earthquakes, and calamities of life, we must build upon a sure foundation.

The Nephite prophet Helaman gave unmistakable clarity to the importance of building our lives on a sure foundation, even the foundation of Jesus Christ: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12).

In the development of modern-day temples, careful attention is given to the design, engineering, and use of building materials. Thorough testing of the soils and geology takes place on the site where a temple will be built. Studies of wind, rain, and changes in the weather for the area are considered so that the completed temple can withstand not only storms and climate common to an area, but the temple is designed and positioned to withstand the unexpected earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and other natural calamities that may occur. In many temples, concrete or steel piles are driven deep into the earth to anchor the temple foundation.

Like the designers and builders of our time, our loving and kind Father in Heaven and His Son have prepared plans, tools, and other resources for our use so that we can build and frame our lives to be sure and unshaken. The plan is the plan of





salvation, the great plan of happiness. The plan lays out for us a clear picture and understanding of the beginning and the end and the essential steps, including ordinances, which are necessary for each of Father's children to be able to return to His presence and dwell with Him forever.

Faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end are part of the "blue-prints" of life. They help to form the appropriate building blocks that will anchor our lives to the Atonement of Christ. These shape and frame the supporting structure of a person's life. Then, just as temple plans have specifications that give detailed instructions about how to form and integrate essential components, praying, reading the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament, and receiving essential priesthood ordinances become the "specifications" that help integrate and bind together the structure of life.

Balance in the application of these specifications is vital. For example, in the process of making concrete, precise amounts of sand, gravel, cement, and water are used in order to achieve maximum strength. An incorrect

amount or exclusion of any portion of these elements would make the concrete weak and not able to perform its important function.

In like manner, if we do not provide for an appropriate balance in our lives of daily personal prayer and feasting from the scriptures, weekly strengthening from partaking of the sacrament, and frequent participation in priesthood ordinances such as temple ordinances, we too are at risk of being weakened in our spiritual structural strength.

Paul, in a letter to the Ephesians, said it this way, which we can apply to the need for a balanced and integrated development of our character and soul: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21).

Prayer is one of the most basic and important foundational building blocks of our faith and character. Through prayer we are able to express our gratitude, love, and devotion to God. Through prayer we can submit our will to His and in return receive the strength to conform our lives to His teachings. Prayer is the avenue we can follow to seek His influence in our lives, even revelation.

Alma taught, "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

Sharing our thoughts, feelings, and desires with God through sincere and heartfelt prayer should become to each of us as important and natural as breathing and eating.

Searching the scriptures on a daily basis will also fortify our faith and character. Just as we need food to nourish our physical bodies, our spirits and souls will be replenished and strengthened by feasting upon the words of Christ as contained in the writings of the prophets. Nephi taught, "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

While reading the scriptures is good, reading by itself is insufficient to capture the full breadth and depth of the Savior's teachings. Searching, pondering, and applying the words of Christ as taught in the scriptures will bring wisdom and knowledge beyond our mortal understanding. This will strengthen our commitment and provide the spiritual reserves to do our best in all situations.

One of the most important steps we can take to strengthen our lives and remain firmly attached to the foundation of the Savior is to worthily partake of the sacrament each week. The sacrament ordinance affords every Church member the opportunity to ponder his or her life in advance, to consider the actions or nonactions that may need to be repented of, and

then to partake of the bread and water as sacred emblems in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, a witness of His Atonement. If we partake with sincerity and in humility, we renew eternal covenants, are cleansed and sanctified, and receive the promise that we will have His Spirit to be with us always. The Spirit acts as a type of mortar, a welding link that not only sanctifies but also brings all things to our remembrance and testifies again and again of Jesus Christ. Worthily partaking of the sacrament strengthens our personal connection to the foundation rock, even to Jesus Christ.

During His ministry the Savior taught with love and clarity the doctrines, principles, and necessary actions that would preserve our lives and strengthen our character. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, He stated:

“Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, [which] built his house upon a rock—

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, [which] built his house upon the sand—

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (3 Nephi 14:24–27; see also Matthew 7:24–27).

Brothers and sisters, none of us would knowingly construct our homes, places of work, or sacred houses of worship on sand or rubble or without appropriate plans and materials. Let us accept the Savior’s invitation to come

unto Him. Let us build our lives upon a safe and a sure foundation.

I humbly testify that by anchoring our lives to Jesus Christ and to His Atonement and by carefully following His plans for our happiness, including daily prayer, daily scripture study, and weekly partaking of the sacrament, we will be strengthened, we will experience real personal growth and a lasting conversion, we will be better prepared to successfully withstand the storms and calamities of life, we will experience the joy and happiness promised, and we will have the confidence that our lives have been built upon a sure foundation—a foundation that will never fall. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTE

1. See “1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake,” wikipedia.org/wiki/1989_Loma_Prieta_earthquake.





By Elaine S. Dalton

Recently Released Young Women General President

We Are Daughters of Our Heavenly Father

As daughters of God we are each unique and different in our circumstances and experiences. And yet our part matters—because we matter.

Every week young women all over the world repeat the Young Women theme. No matter the language, each time I hear these words, “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us, and we love Him,”¹ the Spirit affirms to my soul that they are true. It is not only an affirmation of our identity—who we are—but also an acknowledgment of whose we are. We are daughters of an exalted being!

In every country and on every continent, I have met confident, articulate young women, filled with light, refined by hard work and trial, possessing pure and simple faith. They are virtuous. They are covenant keepers who “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”² They know who they are and that they have a significant role to play in building the kingdom of God.

When I was in college, I was a member of the BYU International Folk Dancers. One summer our group had the unique privilege to tour the missions in Europe. It was a difficult summer for me because a few months earlier my father had unexpectedly

passed away. While we were in Scotland, I felt especially alone and became discouraged. We danced at a chapel that night, and then after our performance we went next door to the mission home. As I proceeded up the walk, I saw a stone placed in a well-kept garden by the gate. On it I read the words, “What-e’er thou art, act well thy part.” At that moment those

words went deeply into my heart, and I felt the powers of heaven reach out and give me a message. I knew I was known by a loving Heavenly Father. I felt I was not alone. I stood in that garden with tears in my eyes. “What-e’er thou art, act well thy part.” That simple statement renewed my vision that Heavenly Father knew me and had a plan for my life, and the spirit I felt helped me understand that my part mattered.

Later I learned that this saying had once motivated the prophet David O. McKay while he was serving as a young missionary in Scotland. He had seen it on a stone on a building at a discouraging time in his life and on his mission, and the words lifted him. Years later as the building was being torn down, he made arrangements to obtain the stone and had it placed in the garden at the mission home.³

As daughters of God we are each unique and different in our circumstances and experiences. And yet our part matters—because *we* matter. Our daily contributions of nurturing,



Sydney, Australia



teaching, and caring for others may seem mundane, diminished, difficult, and demeaning at times, and yet as we remember that first line in the Young Women theme—“We are daughters of our Heavenly Father, who loves us”—it will make all the difference in our relationships and our responses.

Recently my magnificent 92-year-old mother passed away. She left this mortal existence as she had lived—quietly. Her life was not what she had planned. Her husband, my father, passed away when he was 45, leaving her with three children—me and my two brothers. She lived 47 years as a widow. She supported our family by teaching school during the day and teaching piano lessons at night. She cared for her aging father, my grandfather, who lived next door. She made sure that each of us received a college education. In fact, she insisted on it so that we could be “contributors.” And she never complained. She kept her covenants, and because she did, she called down the powers of heaven to bless our home and to send miracles. She relied on the power of prayer, priesthood, and covenant promises. She was faithful in her service to the Lord. Her steadfast devotion steadied us, her children. She

often repeated the scripture: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.”⁴ That was her motto, and she knew it was true. She understood what it meant to be a covenant keeper. She was never recognized by the world. She didn’t want that. She understood who she was and whose she was—a daughter of God. Indeed, it can be said of our mother that she acted well her part.

Of women and mothers, President Gordon B. Hinckley once said:

“We must never lose sight of the strength of the women. . . . It is mothers who most directly affect the lives of their children. . . . It is mothers who nurture them and bring them up in the ways of the Lord. Their influence is paramount. . . .

“ . . . They are the creators of life. They are the nurturers of children. They are the teachers of young women. They are our indispensable companions. They are our co-workers in building the kingdom of God. How great is their role, how marvelous their contribution.”⁵

So how do a mother and a father instill in their daughter the ennobling and eternal truth that she is a daughter of God? How do we help her step out

of the world and step into the kingdom of God?

In a morally desensitizing world, young women need women and men to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.” Never before has this been more important than now. Young women need mothers and mentors who exemplify virtuous womanhood. Mothers, your relationship with your daughter is of paramount importance, and so is your example. How you love and honor her father, his priesthood, and his divine role will be reflected and perhaps amplified in your daughter’s attitudes and behavior.

What is that part we must all “act well”? The family proclamation is clear:

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

“We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail



to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God.”⁶

In the decadent society of Mormon’s time, he lamented that the women were robbed of that which was most dear and precious above all—their virtue and chastity.⁷

Again I renew the call for a return to virtue. Virtue is the strength and power of daughters of God. What would the world be like if virtue—a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards, including chastity⁸—were reinstated in our society as a most highly prized value? If immorality, pornography, and abuse decreased, would there be fewer broken marriages, broken lives, and broken hearts? Would media ennoble and enable rather than objectify and degrade God’s precious daughters? If all humanity really understood the importance of the statement “We are daughters of our Heavenly Father,”

how would women be regarded and treated?

Several years ago, as this Conference Center was being built and nearing completion, I entered this sacred building on the balcony level in a hard hat and safety glasses, ready to vacuum the carpet that my husband was helping to install. Where the rostrum now stands was a front-end loader moving dirt, and the dust in this building was thick. When it settled, it did so on the new carpet. My part was to vacuum. And so I vacuumed and vacuumed and vacuumed. After three days my little vacuum burned up!

The afternoon before the first general conference in this beautiful building, my husband called me. He was about to install the last piece of carpet—under this historic pulpit.

He asked, “What scripture should I write on the back of this carpet?”

And I said, “Mosiah 18:9: ‘Stand as

[a witness] of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.’”

In an extremely challenging world, that is what I see young women and women of this Church doing. They are an influence for good. They are virtuous and exemplary, intelligent and industrious. They are making a difference because they *are* different. They are acting well their part.

Years ago when I was vacuuming this carpet—trying to act well my small part—I didn’t realize that I would one day stand with my feet on the carpet under this pulpit.

Today as a daughter of God, I stand as a witness that He lives. Jesus is the Christ. He is our Redeemer. It is through His infinite atoning sacrifice that I will one day return to live with Him—proven, pure, and sealed in an eternal family. I shall ever praise Him for the privilege of being a woman, a wife, and a mother. I testify that we are led by a prophet of God, President Thomas S. Monson, and I am grateful for righteous men, whose priesthood power blesses my life. And I shall ever be grateful for the strength I receive through the enabling power of the Savior’s infinite Atonement as I continue to strive to “act well [my] part.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 3.
2. Mosiah 18:9.
3. See Matthew O. Richardson, “‘What E’er Thou Art, Act Well Thy Part’: John Allan’s Albany Crescent Stone,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 33 (Fall 2007), 31–61; Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (1986), 45.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 82:10.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
6. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
7. See Moroni 9:9.
8. See *Young Women Personal Progress*, 70.



By Elder Craig A. Cardon
Of the Seventy

The Savior Wants to Forgive

The Lord loves us and wants us to understand His willingness to forgive.

During the time of our Savior's mortal ministry, many followed after Him, including scribes and Pharisees "out of every town of Galilee, . . . Judaea, and Jerusalem."¹ A bedridden, paralyzed man desiring to be healed was brought to a large gathering, but unable to get him close to the Savior, his friends took him to the roof of the house where the Savior was and lowered him down. Seeing this demonstration of faith, with a great purpose not yet known to His listeners, the Savior declared, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."²

This must have surprised the man, and although the scriptures say nothing of his reaction, he may have wondered if the Savior really understood why he had come.

The Savior knew that many people followed Him because of His mighty miracles. Already He had turned water to wine,³ cast out unclean spirits,⁴ and healed the nobleman's son,⁵ a leper,⁶ Peter's mother-in-law,⁷ and many others.⁸

But with this paralyzed man, the Lord chose to give evidence to both disciple and detractor of His unique role as Savior of the world. Hearing

the Savior's words, the scribes and Pharisees had begun to reason among themselves, ignorantly speaking of blasphemy while concluding that only God can forgive sin. Perceiving their thoughts, the Savior addressed them, saying:

"What reason ye in your hearts?

"Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?"⁹

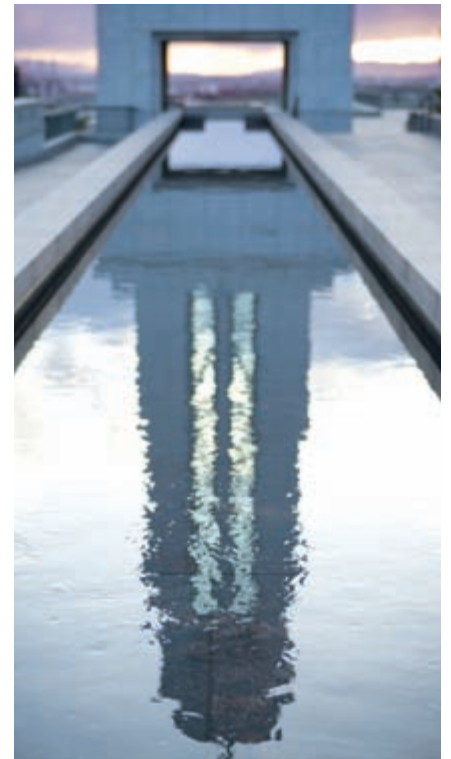
Not waiting for their response, the Savior continued, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power *upon earth* to forgive sins, [He then turned to the paralyzed man] I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house."¹⁰ And he did!

By this miraculous physical healing, the Savior confirmed to all of us this infinitely more powerful spiritual truth: the Son of Man forgives sins!

While this truth is readily accepted by all believers, not so easily acknowledged is the essential companion truth: the Savior forgives sins "upon earth" and not just at the Final Judgment. He does not excuse us *in* our sins.¹¹ He does not condone our return to past sins.¹² But when we repent and obey His gospel, He forgives us.¹³

In this forgiveness we see the enabling *and* the redeeming power of the Atonement harmoniously and graciously applied. If we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the enabling power of His Atonement *strengthens* us in our moment of need,¹⁴ and His redeeming power *sanctifies* us as we "[put] off the natural man."¹⁵ This brings hope to all, especially to those who feel that recurring human weakness is beyond the Savior's willingness to help and to save.

Providing an opportunity for the Savior to enlighten our understanding,¹⁶ Peter once inquired how many times he should forgive his brother and then asked, "Till seven times?" Surely that would be more than enough. But the Savior's response opened wide the door to *His* merciful heart: "I say *not* unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."¹⁷





The Lord loves us and wants us to understand His willingness to forgive. On more than 20 occasions in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord told those to whom He was speaking, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” or similar words.¹⁸ On about half of those occasions, the Lord’s words were directed specifically to the Prophet Joseph Smith, sometimes addressing him alone, sometimes with others.¹⁹ The first of these was recorded in 1830, the last in 1843. Thus, over a span of many years, the Lord told Joseph repeatedly, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

While Joseph was not “guilty of any great or malignant sins,”²⁰ we do well to remember that with very few exceptions, the Lord’s “seventy times seven” does not limit forgiveness according to the seriousness of the sin.

While speaking to elders assembled in Kirtland, the Lord said, “I will that ye should overcome the world; *wherefore* I will have compassion upon you.”²¹ The Lord knows our weakness and the eternal consequences of “the world” upon imperfect men and women.²² The word *wherefore* in this verse is His affirmation that it is only by virtue of His compassion that we

may ultimately “overcome the world.” How is that compassion made manifest? To these same elders in Kirtland, He said, “I have forgiven you your sins.”²³ *The Savior wants to forgive.*

No one need suppose that this forgiveness comes without repentance. Indeed, the Lord has declared, “I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness,” and then He adds the cautionary qualifier “who have not sinned unto death.”²⁴ While the Lord “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance,”²⁵ yet He differentiates the relative gravity of some sins. He stipulates there will be no forgiveness for “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.”²⁶ He declares the gravity of murder²⁷ and emphasizes the seriousness of sexual sin such as adultery.²⁸ With regard to repeated serious sexual sin, He makes known the increased difficulty of receiving His forgiveness.²⁹ And He has said that “he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.”³⁰ Yet, in His mercy, He allows for improvement over time rather than demanding immediate perfection. Even with the multitude of sins occasioned by the weakness of mortality, as often

as we repent and seek His forgiveness, He forgives again and again.³¹

Because of this, all of us, including those struggling to overcome addictive behaviors such as substance abuse or pornography and those close to them, can know that the Lord will recognize our righteous efforts and will lovingly forgive when repentance is complete, “until seventy times seven.” But this does not mean one may *willingly* return to sin with impunity.³²

The Lord is always interested in our hearts,³³ and rationalized false faith does not justify sin.³⁴ In this dispensation the Lord warned one of His servants against such rationalization by declaring, “Let [him] be ashamed of the Nicolaitane band and of all their secret abominations.”³⁵ The Nicolaitans were an ancient religious sect that claimed license to commit sexual sin by virtue of the Lord’s grace.³⁶ This is not pleasing to the Lord.³⁷ His compassion and grace do not excuse us when “[our] hearts are not satisfied. And [we] obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.”³⁸ Rather, after we do all we can do,³⁹ His compassion and grace are the means whereby “in process of time”⁴⁰ we overcome the world through the enabling power of the Atonement. As we humbly seek this precious gift, “weak things become strong unto [us],”⁴¹ and by *His* strength, we are made able to do that which we could never do alone.

The Lord looks upon the light we have received,⁴² the desires of our hearts,⁴³ and our actions,⁴⁴ and when we repent and seek His forgiveness, He forgives. As we consider our own lives and the lives of our loved ones and acquaintances, we should be equally willing to forgive ourselves and others.⁴⁵

Preach My Gospel speaks of the difficulty in overcoming addictive behavior and encourages priesthood

leaders and members to “not be shocked or discouraged” if investigators or new members continue to struggle with such problems. Rather, we are counseled to “show confidence in the individual and not be judgmental . . . [treating] it as a temporary and understandable setback.”⁴⁶ Could we do less with our own children or family members who struggle with similar problems, having temporarily strayed from the path of righteousness? Surely they merit our steadiness, patience, and love—and yes, our forgiveness.

In general conference just last October, President Monson counseled:

“We need to bear in mind that people can change. They can put behind them bad habits. They can repent from transgressions. . . .

“ . . . We can help them to overcome their shortcomings. We must develop the capacity to see men *not* as they are at present but as they may become.”⁴⁷

At an early conference of the Church, similar to this conference, the Lord told the members:

“Verily I say unto you, ye are clean, but not all; . . .

“For *all flesh* is corrupted before me. . . .

“ . . . For verily some of you are guilty before me, *but I will be merciful unto your weakness.*”⁴⁸

His message is the same today.

Our Heavenly Father knows what we are facing, that we all sin and “come short of the glory of God”⁴⁹ again and again. He sent His Son, who “knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted.”⁵⁰ His Son teaches us to “pray always that [we] enter *not* into temptation.”⁵¹ We are told to “cry unto [God] for *mercy*; for he is mighty to save.”⁵² The Savior commands

us to repent⁵³ and to forgive.⁵⁴ And although repentance is not easy, as we strive with all our hearts to obey His gospel, He gives this promise: “Verily I say unto you, notwithstanding [your] sins, *my bowels are filled with compassion towards [you]*. I will not utterly cast [you] off; *and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy.*”⁵⁵ The Savior wants to forgive.

Each week the Mormon Tabernacle Choir begins its inspiring broadcast with the uplifting words of William W. Phelps’s familiar hymn “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain.” Not as familiar are the comforting words of the fourth verse:

Holy, holy is the Lord.

Precious, precious is his word: . . .

Repent and live;

Tho your sins be crimson red,

*Oh, repent, and he’ll forgive.*⁵⁶

I invite you to remember and believe the words of the Lord and to exercise faith in Him unto repentance.⁵⁷ He loves you. He wants to forgive. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 5:17; see also Mark 2:2.
2. Luke 5:20; see also Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5.
3. See John 2:1–11.
4. See Mark 1:21–28; Luke 4:33–37.
5. See John 4:46–54.
6. See Matthew 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–15.
7. See Matthew 8:14–15; Mark 1:29–31; Luke 4:38–39.
8. See Matthew 8:16–17; Mark 1:32–34; Luke 4:40–41.
9. Luke 5:22–23; see also Matthew 9:3–5; Mark 2:6–9.
10. Luke 5:24; emphasis added; see also Matthew 9:6–7; Mark 2:10–12.
11. See 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Alma 11:34, 37; Helaman 5:10–11.
12. See 2 Peter 2:20; James 2:10; Doctrine and Covenants 82:7.
13. See Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 31:34; Luke 7:36–50; Enos 1:5; Alma 24:10; Moroni 6:8; Doctrine and Covenants 1:32; 58:42–43.
14. See Jacob 4:7; Alma 14:26; Moroni 10:7.
15. Mosiah 3:19; see also 2 Nephi 10:24–25.
16. See Alma 32:28, 34.
17. Matthew 18:21–22; emphasis added; see also Luke 17:1–4.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:5–7; 25:3; 29:3; 31:5; 36:1; 50:36; 60:6–7; 61:2; 62:3; 64:1–4, 5–7, 15–17; 75:6–8; 82:1; 84:60–61; 90:1, 6; 108:1; 110:5; 112:3; 124:74–76, 78; 132:50.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:5–7; 29:3; 60:6–7; 61:2; 62:3; 64:5–7; 84:60–61; 90:1; 110:5; 132:50.
20. Joseph Smith—History 1:28.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 64:2; emphasis added.



22. See 1 Nephi 20:9–11; Doctrine and Covenants 24:2; 50:41; 63:47; 108:1–8.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 64:3.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 64:7.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31; see also verses 32–33; Alma 45:16.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 132:27; see also Matthew 12:31; Luke 12:10.
27. See Exodus 20:13; Mosiah 13:21; Doctrine and Covenants 132:19; Moses 5:31–36.
28. See Alma 39:5; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24–26.
29. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–26, 75–78, 80–82; 63:13–17; 76:103.
30. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3; see also John 15:22.
31. See Moroni 6:8.
32. See Mosiah 15:26.
33. See 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 24:3–4; Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 15:18–20; Mark 7:20–23; Hebrews 3:12; 3 Nephi 12:19; Doctrine and Covenants 59:8; 64:34.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:29–30; 121:37.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 117:11.
36. See Bible Dictionary, “Nicolaitans.”
37. See Revelation 2:6, 15.
38. Doctrine and Covenants 56:15.
39. See 2 Nephi 25:23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:4.
40. Moses 7:21.
41. Ether 12:27.
42. See John 15:22; Doctrine and Covenants 1:33; 82:3.
43. See Alma 41:5–6; 3 Nephi 9:20; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
44. See 1 Nephi 15:33; Alma 41:3–4; Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
45. See Matthew 6:14–15; Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10; 98:39–48.
46. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 189.
47. Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 68, 69; emphasis added.
48. Doctrine and Covenants 38:10–11, 14; emphasis added.
49. Romans 3:23.
50. Doctrine and Covenants 62:1; see also Alma 7:12.
51. Doctrine and Covenants 61:39; emphasis added.
52. Alma 34:18; emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 31:19; Alma 7:14.
53. See Helaman 13:11; Doctrine and Covenants 19:4, 13–21.
54. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:8–10.
55. Doctrine and Covenants 101:9; emphasis added; see also Doctrine and Covenants 82:1–7.
56. “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain,” *Hymns*, no. 146.
57. See Alma 34:15–17.



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

“This Is My Work and Glory”

God has freely given His power to those who accept and honor His priesthood, which leads to the promised blessings of immortality and eternal life.

President Packer, we’re all looking forward to the 98 version of that wonderful poem. What a wonderful instruction he gave to us.

A few weeks ago, on a cold, dark winter’s night, my wife, Barbara, and I looked in awe up at the sky. The millions of stars seemed exceptionally bright and beautiful. I then turned to the Pearl of Great Price and read again with wonder what the Lord God said to Moses: “And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:33).

In our day the Hubble deep-space telescope has confirmed the magnitude of what Moses saw. Hubble scientists say the Milky Way galaxy, of which our earth and sun are just a tiny part, is estimated to be only one of over 200 billion similar galaxies. For me it is difficult to comprehend, impossible to fathom, so large and so vast are God’s creations.

Brothers and sisters, the power by which the heavens and earth were and are created is the priesthood. Those of us who are members of the Church

know that the source of this priesthood power is God Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ. Not only is the priesthood the power by which the heavens and the earth were created, but it is also the power the Savior used in His mortal ministry to perform miracles, to bless and heal the sick, to bring the dead to life, and, as our Father’s Only Begotten Son, to endure the unbearable pain of Gethsemane and Calvary—thus fulfilling the laws of justice with mercy and providing an infinite Atonement and overcoming physical death through the Resurrection.

It is the keys of this priesthood authority and resultant power that He gave to Peter, James, and John and His other Apostles to bless others and to bind in heaven that which is bound on earth.

The power of the priesthood is a sacred and essential gift of God. It is different from priesthood authority, which is the authorization to act in God’s name. The authorization or ordination is given by the laying on of hands. The power of the priesthood comes only when those



who exercise it are worthy and acting in accordance with God's will. As President Spencer W. Kimball declared, "The Lord has given to all of us, as holders of the priesthood, certain of his authority, but we can only tap the powers of heaven on the basis of our personal righteousness" ("Boys Need Heroes Close By," *Ensign*, May 1976, 45).

During the glorious days of the Restoration and the reestablishment of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world today, John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses; Elias; and Elijah came to the earth and restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith all of the keys and authority of the priesthood for the work of God in these latter days.

It is by these keys, this authority, and this power that the Church of Jesus Christ is organized today, with Christ at the head directing His living prophet, Thomas S. Monson, and assisted by duly called and ordained Apostles.

In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. In other words, in the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife. And as husband and wife, a man and a woman should strive to follow our Heavenly Father. The Christian virtues of love, humility, and patience should be their focus as they seek the blessings of the priesthood in their lives and for their family.

It is crucial for us to understand that Heavenly Father has provided a way for all of His sons and His daughters to have access to the blessings of and be strengthened by

the power of the priesthood. Central to God's plan for His spirit children is His own declaration: "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

In the revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in section 81 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explains that the power of the priesthood is to be used to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (verse 5).

"And in doing [such] things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord" (D&C 81:4).

As we think about the imagery of succoring the weak, lifting up the hands which hang down, and strengthening feeble knees, I am reminded of a sweet seven-year-old showing her grandfather a small tomato plant she had started from seed as part of a second-grade school project.

She explained that from one tiny seed would come a plant. And if the plant were cared for, it would grow many tomatoes that would each have many seeds.

She said, “And if all of those seeds were planted and grew more tomatoes, and you planted all of those seeds, in a few seasons you would have millions of tomatoes.”

“All,” she said in amazement, “from one little seed.”

But then she said, “I almost killed my plant. I left it in a dark room and forgot to water it. When I remembered the plant, it was all wilted and dead looking. I cried because I thought of all of those millions of tomatoes that would never grow.”

She was then excited to tell her grandfather about the “miracle” that happened.

She explained, “Momma said maybe the plant wasn’t dead. Maybe all it needed was some water and some light to bring life back.

“And she was right. I gave the plant some water, and I put it in the window for light. And guess what?” she asked. “It came back to life, and now it’s going to grow millions of tomatoes!”

Her small tomato plant, so full of potential but so weakened and wilted from unintentional neglect, was strengthened and revived through the simple ministration of water and light by the little girl’s loving and caring hands.

Brothers and sisters, as the literal spirit children of our loving Heavenly Father, we have unlimited, divine potential. But if we are not careful, we can become like the wilted tomato plant. We can drift away from the true doctrine and gospel of Christ and become spiritually undernourished and wilted, having removed ourselves from the divine light and living waters

of the Savior’s eternal love and priesthood power.

Those who hold the priesthood and fail to constantly strive to honor it by serving our families and others will be like those who do not *receive* the blessings inherent in the power of the priesthood and will surely wilt spiritually, having deprived themselves of the essential spiritual nutrients, light, and power of God in their lives—much like the tomato plant so full of potential but neglected and wilted.

The same priesthood power that created worlds, galaxies, and the universe can and should be part of our lives to succor, strengthen, and bless our families, our friends, and our neighbors—in other words, to do the

things that the Savior would do if He were ministering among us today.

And the primary purpose of this priesthood power is to bless, sanctify, and purify us so we can live together with our families in the presence of our heavenly parents, bound by priesthood sealings, participating in the marvelous work of God and Jesus Christ in forever expanding *Their* light and glory.

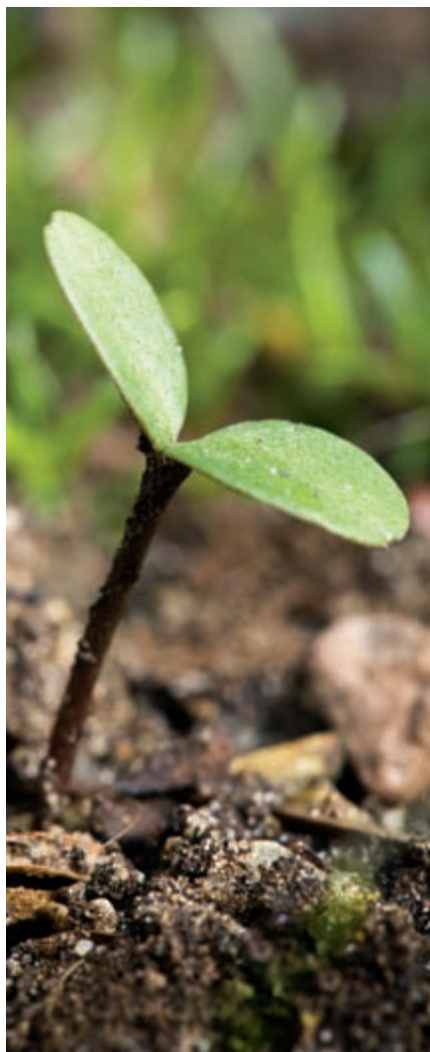
To this end, a few months ago I had the opportunity to participate in making a video-based worldwide leadership training presentation called *Strengthening the Family and the Church through the Priesthood*.

This innovative and instructive DVD is translated into 66 languages. It teaches how the power of the priesthood can bless, vitalize, and revitalize our lives, the lives of our families, and the lives of all the members of the Church.

It shows us all—men, women, children; married, widowed, or single; no matter what our circumstances—how we can be partakers of the blessings of the priesthood. There are several 8- to 12-minute segments that explain the keys, authority, and power of the priesthood and how it strengthens individuals, families, and the Church.

One special scene was filmed in the very small pioneer home of my mother’s great-grandmother Mary Fielding Smith. She was the widow of Hyrum, the Prophet Joseph’s older brother. As a single parent, through her strong faith in the priesthood, she called upon and relied on that power to raise and bless her children in love and the light of the gospel. Today her posterity of thousands of faithful leaders and members of the Church thank her for her faith, courage, and example.

This new leadership training is now available on the Internet at LDS.org for all to see and experience (wwlt.lds.org). You can stream it live





from LDS.org, or you can download it to your computer, smartphone, or tablet devices.

The First Presidency has asked “stake presidencies and bishoprics to dedicate one or more stake or ward council meetings to viewing the [entire] DVD. Stake and ward councils should discuss how to implement the teachings that are presented” (First Presidency letter, Feb. 1, 2013).

The content will inspire and motivate members in priesthood quorums, Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Women, Young Men (especially those preparing for missions), and in Primary meetings or combined fifth-Sunday gatherings. Council members will then be able to encourage individuals and parents to use this presentation with their families. Brothers and sisters, this leadership training is for every member of the Church. Parents, review, share, and discuss what you learn and feel with your children, and let them watch and do the same with you, that your families may be strengthened through the priesthood.

Jesus said:

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37).

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me . . . shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

If any one of you feels your faith or your testimony of Heavenly Father’s plan is less than you know it should be, then turn more fully to the Savior. Let His light and His living water do for you and your family what a little water and light did in bringing life back to the weakened tomato plant.

Now, I began with the wonder and awe in the creations of God through the power of the priesthood. I stand here wondering, as I suppose most of you also do, if God’s power to instruct and bless us can ever be fully comprehended. It is so great, so majestic, so powerful.

Joseph Smith said, “The Priesthood

is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 104).

God has freely given His power to those who accept and honor His priesthood, which leads to the promised blessings of immortality and eternal life.

I testify that the work of Jesus Christ is accomplished through the priesthood. It is the power by which our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son created this earth and set in motion the great plan of happiness for our sakes. May we be wise and seek to strengthen our own lives, the lives of our families, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the power of the priesthood of God is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Short Video Highlight

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

"Come unto Me"

By His words and His example, Christ has shown us how to draw closer to Him.

I am grateful to be with you in this conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is His Church. We take His name upon us as we enter His kingdom. He is God, the Creator, and perfect. We are mortals subject to death and sin. Yet in His love for us and our families, He invites us to be close to Him. Here are His words: "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."¹

At this Easter season we are reminded of why we love Him and of the promise He makes to His faithful disciples to become His beloved friends. The Savior made that promise and told us how, in our service to Him, He comes to us. One example is in a revelation to Oliver Cowdery as he served the Lord with the Prophet Joseph Smith in the translation of the Book of Mormon: "Behold, thou art Oliver, and I have spoken unto thee because of thy desires; therefore treasure up these words in thy heart. Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love."²

I experienced the joy of coming closer to the Savior and of His coming closer to me most often through

simple acts of obedience to the commandments.

You have had such experiences. It may have been when you chose to attend a sacrament meeting. It was for me on a Sabbath when I was very young. In those days we received the sacrament during an evening meeting. The memory of one day more than 65 years ago, when I kept the commandment to gather with my family and with the Saints, still draws me closer to the Savior.

It was dark and cold outside. I remember feeling light and warmth in the chapel that evening with my parents. We partook of the sacrament, administered by Aaronic Priesthood holders, covenanting with our Heavenly Father to always remember His Son and keep His commandments.

At the end of the meeting we sang the hymn "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide," with the words in it "O Savior, stay this night with me."³

I felt the Savior's love and closeness that evening. And I felt the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

I wanted to rekindle once again the feelings of the love of the Savior and His closeness I felt during that sacrament meeting in my youth. So recently I kept another commandment. I searched in the scriptures. In

them, I knew I could go back again to have the Holy Ghost let me feel what two disciples of the risen Lord had felt when He accepted their invitation to come into their home and to abide with them.

I read of the third day after His Crucifixion and burial. Faithful women and others found the stone rolled away from the tomb and saw that His body was not there. They had come out of love for Him to anoint His body.

Two angels stood by and asked why they were afraid, saying:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

"Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."⁴

The Gospel of Mark adds the direction from one of the angels: "But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."⁵

The Apostles and disciples had gathered in Jerusalem. As we might have been, they were afraid and wondered as they spoke together about what death and reports of His being resurrected meant for them.

Two of the disciples walked that afternoon from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus. The resurrected Christ appeared on the road and walked with them. The Lord had come to them.

The book of Luke allows us to walk with them:

"And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

“And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”⁶

They told Him of their sadness that Jesus had died when they had trusted He would be the Redeemer of Israel.

There must have been affection in the risen Lord’s voice as He spoke to these two sorrowful and mourning disciples:

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”⁷

Then came a moment that has warmed my heart since I was a little boy:

“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.”⁸

The Savior accepted that night the invitation to enter the house of His disciples near the village of Emmaus.

He sat at meat with them. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened so that they knew Him. Then He vanished out of their sight. Luke recorded for us the feelings of those blessed disciples: “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by



the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”⁹

At that same hour, the two disciples rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven Apostles what had happened to them. In that moment the Savior appeared again.

He reviewed the prophecies of His mission to atone for the sins of all His Father’s children and to break the bands of death.

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

“And ye are witnesses of these things.”¹⁰

The Savior’s words are true as well for us as they were for His disciples

then. We are witnesses of these things. And the glorious charge we accepted as we were baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was made plain for us by the prophet Alma centuries ago at the waters of Mormon:

“And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) 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 be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of



the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

“Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

“And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.”¹¹

We are under covenant both to lift up those in need and to be witnesses of the Savior as long as we live.

We will be able to do it without fail only as we feel love for the Savior and His love for us. As we are faithful to the promises we have made, we will feel our love for Him. It will increase because we will feel His power and His drawing near to us in His service.

President Thomas S. Monson has reminded us often of the promise of the Lord to His faithful disciples: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”¹²

There is another way you and I have felt Him grow closer to us. As we

give devoted service to Him, He draws closer to those we love in our families. Every time I have been called in the Lord’s service to move or to leave my family, I have come to see that the Lord was blessing my wife and my children. He prepared loving servants of His and opportunities to draw my family closer to Him.

You have felt that same blessing in your lives. Many of you have loved ones who are wandering off the path to eternal life. You wonder what more you can do to bring them back. You can depend on the Lord to draw closer to them as you serve Him in faith.

You remember the Lord’s promise to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon when they were away from their families on His errands: “My friends Sidney and Joseph, your families are well; they are in mine hands, and I will do with them as seemeth me good; for in me there is all power.”¹³

Like Alma and King Mosiah, some faithful parents have served the Lord long and well yet have had children who wandered despite their parents’ sacrifice for the Lord. They have done all they could to no apparent avail, even with help from loving and faithful friends.

Alma and the Saints of his day prayed for his son and the sons of King Mosiah. An angel came. Your prayers and the prayers of those who

exercise their faith will bring the Lord’s servants to help your family members. They will help them choose the way home to God, even as they are attacked by Satan and his followers, whose purpose it is to destroy families in this life and in eternity.

You remember the words spoken by the angel to Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah in their rebellion: “And again, the angel said: Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith.”¹⁴

My promise to you who pray and serve the Lord cannot be that you will have every blessing you may wish for yourself and your family. But I can promise you that the Savior will draw close to you and bless you and your family with what is best. You will have the comfort of His love and feel the answer of His drawing closer as you reach out your arms in giving service to others. As you bind up the wounds of those in need and offer the cleansing of His Atonement to those who sorrow in sin, the Lord’s power will sustain you. His arms are outstretched with yours to succor and bless the children of our Heavenly Father, including those in your family.

There is a glorious homecoming prepared for us. We will then see fulfilled the promise of the Lord we have loved. It is He who welcomes us into eternal life with Him and our Heavenly Father. Jesus Christ described it this way:

“Seek to bring forth and establish



Los Angeles, California, USA

my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things.

“And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”¹⁵

“For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them.”¹⁶

I testify that we can by the Spirit follow the invitation of Heavenly Father: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”¹⁷

By His words and His example, Christ has shown us how to draw closer to Him. Every child of Heavenly Father who has chosen to enter through the gate of baptism into His Church will have the opportunity in this life to be taught His gospel and to hear from His called servants His invitation, “Come unto me.”¹⁸

Every covenant servant of His within His kingdom on earth and

in the spirit world will receive His guidance by the Spirit as they bless and serve others for Him. And they will feel His love and find joy in being drawn closer to Him.

I am a witness of the Resurrection of the Lord as surely as if I had been there in the evening with the two disciples in the house on Emmaus road. I know that He lives as surely as did Joseph Smith when he saw the Father and the Son in the light of a brilliant morning in a grove of trees in Palmyra.

This is the true Church of Jesus Christ. Only in the priesthood keys held by President Thomas S. Monson is the power for us to be sealed in families to live forever with our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We will on the Day of Judgment stand before the Savior, face to face. It will be a time of joy for those who have drawn close to Him in His service in this life. It will be a joy to hear the words: “Well done, thou

good and faithful servant.”¹⁹ I so testify as a witness of the risen Savior and our Redeemer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 6:20.
3. “Abide with Me; ’Tis Eventide,” *Hymns*, no. 165.
4. Luke 24:5–7.
5. Mark 16:7.
6. Luke 24:15–18.
7. Luke 24:25–27.
8. Luke 24:28–29.
9. Luke 24:32.
10. Luke 24:46–48.
11. Mosiah 18:8–11.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 100:1.
14. Mosiah 27:14.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 14:6–7.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 59:2.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
18. Matthew 11:28.
19. Matthew 25:21.



Short Video Highlight

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Presented by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

The Sustaining of Church Officers

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

Those in favor may manifest it.

Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum:

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

Those in favor, please manifest it.

Any opposed may so indicate.

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

All in favor, please manifest it.

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



Elder Walter F. González has been released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

Those who wish to join us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Ulisses Soares as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies, effective on May 1, 2013: Rubén V. Alliaud, Sergio M. Anaya, Nolan D. Archibald, Carlos L. Astorga, Hector Avila, M. Anthony Burns, David Cabrera, Milton Camargo, Robert E. Chambers, Victor Kah Keng Chen, Kuo Chiang Chung, Nelson D. Córdova, Gary L. Crittenden, Edward Dube, Matthew J. Eyring, Sione M. Fineanganofu, Alfredo L. Gessati, James B. Gibson, Jovencio A. Guanzon, Mario E. Guerra, Luis S. Hernandez, Hernan I. Herrera, Javier Ibañez, Paulo H. Itinose, Douglas W. Jessop, Stephen C. Kerr, Joni L. Koch, Faustino López, Richard K. Melchin, Freebody A. Mensah, Benson E. Misalucha, Abelardo Morales, W. T. David Murray, K. Brett Nattress, S. Gifford Nielsen, Satoshi Nishihara, Michael D. Pickerd, William F. Reynolds, Michael A. Roberts, Fernando A. R. Da Rocha, Manfred Schütze, Terrence C. Smith, Rubén L. Spitale, Joshua Subandriyo, Frank V. Trythall, Miguel R. Valdez, Arnulfo Valenzuela, Carlos A. C. Villanova, Terence M. Vinson, Louis Weidmann, and Richard C. Zambrano.

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

It is proposed that we release with a vote of sincere appreciation Sisters Elaine S. Dalton, Mary N. Cook, and



Ann M. Dibb as the Young Women general presidency.

We likewise extend a release to all members of the Young Women general board.

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

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Edward Dube, S. Gifford Nielsen, and Arnulfo Valenzuela; and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Timothy J. Dyches, Randy D. Funk, Kevin S. Hamilton, Adrián Ochoa, and Terence M. Vinson.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

In view of his call as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we also release Brother Adrián Ochoa as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency.

Those who wish to extend a vote of appreciation may so manifest it.

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

Ruben Acosta, Frederick O. Akinbo, Omar A. Alvarez, Sergio Antunes, Alan C. Batt, Grant C. Bennett, Fernando E. Calderón, Wilson B. Calderón, H. Marcelo Cardus, Yoke Sang (Freddie) Chan, Christopher Charles, Valeri V. Cordón, Paul R. Coward, M. T. Ben Davis, Massimo De Feo, Marion B. De Antuñano, Francisco J. Ruiz de Mendoza, Robert A. Dryden, Robert J. Dudfield, Daniel F. Dunnigan, Jeffrey D. Erikson, E. Xavier Espinoza, Meliula M. Fata, Sam M. Galvez, Claude R. Gamiette, Mervyn C. Giddey, João R. Grahl, David P. Homer, Daniel W. Jones, John A. Koranteng, Steven O. Laing, Axel H. Leimer, Gustavo Lopez, José E. Maravilla, Alfredo Miron, Hugo Montoya, Joaquim J. Moreira, Katsuyuki Otahara, José C. Pineda, Gary S. Price, Miguel A. Reyes, Gary B. Sabin, Alfredo L. Salas, Netzahualcoyotl Salinas, Ciro Schmeil, D. Zackary Smith, Michael L. Southward, G. Lawrence Spackman, Vern P. Stanfill, William H. Stoddard, Stephen E. Thompson,

George J. Tobias, 'Aisake K. Tukuafu, Jacques A. Van Reenen, Raul E. Vicencio, Raul S. Villanueva, Alan R. Walker, Keith P. Walker, and Hoi Seng Leonard Woo.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Bonnie Lee Green Oscarson as general president of the Young Women, with Carol Louise Foley McConkie as first counselor and Evelyn Neill Foote Marriott as second counselor.

Those in favor may manifest it.

Any opposed may so signify.

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

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

Church Auditing Department Report, 2012

Presented by Robert W. Cantwell
Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

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

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

This council approves budgets for Church departments, operations, and related allocations to ecclesiastical units. Church entities expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls for receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding

of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the year 2012 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

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



Statistical Report, 2012

Presented by Brook P. Hales
Secretary to the First Presidency

For the information of the members of the Church, the First Presidency has issued the following statistical report regarding the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2012.

Church Units

Stakes.....	3,005
Missions.....	347
Districts.....	591
Wards and Branches	29,014

Church Membership

Total Membership	14,782,473
New Children of Record during 2012.....	122,273
Converts Baptized during 2012.....	272,330

Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries	58,990
Church-Service Missionaries	22,961

Temples

Temples Dedicated during 2012 (Kansas City Missouri, Manaus Brazil, Brigham City Utah, and Calgary Alberta).....	4
Temples Rededicated during 2012 (Buenos Aires Argentina and Boise Idaho).....	2
Temples in Operation	140



By Elder Richard G. Scott
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

For Peace at Home

One of the greatest blessings we can offer to the world is the power of a Christ-centered home where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds.

Many voices from the world in which we live tell us we should live at a frantic pace. There is always more to do and more to accomplish. Yet deep inside each of us is a need to have a place of refuge where peace and serenity prevail, a place where we can reset, regroup, and reenergize to prepare for future pressures.

The ideal place for that peace is within the walls of our own homes, where we have done all we can to make the Lord Jesus Christ the centerpiece.

Some homes have a father who is a worthy priesthood holder joined by a faithful, devoted mother who together lead in righteousness. Many homes have a different configuration. Regardless of your circumstances, you can center your home and your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the source of true peace in this life.

Be certain that every decision you make, whether temporal or spiritual, is conditioned on what the Savior would have you do. When He is the center of your home, there is peace and serenity. There is a spirit of assurance that pervades the home, and it is felt by all who dwell there.

The fulfillment of this counsel does not rest upon parents alone, although it is their role to lead. Children can be responsible for improving the Christ-centered efforts in the home. It is important for parents to teach children to recognize how their actions affect each individual who lives in the home. Children who are made to feel accountable for their actions, whether righteous or otherwise, grow to become trustworthy citizens in the kingdom of God.

I'm sure you can identify the fundamental principles that center your home on the Savior. The prophetic counsel to have daily personal and family prayer, daily personal and family scripture study, and weekly family home evening are the essential, weight-bearing beams in the construction of a Christ-centered home. Without these regular practices it will be difficult to find the desired and much-needed peace and refuge from the world.

Be obedient to the prophetic teachings Christ would have you follow. Don't rationalize away future happiness by taking shortcuts instead of applying sound gospel principles. Remember: little things lead to big things. Seemingly insignificant



Sydney, Australia

indiscretions or neglect can lead to big problems. More importantly, simple, consistent, good habits lead to a life full of bountiful blessings.

You children in the Primary, you young men and women in youth programs, and you stalwart missionaries now serving are doing many things more effectively than I was able to do at your age. In the premortal life you proved to be valiant, obedient, and pure. There you worked hard to develop talents and capacities to prepare yourselves to face mortality with courage, dignity, honor, and success.

Not long ago you came to mortality with all of those magnificent capacities and endless possibilities. Yet there is real danger in the environment surrounding you. Your great potential and ability could be limited or destroyed if you yield to the devil-inspired contamination around you. However, Satan is no match for the Savior. Satan's fate is decided. He

knows he has lost, but he wants to take as many with him as he can. He will try to ruin your goodness and abilities by exploiting your weaknesses. Stay on the Lord's side, and you will win every time.

You live in a world where technological advances occur at an astounding pace. It is difficult for many of my generation to keep up with the possibilities. Depending on how technology is used, these advances can be a blessing or a deterrent. Technology, when understood and used for righteous purposes, need not be a threat but rather an enhancement to spiritual communication.

For example, many of us have a personal electronic device that fits into our pocket. We are seldom without its company; we may refer to it many times a day. Unfortunately, these devices can be a source of filth and wasted time. But, used with discipline, this technology can be a tool of

protection from the worst of society.

Who could have imagined not very many years ago that the full standard works and years of general conference messages would fit into your pocket? Just having them in your pocket will not protect you, but studying, pondering, and listening to them during quiet moments of each day will enhance communication through the Spirit.

Be wise in how you embrace technology. Mark important scriptures on your device and refer back to them frequently. If you young people would review a verse of scripture as often as some of you send text messages, you could soon have hundreds of passages of scripture memorized. Those passages would prove to be a powerful source of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Ghost in times of need.

Doing all we can to invite the gentle, guiding influence of the Holy Ghost into our lives is critical in our attempts to center our homes on the

Savior. Acting obediently on those promptings strengthens us even more.

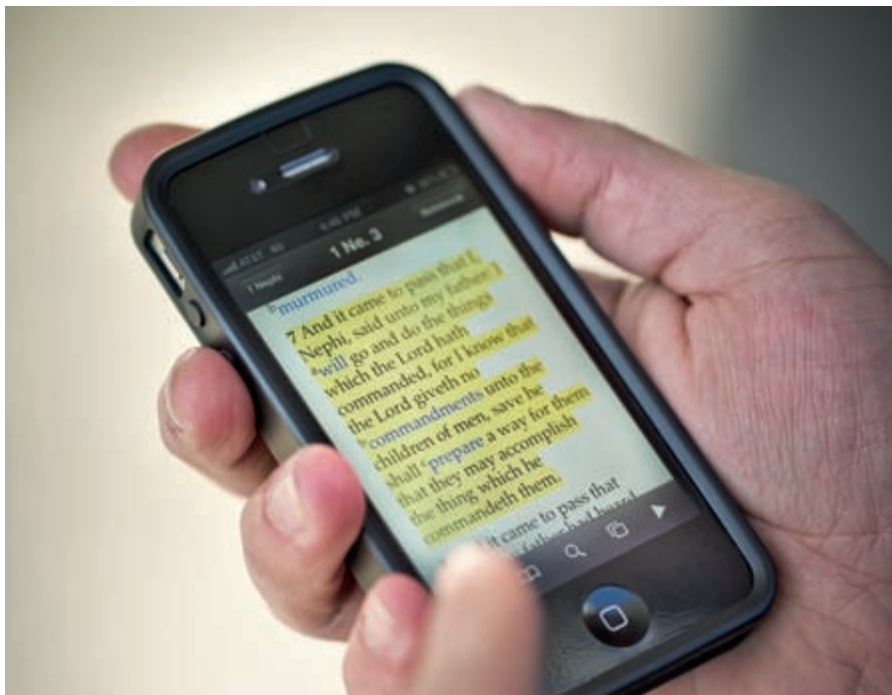
Greater peace will come as you couple your efforts to be obedient with serving those around you. So many individuals who have what they perceive to be meager talents humbly and generously use those talents to bless the lives of those around them. Selfishness is the root of great evil. The antidote for that evil is exemplified in the life of the Savior. He shows us how to focus our lives outward in unselfish service to others.

I have learned a truth that has been repeated so frequently in my life that I have come to know it as an absolute law. It defines the way obedience and service relate to the power of God. 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. His power is a fundamental component to establishing a home filled with peace.

As you center your home on the Savior, it will naturally become a refuge not only to your own family but also to friends who live in more difficult circumstances. They will be drawn to the serenity they feel there. Welcome such friends into your home. They will blossom in that Christ-centered environment. Become friends with your children's friends. Be a worthy example to them.

One of the greatest blessings we can offer to the world is the power of a Christ-centered home where the gospel is taught, covenants are kept, and love abounds.

Years ago, following a mission tour, my wife, Jeanene, told me about an elder she had met. Jeanene had





New York City, New York, USA

asked him about his family. She was surprised as he responded that he had no family. He further explained that at his birth, his mother had given him to the government to raise. He spent his childhood going from one foster home to another. He was blessed as a teenager to find the gospel. A loving ward family had helped him to have the opportunity to serve a mission.

Later Jeanene asked the mission president's wife about this fine elder. She learned that a few months earlier this elder had been in the mission home for a few days due to an illness. During that time he had joined them for a family home evening. Before he left to go back into the field, he asked the mission president if he could spend two or three days at the end of his mission in the mission home again. He wanted to observe how a Christ-centered family functions. He wanted to be able to pattern his family after theirs.

Do all you can to have just such a home. Reach out to those living in adverse circumstances. Be a true friend. This kind of enduring friendship is like asphalt that fills the potholes of life and makes the journey

smoother and more pleasant. It should not be a resource used to gain personal advantage but a treasure to be appreciated and shared. Welcome into your home others who need to be strengthened by such an experience.

I offer some final thoughts for those who love a family member who is not making good choices. That can challenge our patience and endurance. We need to trust in the Lord and in His timing that a positive response to our prayers and rescue efforts can occur. We do all that we can to serve, to bless, and to submissively acknowledge God's will in all things. We exercise faith and remember that there are some things that must be left to the Lord. He invites us to set our burdens down at His feet. With faith we can know that this straying loved one is not abandoned but is in the watchcare of a loving Savior.

Recognize the good in others, not their stains. At times a stain needs appropriate attention to be cleansed, but always build on his or her virtues.

When you feel that there is only a thin thread of hope, it is really not a thread but a massive connecting link, like a life preserver to strengthen and

lift you. It will provide comfort so you can cease to fear. Strive to live worthily and place your trust in the Lord.

We need not worry if we can't simultaneously do all of the things that the Lord has counseled us to do. He has spoken of a time and a season for all things. In response to our sincere prayers for guidance, He will direct us in what should be emphasized at each phase of our life. We can learn, grow, and become like Him one consistent step at a time.

I bear testimony that living an obedient life, firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, provides the greatest assurance for peace and refuge in our homes. There will still be plenty of challenges or heartaches, but even in the midst of turmoil, we can enjoy inner peace and profound happiness. I testify that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is the source of that abundant peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Short Video Highlight

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

Personal Peace: The Reward of Righteousness

Even with the trials of life, because of the Savior's Atonement and His grace, righteous living will be rewarded with personal peace.

Recent experiences have caused me to reflect on the doctrine of peace and especially the role of Jesus Christ in helping each of us obtain lasting personal peace.

Two events in the past few months have touched me deeply. First, I spoke at the funeral for Emilie Parker, a precious six-year-old who lost her life along with 25 others, including 19 young children, in a tragic shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. I mourned with her family and recognized that many had been deprived of peace. I found strength and faith in her parents, Robert and Alissa Parker.

Second, I met with thousands of faithful members of the Church in the Ivory Coast city of Abidjan.¹ This French-speaking, West-African country has endured economic hardship, a military coup, and two recent civil wars concluding in 2011. Yet I felt a special peace in their presence.

Events often occur that rob us

of peace and heighten our sense of vulnerability.

Who can forget the evil attacks of September 11, 2001, on various U.S. locations? Such events remind us how quickly our feelings of peace and safety can be destroyed.

Our oldest son and his wife, who were expecting their first child, lived three blocks from the World Trade Center in New York City when the first plane crashed into the North Tower. They went to the roof of their apartment building and were horrified as they watched what they thought was some kind of terrible accident. Then they witnessed the second plane crash into the South Tower. They immediately realized that this was no accident and believed lower Manhattan was under attack. When the South Tower collapsed, their apartment building was engulfed in the dust cloud that rained down over lower Manhattan.

Confused about what they had witnessed and concerned about

further attacks, they made their way to a safer area and then to the Manhattan stake Church building at Lincoln Center. When they arrived, they found that dozens of other members in lower Manhattan had made the same decision to gather at the stake center. They called to let us know where they were. I was relieved that they were safe but not surprised at their location. Modern revelation teaches that the stakes of Zion are a defense and “a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.”²

They could not return to their apartment for over a week and were devastated by the loss of innocent lives, but they suffered no permanent damage.

In contemplating these events, I have been impressed with the doctrinal difference between universal or world peace and personal peace.³

At the birth of the Savior, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God and proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will toward men.”⁴

However, it has been poignantly noted that even in this eternally significant period following the birth of the Son of God, Herod the king carried out the slaughter of innocent infants in Bethlehem.⁵

Agency is essential to the plan of happiness. It allows for the love, sacrifice, personal growth, and experience necessary for our eternal progression. This agency also allows for all the pain and suffering we experience in mortality, even when caused by things we do not understand and the devastating evil choices of others. The very War in Heaven was waged over our moral agency and is essential to understanding the Savior's earthly ministry.

As recited in the 10th chapter of

Matthew, the Savior instructed the Twelve and acknowledged that His mission would not achieve universal peace in this mortal life. The Apostles were told to leave peace upon the worthy houses they visited but warned that they would be “in the midst of wolves . . . [and] hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”⁶ A significant pronouncement is made in verse 34: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.”⁷ It is clear that universal peace did not exist on the earth during Christ’s mortal ministry, and it does not now.

In the Lord’s preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, a number of very important principles are taught. With respect to those who do not repent, His Spirit (the Spirit of Christ), which is given to every person who comes into the world,⁸ “shall not always strive with man.”⁹ Also, “peace shall be taken from the earth.”¹⁰ Prophets have declared that peace has indeed been taken from the earth.¹¹ Lucifer has not yet been bound and exercises power in this dominion.¹²

The heavenly aspiration of good people everywhere has and always will be for peace in the world. We must never give up on achieving this goal. But, President Joseph F. Smith taught, “There never can come to the world that spirit of peace and love . . . until mankind will receive God’s truth and God’s message . . . , and acknowledge his power and authority which is divine.”¹³

We earnestly hope and pray for universal peace, but it is as individuals and families that we achieve the kind of peace that is the promised reward of righteousness. This peace is a promised gift of the Savior’s mission and atoning sacrifice.

This principle is succinctly captured



in the Doctrine and Covenants: “But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”¹⁴

President John Taylor taught that peace is not only desirable, but “it is the gift of God.”¹⁵

The peace to which I am referring is not just a temporary tranquility. It is an abiding deep happiness and spiritual contentment.¹⁶

President Heber J. Grant described the Savior’s peace this way: “His peace will ease our suffering, bind up our broken hearts, blot out our hates, engender in our breasts a love of fellow men that will suffuse our souls with calm and happiness.”¹⁷ In my meetings with Emilie Parker’s parents, I saw that the Savior’s peace has eased their suffering and is helping to bind up their broken hearts. It is notable that immediately after the shooting, Brother Parker expressed forgiveness to the perpetrator. As President Grant said, the Savior’s peace can “blot out our hates.” Judgment is the Lord’s.

The Ivory Coast Saints, during the period of civil war in their country, found peace by focusing on living the gospel of Jesus Christ, with particular

emphasis on family history and temple work for their ancestors.¹⁸

We all long for peace. Peace is not just safety or lack of war, violence, conflict, and contention. Peace comes from knowing that the Savior knows who we are and knows that we have faith in Him, love Him, and keep His commandments, even and especially amid life’s devastating trials and tragedies. The Lord’s answer to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail brings solace to the heart:

“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.”¹⁹

Remember, “God is not the author of confusion, but [the author] of peace.”²⁰ For those who reject God, there is no peace. We all participated in the councils of heaven that provided for moral agency, knowing that there would be mortal pain and even unspeakable tragedy because of the abuse of agency. We understood that this could leave us angry, bewildered, defenseless, and vulnerable. But we also knew that the Savior’s Atonement would overcome and compensate for all of the unfairness of mortal life



and bring us peace. Elder Marion D. Hanks had a framed statement on his wall by Ugo Betti: “To believe in God is to know that all the rules will be fair, and that there will be wonderful surprises.”²¹

What are the sources of peace? Many search for peace in worldly ways, which never have and never will succeed. Peace is not found by attaining great wealth, power, or prominence.²² Peace is not found in the pursuit of pleasure, entertainment, or leisure. None of these can, even when attained in abundance, create any lasting happiness or peace.

Emma Lou Thayne’s beloved hymn asks the appropriate questions: “Where can I turn for peace? Where is my solace when other sources cease to make me whole?”²³ The answer is the Savior, who is the

source and author of peace. He is the “Prince of Peace.”²⁴

How do we stay close to the Savior? Humbling ourselves before God, praying always, repenting of sins, entering the waters of baptism with a broken heart and contrite spirit, and becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ are profound examples of the righteousness that is rewarded by abiding peace.²⁵ After King Benjamin delivered his stirring message concerning the Atonement of Christ, the multitude fell to the earth. “The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having *peace of conscience*, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ.”²⁶ Repentance and living righteously allow for *peace of conscience*, which is essential for

contentment.²⁷ When there has been a major transgression, confession is required to bring peace.²⁸ Perhaps there is nothing to compare with the peace that comes from a sin-wracked soul unloading his or her burdens on the Lord and claiming the blessings of the Atonement. As another favorite Church hymn puts it, “I’ll drop my burden at his feet and bear a song away.”²⁹

My heart rejoices when I realize that in our day tens of thousands of young men, young women, and senior missionaries have accepted the call to be emissaries of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are taking the restored gospel of peace to the world, one person and one family at a time—a work of righteousness to bring this peace to Heavenly Father’s children.

The Church is a refuge where followers of Christ attain peace. Some young people in the world say they are spiritual but not religious. Feeling spiritual is a good first step. However, it is in the Church that we are fellowshiped, taught, and nourished by the good word of God. More importantly, it is priesthood authority in the Church that provides for sacred ordinances and covenants that bind families together and qualify each of us to return to God the Father and Jesus Christ in the celestial kingdom. These ordinances bring peace because they are covenants with the Lord.

Temples are where many of these sacred ordinances occur and are also a source of peaceful refuge from the world. Those who visit temple grounds or participate in temple open houses also feel this peace. One experience preeminent in my mind is the Suva Fiji Temple open house and dedication. There had been political upheaval resulting in rebels burning and looting downtown Suva,

occupying the houses of Parliament and holding legislators hostage. The country was under martial law. The Fiji military gave the Church limited permission to assemble people for the open house and a very small group for the dedication. The members as a whole were uninvited due to concerns for their safety. It was the only temple dedication since the original Nauvoo Temple that was held under very difficult circumstances.

One person invited to the open house was a lovely Hindu woman of Indian descent, a member of Parliament who was initially held hostage but was released because she was female.

In the celestial room, free from the turmoil of the world, she dissolved in tears as she expressed feelings of peace that overwhelmed her. She felt the Holy Ghost comforting and bearing witness of the sacred nature of the temple.

The Savior is the source of true peace. Even with the trials of life,

because of the Savior's Atonement and His grace, righteous living will be rewarded with personal peace. In the intimate setting of the Passover chamber, the Savior promised His Apostles that they would be blessed with the "Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost" and then uttered these important words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."³⁰ Then just before His Intercessory Prayer: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."³¹

Eliza R. Snow penned this concept beautifully:

*Lift up your hearts in praise to God;
Let your rejoicings never cease.
Though tribulations rage abroad,
Christ says, "In me ye shall have peace."*³²

I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Two conferences were held in Abidjan on Sunday, February 10, 2013; 9,693 were in attendance—619 of whom were not yet members of the Church. Total Church membership in the Ivory Coast is approximately 19,000.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
3. The word *peace* has different meanings. In classical Greek it refers to cessation, discontinuance, or absence of hostilities between rival forces. In Hebrew the word has a more comprehensive meaning and sometimes is just a form of greeting. Peace is also a "state of existence that comes to man only upon the terms and conditions set by God" (Howard W. Hunter, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 14–17).
4. Luke 2:14; emphasis added.
5. See Matthew 2:16; see also Ross Douthat, "The Loss of the Innocents," *New York Times*, Dec. 16, 2012, 12.
6. Matthew 10:16, 22.
7. Matthew 10:34.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 1:35.
11. President Woodruff declared this in 1894 and again in 1896. See *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham (1946), 251–52; see also Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 79–82.
12. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Predicted Judgments*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (Mar. 21, 1967), 5–6. However, as Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated, "We can have inner peace even though peace has been taken from the earth . . . [and] 'all things [are] in commotion'" ("Behold, the Enemy Is Combined," *Ensign*, May 1993, 79).
13. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 400.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
15. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 151.
16. From the ancient Greeks to our own day, these words—*happiness* and *contentment*—have been parsed, dissected, and grappled with not only as to their meaning but also the guidance they give to our lives. See David Malouf, *The Happy Life: The Search for Contentment in the Modern World* (2011). See also a review of Mr. Malouf's book, in R. Jay Magill Jr., "How to Live Well," *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 26–27, 2013, C6.
17. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Heber J. Grant* (2002), 226.
18. "Three of the five Ivory Coast stakes are among the top 25 in the Church in the percentage of adults [submitting] family names for temple ordinances," and the



Copenhagen, Denmark

- Cocody Cote d'Ivoire Stake is the highest (C. Terry Warner and Susan Warner, "Apostle Visits Ivory Coast, Is 'Impressed with Exceptional Spirit,'" *Church News*, Mar. 3, 2013, 4, 14). In the wake of the civil war and the closest temple being 12 hours away by bus in Accra, Ghana, this is marvelous evidence of faith and has resulted in personal and family peace.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8. President Harold B. Lee taught, "So, we must be refined; we must be tested in order to prove the strength and power that are in us" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 208).
 20. 1 Corinthians 14:33.
 21. In Marion D. Hanks, "A Loving, Communicating God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 63.
 22. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *For Times of Trouble* (2012), 79. Elder Holland teaches that "true poverty may do more to destroy the human spirit than any other condition except sin itself." But the righteous use of money can enhance peace.
 23. "Where Can I Turn for Peace?" *Hymns*, no. 129.
 24. Isaiah 9:6.
 25. John Greenleaf Whittier put it simply: "Heed how thou livest. Do not act by day which from the night shall drive thy peace away" ("Conduct [From the Mahabharata]," in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier* [1802], 484).
 26. Mosiah 4:3; emphasis added; see also Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 79–82.
 27. Conscience is a moral compass pointing us toward peace. It is activated by at least two sources: the Light of Christ, a glorious birthright from our Heavenly Father (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:6–13; 93:2), and the gift of the Holy Ghost (see Doctrine and Covenants 39:6).
 28. "Two sets of forgiveness are required to bring peace to the transgressor—one from the proper authorities of the Lord's Church, and one from the Lord himself. [See Mosiah 26:29.]" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 41).
 29. "How Gentle God's Commands," *Hymns*, no. 125.
 30. John 14:26–27.
 31. John 16:33.
 32. "Though Deepening Trials," *Hymns*, no. 122.



Short Video Highlight

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By Elder Stanley G. Ellis
Of the Seventy

The Lord's Way

The Lord's way is that we hearken to our leaders' teachings, understand correct principles, and govern ourselves.

Seventy

I serve as a Seventy. The Seventy are called to be messengers—to share the word of the Lord as we receive it from the apostles and prophets and from the Spirit and to be especial witnesses of the name of Christ in preaching the gospel in all the world, in building up the Church and regulating its affairs (see D&C 107:25, 34).

Farm Boy

I grew up on a farm near Burley, Idaho—a real “Idaho farm boy!” As such I learned:

1. To work—if you don't plant, you don't harvest.
2. To work smart—if you irrigate and fertilize, you harvest more.
3. The importance of timing—if you don't plant at the right time, an early frost can destroy the harvest.
4. To do what is needed or ought to be done regardless of what is enjoyable, preferable, or convenient—you milk the cow when she needs to be milked, not when you want to.
5. To be direct—with livestock and machinery involved, you don't have time to “beat around the bush” or to worry about being politically correct. (In this respect, as I have

served throughout the Church, I have often asked, “Do you want me to speak directly or with sugar?” As a rule the Saints have chosen “direct!” I will be direct today.)

6. Finally, as an Idaho farm boy, I learned to stick to the basics.

Nothing is more basic to all of us, and our doctrine, than the truths of the first article of faith: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:1).

Further, He is *our* Heavenly Father, who knows us, loves us, and wants us to return to Him. Jesus is *our* Savior and Redeemer, who through the Atonement made it certain *we* will overcome death and live again and possible for *us* to be exalted and have eternal life. The Holy Ghost is *our* comforter, revelator, teacher, testifier, and guide.

Think of it, brothers and sisters—we are not spiritual orphans! We are not alone.

What are the advantages of having parents—of not being an orphan? We can learn from them, benefit from their experience, avoid pitfalls they warn us about, and understand better because of their perspective. We don't have to be lost, confused, deceived, or

less effective. This is especially true in the case of our Heavenly Father, who has taught us and shown us not just a way but *the* way.

God Has the Way

In fact, God has the way to live,¹ to love,² to help,³ to pray,⁴ to talk,⁵ to interact with each other,⁶ to lead,⁷ to marry,⁸ to raise children,⁹ to learn,¹⁰ to know the truth,¹¹ to share the gospel,¹² to choose wisely what we eat,¹³ etc.

Along with the scriptures, some great sources for finding the Lord's way are *True to the Faith*, *For the Strength of Youth*, and other teachings of the living apostles and prophets.

1. For example, the Lord has taught us in the scriptures:

“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).

2. One of the evils of these last days is that “every man walketh in his own way” (D&C 1:16). In Proverbs we are warned to “be not wise in thine own eyes” and to “lean not unto thine own understanding” (see Proverbs 3:5–7).
3. We are taught that if we do things the Lord's way, He is bound to bless us and we have claim to His promises; and if not His way, we have no promise (see D&C 82:10).
4. The Lord contrasted His way with our way in His training of the prophet Samuel, who was sent to find a new king: “But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward



Sydney, Australia

- appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).
5. Even with the universally accepted desire to help the poor and needy, the Lord concurs in our goal but warns, “But it must needs be done in mine own way” (D&C 104:16). Otherwise, in our efforts to help, we may actually hurt them. The Lord has taught us the need to promote self-reliance. Even if we are able to help, we should not give or provide what they can and should do for themselves. Everywhere it is tried, the world learns the evils of the dole. Truly God knows best.

Let's consider some other examples. The Lord has the way to do missionary work. It is codified in the scriptures and in *Preach My Gospel* and implemented as guided by the Spirit.

The Lord has His way, or *the* way, to love. Those of the world say that what really matters is that two people love each other. Our Father in Heaven teaches that this is important, but He teaches us more: that there is an authorized way and time to express that love.

Governing Ourselves

Joseph Smith was taught from his youth the ways of the Lord. When asked how he led the Church, he explained that he taught correct principles and the members governed themselves.¹⁴ Brothers and sisters, our living apostles and prophets are still teaching correct principles. The question is “Are we using these principles to govern ourselves?”

One thing we have often been taught is to bloom where we are planted. Yet sometimes we are tempted to migrate to some new area, thinking our children will have more friends and therefore better youth programs.

Brothers and sisters, do we really think the critical factor in the salvation of our children is the neighborhood where we live? The apostles and prophets have often taught that what happens inside the home is far more important than what our children encounter outside. *How* we raise our children is more important than *where* we raise them.

Certainly there are other factors involved in deciding where to live, and thankfully, the Lord will guide us if we seek His confirmation.



Another question is “Where are we needed?” For 16 years I served in the presidency of the Houston Texas North Stake. Many moved to our area during those years. We would often receive a phone call announcing someone moving in and asking which was the best ward. Only once in 16 years did I receive a call asking, “Which ward needs a good family? Where can we help?”

In the early years of the Church, President Brigham Young and others would call members to go to a certain place to build up the Church there. The irony is that even now we have faithful Church members everywhere who would go anywhere the prophet asked them to go. Do we really expect President Monson to individually tell more than 14 million of us where our family is needed? The Lord’s way is that we hearken to our leaders’ teachings, understand correct principles, and govern ourselves.

Especially Important

With all that is happening in the Church today, and as the Lord is hastening His work on every side, it is even more critically important that we do all we do in His way!

Especially in the work of salvation, we learn that “in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way” (Ether 12:11). The doctrine of Christ “is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:21).

Conclusion

As we see so many in the world today living in confusion or, worse, wandering in forbidden paths and suffering unnecessarily the consequences of poor choices, it makes me want to exclaim as did Alma:

“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!

“Yea, I would declare unto every soul . . . the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God [and His ways], that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth” (Alma 29:1–2).

Again, I witness the Lord has the way! Our Heavenly Father knows us, loves us, and wants to help. He knows best how to help. We are not spiritual orphans!

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6; see also Alma 38:9). His way is based on eternal truth and leads us to “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 5:27; Mosiah 4:27; Alma 7:23–25.
2. See Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 6:5; John 13:34–35; Romans 1:24–32; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Alma 39:3–5.
3. See Mosiah 4:21–27; Doctrine and Covenants 104:15–18.
4. See Matthew 6:5–13; 2 Nephi 32:8–9; 3 Nephi 18:21; Doctrine and Covenants 10:5.
5. See Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 4:6; James 5:12; 3 Nephi 11:29–30.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:10–11; 121:41–46.
7. See Matthew 25:14–30; John 10:1–14; Doctrine and Covenants 50:26; 107:99–100; 121:34–40.
8. See Genesis 2:24; Jacob 2:27; Doctrine and Covenants 42:22; 132:19.
9. See Mosiah 4:14–15; Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–28.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 43:8–9; 88:77–79, 118.
11. See Moroni 7:15–19; 10:3–5; Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 33:8–10; 100:3–8.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 89.
14. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284.



By Elder John B. Dickson
Of the Seventy

The Gospel to All the World

The Church has moved steadily across the world from nation to nation, culture to culture, people to people, on the Lord's calendar and in His time.

The Savior's mortal ministry was complete. His suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross was over. We learn from Acts 1 that He had ministered for 40 days after His Resurrection, "being seen" of the Apostles and "speaking of . . . things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

He told them that "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Shortly thereafter, "he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

"And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9–11).

Indeed, the Savior would come again in His Second Coming, but in the meantime, the gospel of Jesus Christ was to go to "the uttermost part of the earth."

From Matthew we learn of a special mandate to the Apostles to take the gospel to all nations:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:18–19).

During the early days of the Church, in the meridian of time, the gospel was taken to the house of Israel only; then revelation came to Peter, the senior Apostle, that the time had come to take the gospel beyond Israel and unto the Gentiles. The 10th and 11th chapters of Acts help us understand the process and pattern whereby this needed expansion of the Church to more of God's children was made known to its presiding officers and the general membership.

Using Cornelius, who was a Gentile, a centurion, and a good man,

the Lord impressed upon Peter that the gospel would go to the Gentiles, a concept new and foreign to the Saints of that day. The revelation making that change in the affairs of the Church came to Peter, the senior Apostle. We know that the gospel then went rapidly to the nations of the Gentiles.

An example of the expansion of the Church at that time was the conversion of Paul, who became the great Apostle to the Gentiles. He had a vision while on the road to Damascus, where he saw a light and heard a voice, repented of his sins, and was called of God (see Acts 22:6–18) and then became a tremendous force in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now let us move 1,800 years forward to the time of the Restoration of the gospel, or the restitution of all things prior to the Second Coming. I testify that through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Church has been restored and continues to move forward under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Their mandate to take the gospel to the world is the same as that of the Apostles of old.

From the time of the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830, the Church has moved steadily across the world from nation to nation, culture to culture, people to people, on the Lord's calendar and in His time.

In 1978, following the established pattern of revelation through the senior Apostle, President Spencer W. Kimball, came a revelation, this time on extending priesthood blessings to all worthy males across the world. This means that in our day all of Heavenly Father's children worldwide can partake of all of the blessings of



the restored gospel. How appropriate to the kingdom of God on earth in the days approaching Christ's Second Coming.

On a personal note, I had just been called as a mission president and Sister Dickson and I were about to take our family to Mexico when Elder Richard G. Scott, at the time a member of the Seventy, told me of the coming forth of this special revelation. I remember tears coming to my eyes as he related to me what had happened. I was pleased beyond words, as I knew it was right and that the time had come for all mankind to have access to all of the ordinances, covenants, and blessings of the gospel.

That was almost 35 years ago, and little did I know at the time that I would spend several years of my ministry in the Seventy in the Africa West Area of the Church, among a believing, faithful people whose lives would be so affected by the 1978 revelation

on priesthood. Sister Dickson and I have lived there for four years, and the experience has been wonderful and life changing for us.

As a people, West Africans believe in God, have absolutely no shame in declaring and sharing their belief with others, and have tremendous leadership capacity. They are coming into the Church by the hundreds, and every week or so a couple of wards or branches are created somewhere in the Africa West Area with, in nearly every case, all-African priesthood and auxiliary leadership.

How I wish you could join the Saints in the temple in Aba, Nigeria, or Accra, Ghana, where you would sense the commitment of the Saints and come to know the all-African temple presidencies. Or how I wish I could introduce you to the African Area Seventies, who are assembled with us here in the Conference Center today and are attorneys, professors, and business managers, or have you

become acquainted with the African stake and ward leaders and their families.

Across Africa, to join a Sunday School, auxiliary, or priesthood class is a sacred experience, where the Church curriculum is followed and there is great gospel understanding, teaching, and learning by the Spirit.

The gospel in Africa is going to a happy people, very unencumbered by the trappings that affect the lives of many in the West. They are not concerned about having endless material possessions.

It has been said of Africans that they have very little of that which matters least and a great deal of that which matters most. They have little interest in enormous homes and the finest cars but great interest in knowing their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and in having eternal families. As a natural result of their faith, the Lord is lifting them in meaningful ways.

Knowing them as we do, we are not surprised that they would be such an important part of the expansion of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days. Given that Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, envisioned the kingdom of God in the last days “roll[ing] forth unto the ends of the earth, as [a] stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands [would] roll forth, until it [had] filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2), it is very fitting that our wonderful African brothers and sisters would be an important part of the fulfillment of that prophecy and that the revelations making it so would follow the Lord’s established patterns.

I testify that our Heavenly Father loves all of His children, that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is available to all, both the living and the dead. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

We Believe in Being Chaste

Obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible our progress in eternity.

My message addresses a fundamental question of great spiritual consequence: Why is the law of chastity so important? I pray the Holy Ghost will confirm the truthfulness of the principles I emphasize.

The Father’s Plan of Happiness

The eternal importance of chastity can only be understood within the overarching context of our Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for His children. “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 . . . has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). All men and women lived with God as His spirit children before coming to the earth as mortal beings. The Father’s plan enables His spirit sons and daughters to obtain physical bodies, to gain mortal experience, and to progress toward exaltation.

The Importance of a Physical Body

Our physical bodies make possible a breadth, a depth, and an intensity

of experience that simply could not be obtained in our premortal existence. Thus, our relationships with other people, our capacity to recognize and act in accordance with truth, and our ability to obey the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ are amplified through our physical bodies. In the school of mortality, we experience tenderness, love, kindness, happiness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, and even the challenges of physical limitations in ways that prepare us for eternity. Simply stated, there are lessons we must learn and experiences we must have, as the scriptures describe, “according to the flesh” (1 Nephi 19:6; Alma 7:12–13).

The Power of Procreation

After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly, however, God said “it was not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam’s wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact



the plan of happiness. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other.

The means by which mortal life is created is divinely appointed. “The first commandment . . . God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force today. Thus, marriage between a man and a woman is the authorized channel through which premortal spirits enter mortality. Complete sexual abstinence before marriage and total fidelity within marriage protect the sanctity of this sacred channel.

The power of procreation is spiritually significant. Misuse of this power subverts the purposes of the Father’s plan and of our mortal existence. Our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son are creators and have entrusted each of us with a portion of Their creative power. Specific guidelines for the proper use of the ability to create life are vital elements in the Father’s plan. How we feel about and use that supernal power will determine in large measure our happiness

in mortality and our destiny in eternity.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained:

“The power to create mortal life is the most exalted power God has given his children. Its use was mandated in the first commandment, but another important commandment was given to forbid its misuse. 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, all uses of the procreative power are to one degree or another a sinful degrading and perversion of the most divine attribute of men and women” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74).

The Standard of Sexual Morality

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, unyielding standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions

of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies.

The Natural Man

To some degree, the natural man described by King Benjamin is alive and well in each of us (see Mosiah 3:19). The natural man or woman is unrepentant, is carnal and sensual (see Mosiah 16:5; Alma 42:10; Moses 5:13), is indulgent and excessive, and is prideful and selfish. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, “The ‘natural man’ is the ‘earthy man’ who has allowed rude animal passions to overshadow his spiritual inclinations” (“Ocean Currents and Family Influences,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 112).

In contrast, the “man [or woman] of Christ” (Helaman 3:29) is spiritual and bridles all passions (see Alma 38:12), is temperate and restrained, and is benevolent and selfless. Men and women of Christ lay hold upon the word of God, deny themselves and take up His cross (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; D&C 56:2), and press forward along a strait and narrow course of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion to the Savior and His gospel.

As sons and daughters of God, we have inherited divine capacities from Him. But we presently live in a fallen world. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. Consequently, the Fall of Adam and its spiritual and temporal consequences affect us most directly

through our physical bodies. And yet we are dual beings, for our spirit that is the eternal part of us is tabernacled in a physical body that is subject to the Fall. As Jesus emphasized to the Apostle Peter, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

The precise nature of the test of mortality, then, can be summarized in the following question: Will I respond to the inclinations of the natural man, or will I yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and put off the natural man and become a saint through the Atonement of Christ the Lord (see Mosiah 3:19)? That is the test. Every appetite, desire, propensity, and impulse of the natural man may be overcome by and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. We are here on the earth to develop godlike qualities and to bridle all of the passions of the flesh.

The Intent of the Adversary

The Father’s plan is designed to provide direction for His children, to help them become happy, and to bring them safely home to Him with resurrected, exalted bodies. Heavenly Father desires us to be together in the light and filled with hope. In contrast, Lucifer labors to make the sons and daughters of God confused and unhappy and to hinder their eternal progression. The overarching intent of the father of lies is that all of us would become “miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Lucifer wants us ultimately to be alone in the dark and without hope.

Satan relentlessly works to distort the most important elements of the Father’s plan. He does not have a body, and his eternal progress has been halted. Just as water flowing in a riverbed is stopped by a dam, so



the adversary’s eternal progress is thwarted because he does not have a physical body. Because of his rebellion, Lucifer has denied himself all of the mortal blessings and experiences made possible through a body of flesh and bones. He cannot learn the lessons that only an embodied spirit can learn. He resents the reality of a literal and universal resurrection of all mankind. One of the potent scriptural meanings of the word *damned* is illustrated in his inability to continue developing and becoming like our Heavenly Father.

Because a physical body is so central to the Father’s plan of happiness and our spiritual development, Lucifer seeks to frustrate our progression by tempting us to use our bodies improperly. One of the ultimate ironies of eternity is that the adversary, who is miserable precisely because he has no physical body, entices us to share in his misery through the improper use of our bodies. The very tool he does

not have is thus the primary target of his attempts to lure us to spiritual destruction.

Violating the law of chastity is a grievous sin and a misuse of our physical tabernacles. To those who know and understand the plan of salvation, defiling the body is an act of rebellion (see Mosiah 2:36–37; D&C 64:34–35) and a denial of our true identity as sons and daughters of God. As we look beyond mortality and into eternity, it is easy to discern that the counterfeit companionship advocated by the adversary is temporary and empty.

The Blessings of Being Chaste

Alma counseled his son Shiblon to “bridle all [of his] passions, that [he] may be filled with love” (Alma 38:12). Significantly, disciplining the natural man in each of us makes possible a richer, a deeper, and a more enduring love of God and of His children. Love increases through righteous restraint



and decreases through impulsive indulgence.

President Marion G. Romney declared:

“I can think of no blessings to be more fervently desired than those promised to the pure and the virtuous. Jesus spoke of specific rewards for different virtues but reserved the greatest, so it seems to me, for the pure in heart, ‘for they,’ said he, ‘shall see God’ (Matt. 5:8). And not only shall they see the Lord, but they shall feel at home in his presence.

“Here is . . . the Savior’s promise: ‘Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God’ (D&C 121:45)” (“Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 42).

We also are promised that, as we pursue the pathway of virtue, “the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion” (D&C 121:46). Thus, living the law of chastity invites some of the greatest blessings men and women can receive in mortality: appropriate spiritual confidence in the presence of family, friends, Church associates, and, ultimately, the Savior. Our innate longing to belong is fulfilled in righteousness as we walk in the light with hope.

The Principle of Repentance

Some of you who receive this message need to repent of sexual or other sins. The Savior is often referred to as the Great Physician, and this title has both symbolic and literal significance. All of us have experienced the pain associated with a physical injury or wound. When we are in pain, we typically seek relief and are grateful for the medication and treatments that help to alleviate our suffering. Consider sin as a spiritual wound that causes guilt or, as described by Alma to his son Corianton, “remorse of conscience” (Alma 42:18). Guilt is to our spirit what pain is to our body—a warning of danger and a protection from additional damage. From the Atonement of the Savior flows the soothing salve that can heal our spiritual wounds and remove guilt. However, this salve can only be applied through the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and consistent obedience. The results of sincere repentance are peace of conscience, comfort, and spiritual healing and renewal.

Your bishop or branch president is the spiritual physician’s assistant who is authorized to help you repent

and heal. Please remember, however, that the extent and intensity of your repentance must match the nature and severity of your sins—especially for Latter-day Saints who are under sacred covenant. Serious spiritual wounds require sustained treatment and time to heal completely and fully.

A Promise and a Testimony

The doctrine I have described will seem to be archaic and outdated to many people in a world that increasingly mocks the sanctity of procreation and minimizes the worth of human life. But the Lord’s truth is not altered by fads, popularity, or public opinion polls. I promise that obedience to the law of chastity will increase our happiness in mortality and make possible our progress in eternity. Chastity and virtue are now, always have been, and always will be “most dear and precious above all things” (Moroni 9:9). I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Short Video Highlight

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

Catch the Wave

I thank God and His Son, Jesus Christ, for the Restoration and its power to propel a magnificent wave of truth and righteousness across the earth.

Dear brothers and sisters, I add my voice to that of President Thomas S. Monson and others in praising those who have responded to a prophet's call for more worthy missionaries. Now an unprecedented wave of enthusiasm for missionary work is sweeping the entire earth. Since President Monson's historic announcement last October, thousands of elders, sisters, and couples have been called, and many more are preparing.¹ Now we get questions like "What are you going to do with all these missionaries?" The answer is simple. They will do what missionaries have always done. They will preach the gospel! They will bless the children of Almighty God!

More of you young men and women will catch this wave as you strive to be worthy of mission calls. You see this as a wave of truth and righteousness. You see your opportunity to be on the crest of that wave.

You teenagers, embrace your new curriculum and teach one another the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Now is your time to prepare to teach others about the goodness of God.

Young men and women, your education is ever important—to us, to you, and to God. Where feasible, if

you wish to attend a college or university *after* your mission, we encourage you to apply to your institution of choice *before* beginning your mission. Many institutions of higher learning will grant an 18- to 30-month deferral to prospective missionaries. This will enable you elders and sisters to serve without worrying about where you will begin your advanced education. We are very grateful to leaders of educational institutions who are making such planning possible!

You parents, teachers, and others, catch the wave as you prepare our



rising generation to be worthy of missionary service. Meanwhile, your exemplary lives will attract the interest of your friends and neighbors. Be ready to give an answer to those who ask why you live as you do. Be ready to give a reason for the hope and joy that they see in you.² When such questions come, you might respond by saying, "Let's ask the missionaries! They can help us! And if you desire, I will be at your side as the missionaries respond and teach you."

You adults, catch the wave with help for the spiritual, physical, and financial preparation of future missionaries. Pinching pennies for piggy banks becomes part of your practice. You senior couples, you plan for the day when you can go on your mission. We will be most grateful for your service. Until then, perhaps some of you could send your dollars on missions by contributing to the General Missionary Fund, as suggested by President Monson again this morning.³

Increasing numbers of selected men and their dear companions catch the wave as they are called to preside over missions of the Church. In that service they will shape the destiny of generations born and unborn. Mission presidents hold keys of responsibility for the welfare, safety, and success of their missionaries. After consulting with stake and district presidents in his mission, each mission president assigns missionaries to serve in specific stakes, wards, and branches.

Stake presidents and bishops catch the wave as they spend more and more hours interviewing prospective missionaries. These priesthood leaders hold keys of responsibility for missionary work in their units, and they inspire members to participate.

Brothers and sisters on each ward council are beginning to catch the



wave. On that council is the ward mission leader.⁴ I would like to speak specifically to each of you ward mission leaders. You have been called by your bishop to lead missionary work in the ward. And some of you are so successful that an assistant has also been called to help you. Along with others on the ward council, you identify less-active members, part-member families, and interested neighbors. You meet regularly with assigned full-time missionaries. You advise and assist the missionaries. Please help them to fill their daily planners with focused and meaningful teaching opportunities. This is your responsibility. Your role is crucial, truly crucial to the success of this work. If you catch the wave with faith and enthusiasm, others will also. You, as the ward mission leader, are *the* connecting link between members

and missionaries in this sacred work of rescuing God's children.⁵

Our inquiring friends and neighbors not of our faith can also catch the wave. We encourage them to keep all that is good and true in their lives. And we invite them to receive more, especially the glorious truth that through God's eternal plan, families can be together forever.⁶

This wave of truth and righteousness is wondrous! It is *not* man-made! It comes from the Lord, who said, "I will hasten my work in its time."⁷ This wave is empowered by a divine announcement made 193 years ago. It consisted of only seven words: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"⁸ Uttered by Almighty God, that announcement introduced a young Joseph Smith to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those seven words launched the Restoration of His gospel. Why?

Because our living God is a loving God! He wants His children to know Him and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent!⁹ And He wants His children to gain immortality and eternal life!¹⁰

For this glorious purpose, our missionaries teach of the Restoration. They know that some 2,000 years ago, the Lord established His Church. After His Crucifixion and the death of His Apostles, men changed the Church and its doctrine. Then, after generations of spiritual darkness, and as predicted by previous prophets,¹¹ Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ restored the Church, its doctrine, and its priesthood authority. Because of that Restoration, knowledge and essential ordinances for salvation and exaltation are again available to all people.¹² Ultimately, that exaltation allows each of us to dwell with our families in the presence of God and Jesus Christ forever!

I cannot speak of the Restoration in tempered tones. This fact of history is absolutely stunning! It is incredible! It is breathtaking! How amazing is it that messengers from heaven came to give authority and power to this work?

Our Eternal Father and Jesus Christ made multiple appearances to the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹³ Under Their direction, other heavenly messengers came, each with a specific purpose. For example:

- The angel Moroni revealed the Book of Mormon.¹⁴
- John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood.¹⁵
- Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood.¹⁶
- Moses bestowed keys for the gathering of Israel.¹⁷
- Elias conferred keys of knowledge about Abraham.¹⁸
- Elijah restored keys of the sealing authority.¹⁹

In addition, the Restoration added knowledge that Saints had anciently. The Lord provided a new book of scripture. To the Holy Bible, He added the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. It is a record of prophecies and the ministry of the resurrected Lord to the people of ancient America. It explains God's great plan of happiness²⁰—the plan of salvation.²¹ The Book of Mormon is in full harmony with the Bible. Both sacred records affirm the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the importance of His Atonement.²²

The Restoration fulfills many biblical prophecies. For example, Isaiah prophesied that the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains.²³ The exodus of Mormon pioneers to the mountains of western America is a fulfilling saga of sacrifice and faith. Isaiah also foretold that God will do "a marvellous work and a wonder."²⁴ That is now being

fulfilled by the sacred work of our growing army of missionaries.

Old Testament teachings about tithing have been restored.²⁵ As a result, more tithe payers are blessed because of their obedience. References to Melchizedek are clarified by scriptures of the Restoration.²⁶ Prophecies that the stick of Joseph (the Book of Mormon) and the stick of Judah (the Bible) would be as one in God's hand have now been fulfilled.²⁷

The Restoration also clarifies New Testament scriptures. Its reference to baptism for the dead is now better understood.²⁸ Ordinances for our deceased ancestors are now performed vicariously in 141 temples throughout the world! There is no other way to offer salvation to our ancestors who died without a knowledge of the gospel!²⁹ John the Revelator's vision of "another angel [flying] in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," foretold

the mission of the angel Moroni and the Book of Mormon.³⁰

The Book of Mormon is the centerpiece of the Restoration. It was written, preserved, and transmitted under the Lord's direction. It was translated "by the gift and power of God."³¹ The book of Doctrine and Covenants contains many additional revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Through him we have received more pages of scripture than we have from any other prophet. In what must have been a wistful moment, he said to the Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, "I never told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught."³²

Together, members and missionaries invite all to learn of God, of Jesus Christ, and of His gospel. Each inquiring individual should seek earnestly and pray fervently for the assurance that these things are true. The truth will be manifest by the power of the Holy Ghost.³³

I thank God and His Son, Jesus Christ, for the Restoration and its power to propel a magnificent wave of truth and righteousness across the earth. May we catch this wave and fulfill the Lord's command to take the gospel "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,"³⁴ I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 4–5.
2. See 1 Peter 3:15.
3. See Thomas S. Monson, "It's Conference Once Again," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 6.
4. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 5.1.
5. We are grateful for Saints who are sincerely striving for consecration. They are trying to be more holy. They seek "first to build up the kingdom of God, and to





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

Stand Strong in Holy Places

Standing obedient and strong on the doctrine of our God, we stand in holy places, for His doctrine is sacred and will not change.

Brethren, it is an honor to be with the holders of the royal priesthood of God. We are living in the last days, in “perilous times.”¹ As bearers of the priesthood, we have the responsibility to stand strong with a shield of faith against the fiery darts of the adversary. We are role models to the world, protecting God-given, inalienable rights and freedoms. We stand in defense of our homes and our families.

When I was in the ninth grade, I returned from my first out-of-town game with the varsity baseball team. My father discerned that on the long bus ride home I had witnessed language and behavior that was not in harmony with the standards of the gospel. Being a professional artist, he sat down and drew a picture of a knight—a warrior capable of defending castles and kingdoms.

As he drew and read from the scriptures, I learned how to be a faithful priesthood holder—to protect and defend the kingdom of God. The words of the Apostle Paul were my guide:

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to *stand*.

“*Stand* therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”²

Brethren, if we are faithful in the priesthood, this armor will be given to us as a gift from God. We need this armor!

Young men, your fathers and grandfathers never faced the temptations that you face on a regular basis. You are living in the last days. If your father wanted to get in trouble, he had to go searching for it. Not anymore! Today temptation finds you! Please remember that! Satan desires to have you, and “sin lieth at the door.”³ How

establish his righteousness” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*]).

6. See “Families Can Be Together Forever,” *Hymns*, no. 300; additional clarification is found in Doctrine and Covenants 132:7, 19.

7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:73.

8. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.

9. See John 17:3.

10. See Moses 1:39.

11. See Matthew 17:11; Acts 3:20–21; Ephesians 1:10; 2 Nephi 30:8; Doctrine and Covenants 132:40, 45.

12. See 3 Nephi 27:13–14, 21; Doctrine and Covenants 39:6; Articles of Faith 1:4.

13. See Karl R. Anderson, *The Savior in Kirtland* (2012), 228–43.

14. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:33–34.

15. See Doctrine and Covenants 13.

16. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:2–3; 27:12; 128:20; see also Larry C. Porter, “Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood,” *Ensign*, June 1979, 4–10.

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:11.

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.

19. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.

20. See Alma 42, especially verse 8.

21. See, for example, Alma 12:28–30.

22. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 15:22; Alma 34:9.

23. See Isaiah 2:2.

24. Isaiah 29:14.

25. See Genesis 14:18–20; Malachi 3:8–10; Doctrine and Covenants 119–20.

26. See Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4; see also Alma 13:14–18; Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–22.

27. See Ezekiel 37:16, 19; Doctrine and Covenants 27:5.

28. See 1 Corinthians 15:29; Doctrine and Covenants 128.

29. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:7; 138:31–34.

30. Revelation 14:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 133:36–39.

31. Title page of the Book of Mormon, authored by Moroni; Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.

32. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522.

33. See Moroni 10:4–5.

34. Revelation 14:6; see also 1 Nephi 19:17; Doctrine and Covenants 133:37.



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will you resist his aggressive tactics? Put on the whole armor of God.

Let me teach you from another experience of my life:

In January of 1982, I spoke in a devotional on the BYU campus in Provo, Utah. I invited the students to imagine that the Church was on one side of the podium, right here, and the world was just a foot or two away on the other side. This represented the “very short distance between where the world was and where the Church standards were” when I was in college. Then, standing before the students 30 years later, I held up my hands in the same manner and explained, “The world has gone far afield; [it has traveled; it is nowhere to be seen;] it has proceeded way, way out, all the way out of this [building and around the world]. . . . What we and our children and our grandchildren have to remember is that the Church will remain constant, [it’s still right here; yet] the world will keep moving—that gap is [becoming] wider and wider. . . . Therefore, be very careful. If you judge your actions and the standards of the Church on the basis of where the world is and where it’s going, you will find that you are not where you should be.”⁴

Back then I could not have imagined how far and how fast the world would move away from God; it was impossible to understand that, given doctrine, principles, and commandments. And yet the standards of Christ and His Church have not moved. As He said, “The truth *abideth* forever and ever.”⁵ When we understand and accept this, we are prepared to face the social pressure, ridicule, and even discrimination that will come from the world and some who call themselves friends.

Most of us know someone who would say, “If you want to be my friend, you’ll have to accept my

values.” A true friend doesn’t ask us to choose between the gospel and his or her friendship. To borrow the words of Paul, “From such turn away.”⁶ A true friend strengthens us to stay on the strait and narrow path.

Staying on the gospel path of covenants, commandments, and ordinances protects us and prepares us to do God’s work in this world. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, our agency is protected from addictions to substances like alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. As we pay our tithing, study the scriptures, receive baptism and confirmation, live for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, partake of the sacrament worthily, obey the

law of chastity, prepare for and receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, and make sacred covenants in the temple, then we are prepared to serve.

In the temple we are prepared to and promise to live the law of consecration. Able young men begin to live this law by seeking a mission call—giving a tithing of the first years of their lives in the full-time service of the Lord. That sacrifice strengthens them to go forward to the highest covenant in life—for many, it will be to be sealed in the temple and begin an eternal family.

As we press forward along the strait and narrow path, we build progressive spiritual strength—strength in using



our agency to act for ourselves. For both young men and young women, this growth is aided as they learn doctrine and share their testimonies through the new online curriculum, *Come, Follow Me*.

In addition, use your agency to develop yourself personally. As you discover your gifts and talents, remember that parents and mentors may assist you, but you must let the Spirit guide you. Choose and act for yourself. Be motivated from within. Make a plan for your life, including education or vocational training. Explore interests and skills. Work and become self-reliant. Set goals, overcome mistakes, gain experience, and finish what you begin.

Along the way, be sure to participate in family, quorum, class, and combined Mutual activities. Enjoy wholesome fun together. Through these experiences you will come to respect and appreciate one another's spiritual gifts and the eternal, complementary natures of the sons and daughters of God.

Above all, have faith in the Savior! Fear not! As we diligently live the gospel, we become strong in the Lord. With His strength we are able to reject the anti-Christ who says, "Eat, drink, and be merry," for God "will justify [you] in committing a little sin; . . . there is no harm in this . . . , for tomorrow we die."⁷ In the strength of the Lord we

are able to stand against any philosophy or creed that denies the Savior and contradicts the great, eternal plan of happiness for all of God's children.

We are not authorized to negotiate the conditions of that eternal plan. Remember Nehemiah, who was charged with building a wall to protect Jerusalem. Some wanted him to come down and compromise his position, but Nehemiah refused. He was not intolerant of others; he simply explained, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease . . . ?"⁸

Sometimes we become the lightning rod, and we must "take the heat" for holding fast to God's standards and doing His work. I testify that we need not be afraid if we are grounded in His doctrine. We may experience misunderstanding, criticism, and even false accusation, but we are never alone. Our Savior was "despised and rejected of men."⁹ It is our sacred privilege to stand with Him!

Ironically, standing strong sometimes means avoiding and even fleeing from the world. The Savior declared, "Get thee behind me, Satan."¹⁰ Joseph of Egypt ran from the temptations of Potiphar's wife,¹¹ and Lehi left behind Jerusalem and took his family into the wilderness.¹²

Be assured that all of the prophets before us stood strong in their day:

Nephi performed the curious work of the Lord despite the buffetings of Satan and the persecutions of Laman and Lemuel, his brothers.¹³

Abinadi testified of Christ in the face of suspicion, scorn, and certain death.¹⁴

The 2,000 stripling warriors defended their families against those who despised gospel values.¹⁵

Moroni raised the title of liberty to preserve his people's families and religious freedom.¹⁶



Samuel stood on a wall and prophesied of Christ's coming while rocks and arrows were assailing him.¹⁷

The Prophet Joseph Smith restored the Savior's gospel, sealing his testimony with his blood.¹⁸

And Mormon pioneers stood strong in the face of withering opposition and hardship, following a prophet in their great trek and settlement of the West.

These great servants and Saints of God were able to stand strong because they stood with the Savior. Consider how the Savior stood strong:

As a young man, Jesus faithfully went about His Father's business, preaching the gospel to the learned men in the temple.¹⁹ Throughout His ministry, He accomplished the work of the priesthood—teaching, healing, serving, and blessing and lifting others. When appropriate, He boldly stood against evil, even cleansing the temple.²⁰ He also stood for truth—whether with words or with dignified silence. When the chief priests accused Him before Caiaphas, Jesus wisely and courageously refused to respond to untruth and held His peace.²¹

In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior and Redeemer did not shrink from drinking the bitter cup of the Atonement.²² And on the cross He suffered again to do His Father's will, until at last He could say, "It is finished."²³ He had endured to the end. In response to the Savior's perfect obedience in standing strong, our Heavenly Father declared, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name."²⁴

My beloved priesthood brethren young and old, let us glorify God's name by standing strong with our Savior, Jesus Christ. I bear my special witness that He lives and that we "are called with a holy calling"²⁵ to

participate in His work. "Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved."²⁶ Standing obedient and strong on the doctrine of our God, we stand in holy places, for His doctrine is sacred and will not change in the social and political winds of our day. I declare, as did the Apostle Paul, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, [behave] like men, [and] be strong."²⁷ This is my fervent prayer for you in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Ephesians 6:13–17; emphasis added.
3. Moses 5:23.
4. Robert D. Hales, "This Is the Way; and There Is None Other Way," in *Brigham Young University 1981–82 Speeches* (1982), 3–4; available at speeches.byu.edu.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:39; emphasis added.
6. 2 Timothy 3:5.

7. 2 Nephi 28:8.
8. Nehemiah 6:3.
9. Isaiah 53:3; Mosiah 14:3.
10. Luke 4:8.
11. See Genesis 39:7–12.
12. See 1 Nephi 2.
13. See, for example, 1 Nephi 18.
14. See Mosiah 11–17.
15. See Alma 53, 56–58.
16. See Alma 46:11–13.
17. See Helaman 13–16.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 135.
19. See Luke 2:46–49.
20. See Matthew 21:12–13.
21. See Matthew 26:57, 59–63.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19.
23. John 19:30.
24. 3 Nephi 11:7.
25. Alma 13:3; see also 2 Timothy 1:9.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
27. 1 Corinthians 16:13.



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By Elder Tad R. Callister
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

The Power of the Priesthood in the Boy

The priesthood in the boy is just as powerful as the priesthood in the man when exercised in righteousness.

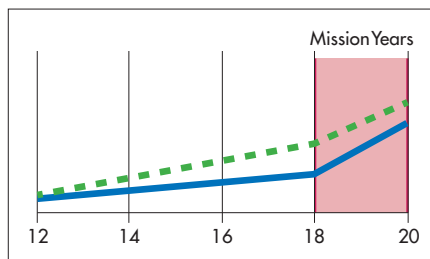
In 1878 my great-grandfather George F. Richards was 17 years of age. As was sometimes the case in those days, he had already been ordained an elder. One Sunday his mother was groaning in intense pain. As his father was not available, the bishop and several others were invited to give her a blessing, but no relief came. Accordingly, she turned to her son George and asked him to lay hands on her head. He wrote in his diary, “In the midst of my tears for my mother’s suffering and the task of performing an administration such as I had never yet done, I retired to another room where I wept and prayed.”

When he became composed, he laid his hands on her and gave her a very simple blessing. He later noted, “My mother ceased her groaning and received relief from her suffering while my hands were yet on her head.” He then recorded in his diary this most insightful observation. He said he had always felt that the reason his mother did not get relief from the bishop’s blessing was not because the Lord failed to honor the bishop’s blessing but because the Lord had reserved this blessing for a boy, to

teach him a lesson that the priesthood in the boy is just as powerful as the priesthood in the man when exercised in righteousness.

Tonight I would like to speak about that power. Though I will refer to deacons quorum presidents, the principles discussed apply to all Aaronic Priesthood youth and their respective leaders, including our teachers quorum presidents and assistants to the priests quorum president.

While serving as a mission president, I observed that there was a dramatic increase in the spirituality and leadership skills of young men during their mission years. If we could somehow quantify these qualities over their Aaronic Priesthood and mission years, perhaps they would look something like the blue line you see on this graph.



Spirituality and Leadership

In my mind there are at least three key factors that contribute to such dramatic growth in the mission years: (1) we trust these young men as never before, (2) we have high but loving expectations of them, and (3) we train and retrain them so they can fulfill those expectations with excellence.

One might appropriately ask, “Why could not these same principles be employed with deacons quorum presidents?” If that were done, perhaps the growth would commence much earlier and look more like the green line on the graph. For a moment, may I address how these principles might apply to a deacons quorum president.

First—trust. We can entrust our deacons quorum presidents with great responsibility. The Lord certainly does—as demonstrated by His willingness to give them keys, meaning the right to preside over and direct the work in their quorum. As an evidence of this trust, we call deacons quorum presidents by revelation, not solely by seniority or any other similar factor. Every leader in this Church, including the deacons quorum president, has the right to know, and should know, that he has been called by revelation. This assurance helps him know that God both trusts him and sustains him.

The second and third attributes are interconnected—high expectations and the related training to fulfill them. I learned a great lesson in the mission field: missionaries generally rise or fall to the mission president’s level of expectation, and so it is with deacons quorum presidents. If they are expected only to conduct quorum meetings and attend bishopric youth committee meetings, then that is all they will do. But you leaders can give them a greater vision—the Lord’s vision. And why is vision so critical?



Because with increased vision comes increased motivation.

Inherent in every calling in this Church is the right to receive revelation. Hence, these deacons quorum presidents need to know they have the right to receive revelation to recommend their counselors, the right to receive revelation concerning rescue of the lost, and the right to receive revelation to train the quorum members in their duties.

A wise leader will teach the deacons quorum president those principles that will be helpful in obtaining revelation. He may teach him the unequivocal promise of the Lord: “If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation” (D&C

42:61). The Lord is most generous in giving revelation. Did He not remind Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, “As often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit” (D&C 6:14)? And so it can be with you deacons quorum presidents. The Lord loves you and wants to reveal to you His mind and will. Could you ever imagine the Lord having a problem He could not solve? I can’t. Because you are entitled to revelation, He can help you solve every concern you have as president of your quorum if you will but seek His help.

You wonderful leaders might teach this deacons quorum president that revelation is not a substitute for hard work and homework. President Henry B. Eyring once asked President Harold B. Lee, “How do I get revelation?” President Lee responded, “If you want to get revelation, do your homework.”¹ The wise leader might discuss with his deacons quorum president some of the spiritual homework he might do in preparing to recommend his counselors. He might need to ask and answer questions such as: Who would be a good example that could lift the other boys? Or who would be

sensitive to the needs of those who face special challenges?

And finally this wise leader might teach him how to recognize and act upon revelation when it comes. We live in an action-packed, fast-paced world where bright lights and high-volume speakers are the norm. But this young man needs to know that this is the world’s way, not the Lord’s way. The Savior was born in the relative anonymity of a manger; He performed the most magnificent and incomparable act of all time in the quiet of a garden; and Joseph received his First Vision in the seclusion of a grove. God’s answers come by the still, small voice—feelings of peace or comfort, impressions to do good, enlightenment—sometimes in the form of tiny seeds of thoughts which if revered and nourished can grow into spiritual redwoods. Sometimes these impressions or thoughts might even cause you deacons quorum presidents to recommend as a counselor or extend an assignment to a young man who is currently less active.

Years ago as a stake presidency, we felt impressed to call a good man as stake clerk. At the time he was temporarily struggling with regular Church





attendance. We knew, however, that if he accepted the calling, he would do a marvelous job.

We extended the call, but he replied, “No, I don’t think I can do it.”

Then an impression came. I said, “Well, I guess the Glendale stake won’t have a stake clerk then.”

Shocked, he responded, “What are you talking about? You have to have a stake clerk.”

I replied, “Do you want us now to call someone else to serve as stake clerk when the Lord impressed us to call you?”

“OK,” he said, “I’ll do it.”

And do it he did. There are not only many men but also many boys who will respond to a call when they know the Lord is calling them and that the Lord needs them.

Next you can let this deacons quorum president know that one of the Lord’s expectations of him is to rescue the lost, both less active and nonmember. The Lord declared His central mission in these terms: “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11). If it is a priority of the Savior to rescue the lost, if it is a priority of President Thomas S. Monson to do so, as demonstrated by his entire life, should it not be a priority of every leader, every deacons quorum president in this Church to do likewise? At the core of our leadership, as a central part of our ministry,

should be the burning, driving, unrelenting resolve to go get the lost and bring them back.

One young man who was visited by his quorum members said: “It was surprising today when . . . 30 people just came up to my house. . . . It makes me want to go to church now.” How can a youth resist love and attention like that?

I am thrilled when I hear the many stories of deacons quorum presidents who have caught the vision and occasionally are teaching all or part of the lesson in their quorum meetings. Several weeks ago I attended a deacons quorum class. A 12-year-old boy gave a 25-minute lesson on the Atonement. He commenced by asking his fellow deacons what they thought the Atonement was. Then he shared some meaningful scriptures and asked thoughtful questions, to which they responded. Realizing, however, there was more time than remaining lesson material, he had enough presence of mind and perhaps some forewarning from his father to ask the leaders who were present what questions they had been asked about the Atonement on their missions and their responses. He then concluded with his testimony. I listened in awe. I thought to myself, “I don’t recall ever giving a significant part of a lesson when I was an Aaronic Priesthood youth.” We can

raise the bar and vision for these young men, and they will respond.

You leaders lift these deacons quorum presidents best when you let them lead out and you step back from the spotlight. You have magnified your calling best not when you give a great lesson but when you help them give a great lesson, not when you rescue the one but when you help them do so.

There is an old saying: do not die with your music still in you. In like manner I would say to you adult leaders, do not get released with your leadership skills still in you. Teach our youth at every opportunity; teach them how to prepare an agenda, how to conduct meetings with dignity and warmth, how to rescue the one, how to prepare and give an inspired lesson, and how to receive revelation. This will be the measure of your success—the legacy of leadership and spirituality you leave ingrained in the hearts and minds of these young men.

If you deacons quorum presidents will magnify your calling, you will be instruments in God’s hands even now, for the priesthood in the boy is just as powerful as the priesthood in the man when exercised in righteousness. And then when you make temple covenants and become the missionaries and future leaders of this Church, you will know how to receive revelation, how to rescue the one, and how to teach the doctrine of the kingdom with power and authority. Then you will have become the youth of the noble birthright. Of this I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Savior and Redeemer of the world, amen. ■

NOTE

1. In Henry B. Eyring, “Waiting Upon the Lord,” in *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (1991), 17.



By David L. Beck
Young Men General President

Your Sacred Duty to Minister

You received the power, the authority, and the sacred duty to minister the moment you were ordained to the priesthood.

The Joy of Ministering

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are beloved sons of God, and He has a great work for you to do. To accomplish this work, you must fulfill your sacred duty to minister to others.¹

Do you know what it means to minister? Think about this question while I tell you about a girl named Chy Johnson.

When Chy started high school last year, she became the victim of cruel and thoughtless bullying. She was mistreated, shoved, and taunted as she walked to class—some students even threw garbage at her. You have probably seen people mistreated like this in your school too.

For too many people, the teenage years are a time of loneliness and fear. It doesn't have to be this way. Fortunately for Chy, there were young men at her school who understood what it means to minister.

Chy's mother had asked teachers at the school to help stop the bullying, but it continued. She then contacted Carson Jones, an Aaronic Priesthood holder and the starting quarterback of the football team. She

asked him to help her find out who was doing the bullying.

Carson agreed to help, but in his heart he felt that he could do much more than just identify the bullies. The Spirit whispered to him that he needed to help Chy feel loved.

Carson asked some of his teammates to join him in ministering to Chy. They invited her to sit with them during lunch. They walked her to class to make sure she was safe. Not surprisingly, with football players as

her close friends, no one bullied Chy anymore.

This was an exciting season for the football team. But even with the thrill of an undefeated season, these young men did not forget about Chy. They invited her to join the team on the field after games. Chy felt loved and appreciated. She felt safe. She was happy.

The football team went on to win the state title. But something more important than a football championship happened at their school. The example of these young men has motivated other students to be more accepting, more friendly. They now treat each other with more kindness and respect.

National news media found out what these young men had done and shared their story across the country. What began as an effort to minister to one is inspiring thousands of others to do the same.

Chy's mother calls these young men "angels in disguise." Carson and his friends are quick to say that Chy has blessed their lives much more than they blessed hers. That's what happens when you lose yourself in serving others—you find yourself.²





You change and grow in ways that would not be possible otherwise. These young men have experienced the joy of ministering and continue to seek opportunities to bless others. They are anxious to extend their ministering in the coming months when they serve as full-time missionaries.³

A Need and a Duty

There are thousands of Chy Johnsons throughout the world—people who need to feel Heavenly Father’s love. They are in your schools, in your quorums, and even in your family. Some come to mind quickly. Others have needs that are less obvious. Virtually everyone you know could be blessed in some way by your ministering. The Lord is counting on you to reach out to them.

You don’t have to be a star athlete to minister to others. You received the power, the authority, and the sacred duty to minister the moment you were ordained to the priesthood. President James E. Faust taught, “Priesthood is the authority delegated to man to *minister* in the name of God.”⁴ The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of the ministering of angels.⁵

As you love His children, Heavenly Father will guide you, and angels will assist you.⁶ You will be given power to bless lives and rescue souls.

Jesus Christ is your example. He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”⁷ To minister means to love and care for others. It means to attend to their physical and spiritual needs. Put simply, it means to do what the Savior would do if He were here.

Your Family

Start in your own home. This is where you can do your most important ministering.⁸

Do you want to try an interesting experiment? The next time your mother asks for your help around the house, say something like, “Thank you for asking, Mom. I would love to help.” Then watch her reaction. Some of you might want to brush up on your first aid skills before you try this. You may send her into shock. After you revive her, you’ll find a noticeable improvement in your relationship with her and an increase of the Spirit in your home.

That’s just one way to minister to your family; there are many others. You minister as you speak kind words to family members. You minister as you treat your siblings like your best friends.

Perhaps most important, you minister as you assist your father in his duties as the spiritual leader in your home. Give your full support and encouragement to family home evening, family prayer, and family scripture study. Do your part to ensure that the Spirit is present in your home. This will strengthen your father in his role and prepare you to be a father someday. If you do not have a father in your home, your responsibility to minister to your family is even more needed.

Your Quorum

You also have a duty to minister in your quorum.

The priesthood is expanding across the world. Many of you are heeding President Monson’s call to rescue. There are more active Aaronic Priesthood holders today than ever before in the history of the Church. Yet there are still those who are not active and who need you.

Last June, when a new branch was created in Bangalore, India, the only

young man in priesthood meeting was a recently ordained deacon named Gladwin.

Gladwin, along with the Young Men president and branch president, began calling the less-active young men and visiting them in their homes. Soon a second young man, Samuel, started coming to church again.

Each week Gladwin and Samuel called those who had not attended quorum meeting and shared what they had learned. They also called or visited them on their birthdays. One by one, the less-active young men became their friends and began to accept invitations to come to quorum activities, to attend quorum meetings, and eventually to do their own ministering. Today, all of the young men in the branch are active in the Church.

The scriptures teach that Aaronic Priesthood quorums are to sit in council and edify—or build up and strengthen—one another.⁹ You edify as you teach gospel truths, share spiritual experiences, and bear testimony.

The youth curriculum encourages these kinds of interactions in quorum meetings, but this can happen only when every member of the quorum feels loved and respected. Mocking and teasing have no place in a quorum meeting—especially when feelings are openly shared. Quorum presidencies must take the lead in ensuring that quorum meetings are a safe place for everyone to participate.

The Apostle Paul admonished, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”¹⁰

Priesthood holders never use vulgar or filthy language. They never demean or hurt others. They always build up and strengthen others. This is a simple but powerful way to minister.

At All Times

The work of ministering is not confined to ordinances or home teaching visits or occasional service projects. We are always priesthood men—not

just on Sunday and not only when we’re wearing white shirts and ties. We have a duty to minister wherever we stand. Ministering is not just something we do—it defines who we are.

Minister every day. Opportunities are all around you. Look for them. Ask the Lord to help you recognize them. You will find that most consist of small, sincere acts that help others become followers of Jesus Christ.¹¹

As you strive to be worthy of the Spirit, you will recognize thoughts and feelings prompting you to minister. As you act on these promptings, you will receive more of them and your opportunities and ability to minister will increase and expand.

My young brethren, I testify that you have been given the authority and power of the magnificent Aaronic Priesthood to minister in God’s name.

I testify that as you do, you will be an instrument in God’s hands to help others. Your life will be richer and more meaningful. You will find greater strength to resist evil. You will find true happiness—the kind that is known only by true followers of Jesus Christ.

May you experience the joy of fulfilling your sacred duty to minister, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:111.
2. See Mark 8:35.
3. See Trent Toone, “Kindness of Arizona High School QB Carson Jones and Teammates Has Gone Viral,” *Deseret News*, Nov. 9, 2012, deseretnews.com/article/865566351/Kindness-of-Arizona-high-school-QB-Carson-Jones-and-teammates-has-gone-viral.html.
4. James E. Faust, “Message to My Grandsons,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 54; emphasis added.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
7. See Matthew 20:27–28.
8. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 2.4.5.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:85.
10. Ephesians 4:29.
11. See *Handbook 2*, 3.2.3.





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

Four Titles

I would like to suggest four titles . . . that may help us recognize our individual roles in God's eternal plan and our potential as priesthood holders.

My dear brethren and beloved friends, it fills my heart with gratitude and joy to be with you. I commend you fathers and grandfathers who have brought your sons and grandsons. I congratulate you young men who have chosen to be here today. This is the place for you to be. I hope you can feel the brotherhood that unites us, and I pray that here, among your brothers, you will find belonging, support, and friendship.

We men sometimes identify ourselves by titles. Many of us have multiple titles, and each says something important about our identity. For example, some titles describe our roles in families, such as *son*, *brother*, *husband*, and *father*. Other titles describe our occupations in the world, such as *doctor*, *soldier*, or *craftsman*. And some describe our positions within the Church.

Today I would like to suggest four titles that I believe apply to all priesthood holders around the world—titles that may help us recognize our individual roles in God's eternal plan and our potential as priesthood holders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Son of Heavenly Father

One title that defines all of us in the most fundamental way is *son of Heavenly Father*. No matter what else we are or do in life, we must never forget that we are God's literal spirit children. We were His children before we came to this world, and we will be His children forevermore. This basic truth should change the way we look at ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and life itself.

Unfortunately, none of us quite lives up to everything that this title implies, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."¹

It can be discouraging at times to know what it means to be a son of God and yet come up short. The adversary likes to take advantage of these feelings. Satan would rather that you define yourself by your sins instead of your divine potential. Brethren, don't listen to him.

We have all seen a toddler learn to walk. He takes a small step and totters. He falls. Do we scold such an attempt? Of course not. What father would punish a toddler for stumbling? We encourage, we applaud, and we praise because with every small step, the child is becoming more like his parents.

Now, brethren, compared to the perfection of God, we mortals are scarcely more than awkward, faltering toddlers. But our loving Heavenly Father wants us to become more like Him, and, dear brethren, that should be our eternal goal too. God understands that we get there not in an instant but by taking one step at a time.

I do not believe in a God who would set up rules and commandments only to wait for us to fail so He could punish us. I believe in a Heavenly Father who is loving and caring and who rejoices in our every effort to stand tall and walk toward Him. Even when we stumble, He urges us not to be discouraged—never to give up or flee our allotted field of service—but to take courage, find our faith, and keep trying.

Our Father in Heaven mentors His children and often sends unseen heavenly help to those who desire to follow the Savior.

Disciple of Jesus Christ

And that leads us to the next title we all have in common: all who strive earnestly to follow the Christ are called His *disciples*. Although we recognize that none of us are perfect, we do not use that fact as an excuse to lower our expectations, to live beneath our privileges, to delay the day of our repentance, or to refuse to grow into better, more perfect, more refined followers of our Master and King.

Remember that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is built not for men and women who are perfect or unaffected by mortal temptations, but rather it is built for people exactly like you and me. And it is built upon the rock of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ,² through whose

Atonement we can be cleansed and become “fellowcitizens . . . of the household of God.”³

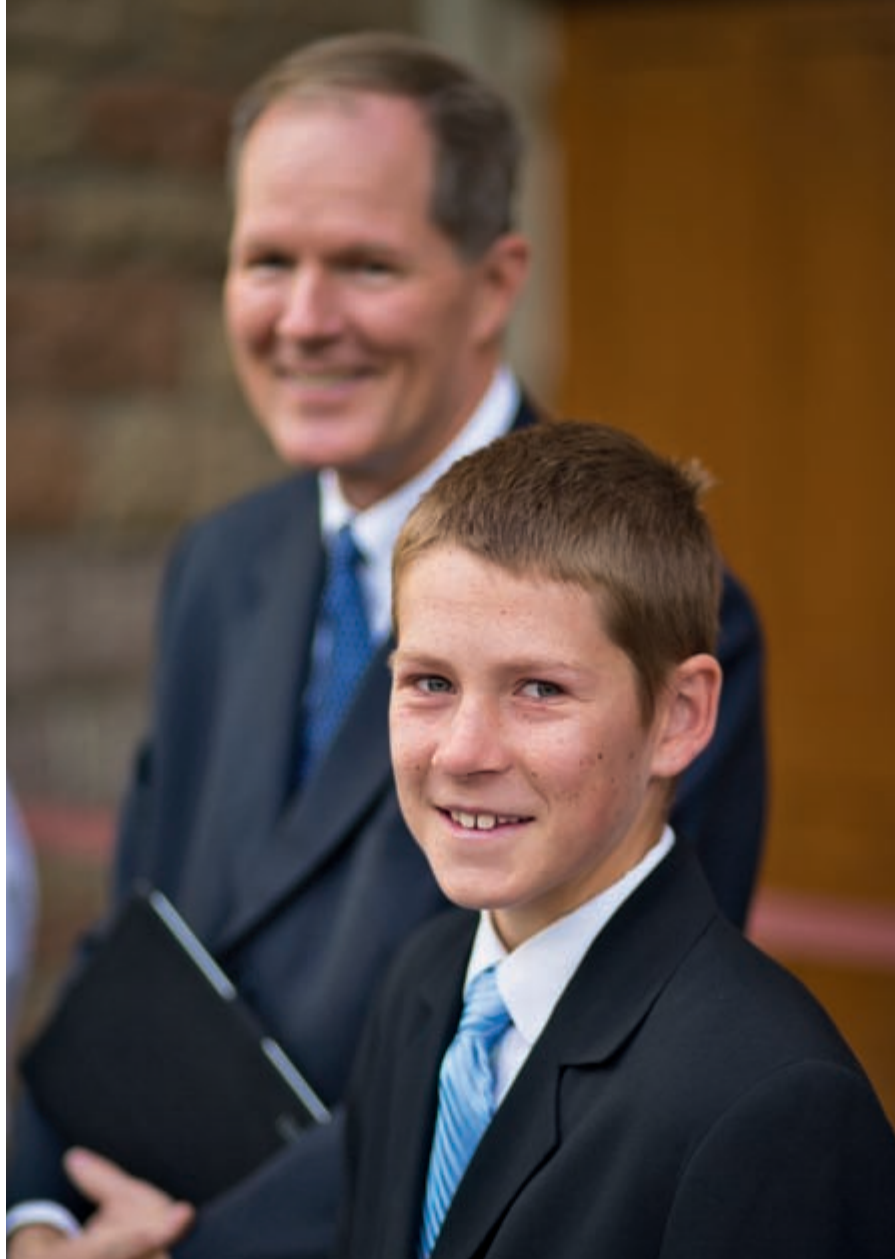
Without the Atonement of Jesus Christ, life would be a dead-end road without hope or future. With the Atonement, life is an ennobling, inspiring journey of growth and development that leads to eternal life in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

But while the Atonement is meant to help us all become more like Christ, it is not meant to make us all the same. Sometimes we confuse differences in personality with sin. We can even make the mistake of thinking that because someone is different from us, it must mean they are not pleasing to God. This line of thinking leads some to believe that the Church wants to create every member from a single mold—that each one should look, feel, think, and behave like every other. This would contradict the genius of God, who created every man different from his brother, every son different from his father. Even identical twins are not identical in their personalities and spiritual identities.

It also contradicts the intent and purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ, which acknowledges and protects the moral agency—with all its far-reaching consequences—of each and every one of God’s children. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are united in our testimony of the restored gospel and our commitment to keep God’s commandments. But we are diverse in our cultural, social, and political preferences.

The Church thrives when we take advantage of this diversity and encourage each other to develop and use our talents to lift and strengthen our fellow disciples.

Brethren, discipleship is a lifelong journey following our Savior.



Along our metaphorical path from Bethlehem to Golgotha, we will have many opportunities to abandon our journey. At times it will seem that the path requires more than we had wished for. But as men of the priesthood, we must have the courage to follow our Redeemer, even when our cross seems too heavy to bear.

With every step we take following the Son of God, we may be reminded that we are not perfect yet. But let us be steadfast and constant disciples. Let us not give up. Let us be true to our covenants. Let us never lose sight of our Advocate and Redeemer as we walk toward Him, one imperfect step after another.

Healer of Souls

Brethren, if we truly follow our Lord Jesus Christ, we must embrace a third title: *healer of souls*. We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God are called to practice “the healer’s art.”⁴

It is our job to build up, repair, strengthen, uplift, and make whole. Our assignment is to follow the Savior’s example and reach out to those who suffer. We “mourn with those that mourn . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁵ We bind up the wounds of the afflicted. We “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”⁶

As home teachers, we are healers.

As priesthood leaders, we are healers. As fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, we should be committed and dedicated healers. We carry in one hand a vial of consecrated oil for blessing the sick; in the other we carry a loaf of bread to feed the hungry; and in our hearts we carry the peaceable word of God, “which healeth the wounded soul.”⁷

This is our first and foremost responsibility as priesthood holders—and it applies to both Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ blesses lives not just when we believe it—but much more when we live it. It is in the application of gospel principles that individuals are uplifted and families are strengthened. It is our privilege and responsibility not just to talk the talk but also to walk the walk.

The Savior is the worker of miracles. He is the great Healer. He is our example, our light, even in the darkest moments, and He shows us the right way.

Let us follow Him. Let us rise up to our role and become healers by serving God and our fellowmen.

Heir of Eternal Life

The fourth title we all share returns us to the first title in our list. As sons of our Heavenly Father, we are *heirs* to all that He has.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”⁸

Think of this, my beloved brethren. We are joint-heirs with Christ!

So, does it make any sense that many of us spend so much of our

valuable time, thoughts, means, and energies in pursuit of prestige or worldly goods or to be entertained by the newest and coolest electronic gadgets?

The Lord has put before us the divine promise that “whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priest-hoods, . . . magnifying their calling, . . . [will] receive me, saith the Lord; . . . and he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; . . . therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”⁹

It is beyond my power of thought to imagine all that this promise entails. But I do know it is grand, it is divine, it is eternal, and it is worth all of our efforts in life.

Knowing this, how can we not willingly and joyfully engage in serving the Lord and our fellowmen and living up to our responsibilities in the priesthood of God?

This is a most noble labor that will challenge our every sense and stretch our every ability. Do we desire to see

the heavens open and witness the promptings of the Holy Spirit showing us the way? Then let’s take up our sickle and put our back into this great work—a cause much greater than ourselves!

Serving God and our fellowmen will challenge us and transform us into something greater than we ever thought possible.

Perhaps you might think that you are not needed, that you are overlooked or unwanted, that you are nobody.

I am sincerely sorry if any priesthood holder feels this way. Certainly you are not overlooked or unwanted by your Heavenly Father. He loves you. And I tell you with certainty that you are needed by your Church.

Do you not know that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to [put to shame] the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to [put to shame] the things which are mighty”?¹⁰





Perhaps it is true that we are weak. Perhaps we are not wise or mighty. But when God works through us, no one and nothing can stand against us.¹¹

This is why you are needed. You have your own special contribution to make, and God can magnify that contribution in a mighty way. Your ability to contribute is not dependent upon your calling in the Church. Your opportunities for service are endless. If you are waiting on the sidelines, I encourage you to get in the game.

Don't wait for a particular calling before you become fully engaged in building the kingdom of God. As a priesthood holder, you are already called to the work. Study the word of God daily, pray to Heavenly Father every day, internalize the principles of the restored gospel, give thanks to God, and ask for His guidance. Then live what you learn, first in your family but also in all situations of your life.

In the great Composer's symphony, you have your own particular

part to play—your own notes to sing. Fail to perform them, and with certainty the symphony will go on. But if you rise up and join the chorus and allow the power of God to work through you, you will see “the windows of heaven” open, and He will “pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”¹² Rise up to your true potential as a son of God, and you can be a force for good in your family, your home, your community, your nation, and indeed in the world.

And in the process, as you “lose [your] life” in the service of others,¹³ you will grow and develop until you reach “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁴ Then you will be prepared to inherit, with Christ, everything your Father has.

You Are Important to God

My dear brethren, my dear friends, you are important. You are loved. You are needed. This work is true. The priesthood you are privileged to bear is indeed of God.

I pray that as you ponder the many titles of a worthy priesthood holder, you will discover a divine wind at your back, lifting you ever upward toward the great inheritance your Heavenly Father has reserved for you. I leave you this blessing and my testimony in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Romans 3:23.
2. See Helaman 5:12.
3. Ephesians 2:19.
4. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
5. Mosiah 18:9.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
7. Jacob 2:8.
8. Romans 8:16–17.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33, 35, 37–38.
10. 1 Corinthians 1:27.
11. See Romans 8:31.
12. Malachi 3:10.
13. Matthew 16:25.
14. Ephesians 4:13.



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

We Are One

I pray that wherever we are and whatever duties we have in the priesthood of God, we will be united in the cause to bring the gospel to all the world.

The Lord made it clear at the very start of this last dispensation that we were to take the gospel to all the world. What He said to the few priesthood holders in 1831 He says to the many now. Whatever our age, capacity, Church calling, or location, we are as one called to the work to help Him in His harvest of souls until He comes again. He said to those first laborers in the vineyard:

“And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

“And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness.

“And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”¹

Now, you members of the Aaronic Priesthood can see that the Lord’s command includes you. Since you know that the Lord always prepares a way to keep His commandments, you can expect that He will do that for each of you.

Let me tell you of how He did it for

one boy who now holds the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. He is 16 years old. He lives in a country where the missionaries first arrived just a year ago. They were assigned to two cities but not to the city where the boy lives.

When he was very young, his parents brought him to Utah for safety. The family was taught and baptized by the missionaries. He was not baptized into the Church because he was not yet eight years of age.

His parents were killed in an accident. So his grandmother had him return to his home, across the ocean, back to the city where he had been born.

He was walking on the street in March just a year ago when he felt that he should speak to a woman he did not know. He spoke with her in the English he still remembered. She was a nurse sent by the mission president to his city to look for housing and medical care for the missionaries who would be assigned there soon. He and she became friends as they talked. When she got back to the mission headquarters, she told the missionaries about him.

The first two elders arrived in September of 2012. The orphan

boy was their first baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By March of this year he had been a member for four months. He had been ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and so could baptize the second convert to the Church. He was the first priesthood pioneer to gather other children of Heavenly Father with him to establish the Church in a city of approximately 130,000 people.

On Easter Sunday, March 31, 2013, the Church membership there had grown to the huge number of six members in that city. He was the only local member who attended the meeting that Sunday. His knee had been injured the day before, but he was determined to be there. He had prayed that he would be able to walk to church. And so he was there. He shared the sacrament with four young elders and a missionary couple—the total congregation.

That story does not seem remarkable unless you recognize in it the pattern of God’s hand in building His kingdom. I have seen it many times.

I saw it in New Mexico as a young man. For generations the prophets have told us that we must help the missionaries find and teach the honest in heart and then love those who come into the kingdom.

I have seen for myself what faithful priesthood leaders and members can do. In 1955 I became an officer in the United States Air Force. My bishop at home gave me a blessing just before I left for my first station, which was in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In his blessing he said that my time in the air force would be missionary service. I arrived in church on my first Sunday at the Albuquerque First Branch. A man walked up to me, introduced himself as the district

president, and told me that he was going to call me to serve as a district missionary.

I told him that I would be there for training for only a few weeks and then I would be assigned somewhere else in the world. He said, "I don't know about that, but we are to call you to serve." In the middle of my military training, by what appeared to be chance, I was chosen from hundreds of officers being trained to take the place in headquarters of an officer who had died suddenly.

So, for the two years I was there, I worked in my office. On most evenings and every weekend, I taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to people the members brought to us.

My companions and I averaged more than 40 hours a month in our missionary service without once having to knock on doors to find someone to teach. The members filled our plates so full that we often taught two families in an evening. I saw for myself the power and the blessing in the repeated call of prophets for every

member to be a missionary.

On the last Sunday before I left Albuquerque, the first stake was organized in that city. There is now a sacred temple there, a house of the Lord, in a city where we once met in a single chapel with Saints who brought friends to us to be taught and to feel the witness of the Spirit. Those friends felt a welcoming home in the Lord's true Church.

I saw it next in New England as I went to school. I was called as the counselor to a great district president who had been brought from disinterest in the Church to a man of great spiritual power. His home teacher loved him enough to ignore his cigar and see what God could see in him. The district president and I drove over the hills and along the shores to visit tiny branches that dotted Massachusetts and Rhode Island to build and bless the kingdom of God.

In the years I served with that great leader, we watched people draw friends to the Church by their example and by their invitation to listen to the missionaries. To me the growth of those branches seemed slow and faltering. But on the Sunday I left, five years later, two Apostles came to organize our district into a stake in the Longfellow Park chapel in Cambridge.

Years later I returned to conduct a stake conference there. The stake president took me to see a rocky hill in Belmont. He told me it would be a perfect place for a temple of God. One stands there now. When I gaze on it, I remember the humble members I sat with in tiny branches, the neighbors they invited, and the missionaries who were teaching them.

There is a new deacon in this meeting here tonight. I was with him





Los Angeles, California, USA

on the same Easter Sunday that the priest whom I spoke of previously walked to his one-member meeting. The deacon beamed as his father said that he would be in this priesthood meeting with him tonight. This father was a great missionary in the same mission where his father had been the president. I have seen the 1937 *Missionary Handbook* of his great-grandfather. His heritage in bringing people to the Church runs deep.

So I spoke with that deacon's bishop to learn what experiences the boy might expect in meeting the charge of the priesthood to work in the gathering of souls for the Lord. The bishop was enthusiastic as he described how the ward mission leader tracked the progress of investigators. He gets that information from regular contact with the missionaries.

The bishop and his ward council discuss every progressing investigator. They decide what they can do for each person and their families to help them become friends before baptism, to include them in activities, and to nurture those who are baptized. He said the missionaries on occasion have

enough appointments to teach that they take Aaronic Priesthood holders as companions.

The ward mission plan includes the goals of the quorums to invite those they know to meet with the missionaries. Even the deacons quorum presidency is invited to set goals and plan for their quorum members to help bring those they know into the kingdom of God.

Now, the deacon in the strong ward and the new priest—the convert—in the tiny member group may seem to have little in common with each other or with you. And you may not see much similarity with your experiences in building up the Church with what I saw as miracles in New Mexico and in New England.

But there is one way in which we are one in our charge in the priesthood. We sanctify ourselves and fulfill our individual duties to the commandment to take the gospel to all of our Heavenly Father's children.

We share experiences in the way in which the Lord builds His kingdom on earth. In His Church, with all the wonderful tools and organization we have been given, there is still a fundamental truth taught by prophets of how we

are to fulfill our priesthood mandate of missionary work.

In the 1959 April general conference, President David O. McKay taught this principle, as have the prophets since his day, including President Thomas S. Monson. President McKay related in his closing comments that in 1923 in the British Mission, there was a general instruction sent out to the members of the Church. They were told not to spend money on advertising to combat the bad feelings of the people against the Church. President McKay said the decision was: "Throw the responsibility upon every member of the Church that in the coming year of 1923 every member will be a missionary. Every member a missionary! You may bring your mother into the Church, or it may be your father; perhaps your fellow companion in the workshop. Somebody will hear the good message of the truth through you."

And President McKay continued: "And that is the message today. *Every member—a million and a half—a missionary!*"²

When it was announced in 2002 that missionary work would become the responsibility of the bishops, I

marveled. I'd been one. It seemed to me they were already carrying a load close to their limits in ministering to the members and directing the organizations in the ward.

One bishop I knew saw it not as an added duty but as an opportunity to draw the ward together in a great cause where every member became a missionary. He called a ward mission leader. He met with the missionaries himself every Saturday to learn about their work, to encourage them, and to learn about the progress of their investigators. The ward council found ways for organizations and quorums to use service experiences as missionary preparation. And as a judge in Israel, he helped young people feel the blessings of the Atonement to keep them pure.

Recently I asked how he explained the surge of convert baptisms in his ward and the increase in the number of young people ready and eager to take the gospel of Jesus Christ out to the world. He said it seemed to

him that it was not so much the duty anyone performed but the way they all became one in their enthusiasm to bring people into the community of Saints that had brought them such happiness.

For some it was that and more. Like the sons of Mosiah, they had felt the effects of sin in their own lives and the marvelous healing of the Atonement within the Church of God. Out of love and gratitude for the Savior's gift to them, they wanted to help everyone they could to escape the sadness of sin, feel the joy of forgiveness, and gather with them to safety in the kingdom of God.

It was the love of God and the love for their friends and neighbors that unified them to serve the people. They desired to take the gospel to everyone in their part of the world. And they prepared their children to be worthy to be called by the Lord to teach, to testify, and to serve in other parts of His vineyard.

Whether it is in the large ward where the new deacon will perform his duty to share the gospel and build up the kingdom or in the tiny group far away where the new priest serves, they will be one in purpose. The deacon will be inspired by the love of God to reach out to a friend not yet a member. He will include his friend in some service or activity in the Church and then invite him and his family to be taught by the missionaries. To those who are baptized, he will be the friend they will need.

The priest will invite others to join with him in the tiny group of Saints where he has felt the love of God and the blessed peace of the Atonement.

If he continues faithful in his priesthood duty, he will see the group become a branch, and then a stake of Zion will come to his city. There will be a ward with a caring bishop. It could be one of his sons or grandsons who will someday take a servant of God to a nearby hill and say, "This would be a wonderful place for a temple."

I pray that wherever we are and whatever duties we have in the priesthood of God, we will be united in the cause to bring the gospel to all the world and that we will encourage people we love to be cleansed from sin and to be happy with us in the kingdom of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, whose Church this is, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 38:40–42.
2. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

Come, All Ye Sons of God

May each one of us search the scriptures with diligence, plan his life with purpose, teach the truth with testimony, and serve the Lord with love.

Twice each year this magnificent Conference Center seems to say to us, with its persuasive voice, “Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood.”¹ There is a characteristic spirit which pervades the general priesthood meeting of the Church.

Tonight there are many thousands of our number throughout the world who are serving the Lord as His missionaries. As I mentioned in my message this morning, we currently have over 65,000 missionaries in the field, with thousands more who are waiting to enter the missionary training center or whose applications are currently being processed. We love and commend those who are willing and anxious to serve.

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:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”²

This divine command, coupled with its glorious promise, is our watchword today as it was in the meridian of time. Missionary work is an identifying feature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Always has it been; ever shall it be. As the Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel.”³

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

At best, missionary work necessitates drastic adjustment to one’s pattern of living. It requires long hours and great devotion, selfless

sacrifice and fervent prayer. As a result, dedicated missionary service returns a dividend of eternal joy which extends throughout mortality and into eternity.

The challenge is to be more profitable servants in the Lord’s vineyard. This applies to all of us, whatever our age, and not alone to those who are preparing to serve as full-time missionaries, for to each of us comes the mandate to share the gospel of Christ.

May I suggest a formula that will ensure our success: first, **search the scriptures with diligence**; second, **plan your life with purpose** (and, I might add, plan your life regardless of your age); third, **teach the truth with testimony**; and fourth, **serve the Lord with love**.

Let us consider each of the four parts of the formula.

First, **search the scriptures with diligence**.

The scriptures testify of God and contain the words of eternal life. They become the foundation of our message.

The emphasis of the Church curriculum is the holy scriptures, programmed and coordinated through the correlation effort. We are encouraged, as well, to study the scriptures each day both individually and with our families.

Let me provide but one reference which has immediate application to our lives. In the Book of Mormon, the 17th chapter of Alma, we read the account of Alma’s joy as he once more saw the sons of Mosiah and noted their steadfastness in the cause of truth. The record tells us, “They 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.

“But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”⁴

Brethren, **search the scriptures with diligence.**

Second in our formula: **plan your life with purpose.**

Perhaps no generation of youth has faced such far-reaching decisions as the youth of today. Provision must be made for school, mission, and marriage. For some, military service will be included.

Preparation for a mission begins early. In addition to spiritual preparation, a wise parent will provide the means whereby a young son might commence his personal missionary fund. He may well be encouraged as the years go by to study a foreign language so that, if necessary, his language skills could be utilized. Eventually there comes that glorious day when the bishop and stake president invite the young man in for a visit. Worthiness is ascertained; a missionary recommendation is completed.

During no other time does the entire family so anxiously watch and wait for the mailman and the letter which contains the return address *47 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah*. The letter arrives; the suspense is overwhelming; the call is read. Often the assigned field of labor is far away from home. Regardless of the location, however, the response of the prepared and obedient missionary is the same: “I will serve.”

Preparations for departure begin. Young men, I hope you appreciate the sacrifices which your parents so willingly make in order for you to serve. Their labors will sustain you,



their faith encourage you, their prayers uphold you. A mission is a family affair. Though the expanse of continents or oceans may separate, hearts are as one.

Brethren, as you plan with purpose your lives, remember that your missionary opportunities are not restricted to the period of a formal call. For those of you who serve in the military, such time can and should be profitable. Each year our young men in uniform bring many souls into the kingdom of God by honoring their priesthood, living the commandments of God, and teaching to others the Lord's divine word.

Do not overlook your privilege to be missionaries while you are pursuing your formal education. Your example as a Latter-day Saint will be observed, weighed, and oftentimes emulated.

Brethren, whatever your age, whatever your circumstance, I admonish you to **plan your life with purpose.**

Now to the third point in our formula: **teach the truth with testimony.**

Obey the counsel of the Apostle Peter, who urged, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”⁵ Lift up your voices and testify to the true nature of the Godhead.



Declare your witness concerning the Book of Mormon. Convey the glorious and beautiful truths contained in the plan of salvation.

When I served as a mission president in Canada more than 50 years ago, one young missionary who came from a small, rural community marveled at the size of Toronto. He was short in stature but tall in testimony. Not long after his arrival, together with his companion, he called at the home of Elmer Pollard in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. Feeling sorry for the young men who, during a blinding blizzard, were going house to house, Mr. Pollard invited the missionaries into his home. They presented to him their message. He did not catch the spirit. In due time he asked that they leave and not return. His last words to the elders as they departed his front porch were spoken in derision: “You can’t tell me you actually believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God!”

The door was shut. The elders walked down the path. Our country boy spoke to his companion: “Elder,

we didn’t respond to Mr. Pollard. He said we didn’t believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Let’s return and bear our testimonies to him.” At first the more experienced missionary hesitated but finally agreed to accompany his companion. Fear struck their hearts as they approached the door from which they had just been ejected. They knocked, confronted Mr. Pollard, spent an agonizing moment, and then with power borne of the Spirit, our inexperienced missionary spoke: “Mr. Pollard, you said we didn’t really believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I testify to you that Joseph *was* a prophet. He *did* translate the Book of Mormon. He saw God the Father and Jesus the Son. I know it.”

Some time later, Mr. Pollard, now Brother Pollard, stood in a priesthood meeting and declared, “That night I could not sleep. Resounding in my ears I heard the words ‘Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know it. I know it. I know it.’ The next day I telephoned the missionaries and asked them to return. Their message,

coupled with their testimonies, changed my life and the lives of my family.” Brethren, **teach the truth with testimony.**

The final point in our formula is to **serve the Lord with love.** There is no substitute for love. Successful missionaries love their companions, their mission leaders, and the precious persons whom they teach. In the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord established the qualifications for the labors of the ministry. Let us consider but a few verses:

“O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day. . . .

“And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

“Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.”⁶

Well might each of you within the sound of my voice ask himself the

question “Today, have I increased in faith, in virtue, in knowledge, in godliness, in love?”

Through your dedicated devotion at home or abroad, those souls whom you help to save may well be those whom you love the most.

Many years ago dear friends of mine, Craig Sudbury and his mother, Pearl, came to my office prior to Craig’s departure for the Australia Melbourne Mission. Fred Sudbury, Craig’s father, was noticeably absent. Twenty-five years earlier, Craig’s mother had married Fred, who did not share her love for the Church and, indeed, was not a member.

Craig confided to me his deep and abiding love for his parents and his hope that somehow, in some way, his father would be touched by the Spirit and open his heart to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I prayed for inspiration concerning how such a desire might be fulfilled. The inspiration came, and I said to Craig, “Serve the Lord with all your heart. Be obedient to your sacred calling. Each week write a letter to your

parents, and on occasion, write to Dad personally, and let him know how much you love him, and tell him why you’re grateful to be his son.” He thanked me and, with his mother, departed the office.

I was not to see Craig’s mother for some 18 months, when she came to my office and, in sentences punctuated by tears, said to me, “It has been almost two years since Craig left for his mission. He has never failed in writing a letter to us each week. Recently, my husband, Fred, stood for the first time in a testimony meeting and surprised me and shocked everyone who was there by announcing that he had made the decision to become a member of the Church. He indicated that he and I would go to Australia to meet Craig at the conclusion of his mission so that Fred could be Craig’s final baptism as a full-time missionary.”

No missionary stood so tall as did Craig Sudbury when, in far-off Australia, he helped his father into water waist-deep and, raising his right arm to the square, repeated those

sacred words: “Frederick Charles Sudbury, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Love had won its victory. **Serve the Lord with love.**

Brethren, may each one of us **search the scriptures with diligence, plan his life with purpose, teach the truth with testimony, and serve the Lord with love.**

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

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

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!”⁷

Of Him who spoke these words I declare my witness: He is the Son of God, our Redeemer, and our Savior.

I pray that we may ever respond to His gentle invitation, “Follow thou me.”⁸ In His holy name—even the name of Jesus Christ the Lord—amen. ■

NOTES

1. “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Hymns*, no. 322.
2. Matthew 28:19–20.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330.
4. Alma 17:2–3.
5. 1 Peter 3:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2, 5–6.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16.
8. John 21:22.



Short Video Highlight

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

The Hope of God's Light

As we seek to increase our love for God and strive to love our neighbor, the light of the gospel will surround and uplift us.

Entrance to Enlightenment

I have a cherished painting in my office that is titled *Entrance to Enlightenment*. It was created by a friend of mine, the Danish artist Johan Benthin, who was the first stake president in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The painting shows a dark room with an open door from which light is shining. It is interesting to me that the light coming through the door does not illuminate the entire room—only the space immediately in front of the door.

To me, the darkness and light in this painting are a metaphor for life. It is part of our condition as mortal beings to sometimes feel as though we are surrounded by darkness. We might have lost a loved one; a child might have strayed; we might have received a troubling medical diagnosis; we might have employment challenges and be burdened by doubts or fears; or we might feel alone or unloved.

But even though we may feel lost in the midst of our current circumstances, God promises the hope of

His light—He promises to illuminate the way before us and show us the way out of darkness.

A Room Filled with Darkness

I'd like to tell you about a woman who grew up in a room filled with darkness—I'll call her Jane.

From the time Jane was three years old, she was repeatedly beaten, belittled, and abused. She was threatened and mocked. She awoke each morning not knowing if she would survive until the next day. The people who should have protected her were those who tortured her or allowed the abuse to continue.

In order to protect herself, Jane learned to stop feeling. She had no hope of rescue, so she hardened herself to the horror of her reality. There was no light in her world, so she became resigned to the darkness. With a numbness that can come only from constant and unrelenting contact with evil, she accepted the fact that any moment might be her last.

Then, at age 18, Jane discovered The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints. The joy and hope of the restored gospel penetrated her heart, and she accepted the invitation to be baptized. For the first time, light entered her life, and she saw a bright path before her. She left the darkness of her world and decided to attend school a great distance away from her abuser. At last she felt liberated from an environment of darkness and evil—free to enjoy the Savior's sweet peace and miraculous healing.

However, years later, after her abuser had died, Jane was again troubled by the horrible events of her youth. Profound sadness and anger threatened to destroy the wonderful light she had found in the gospel. She realized that if she allowed that darkness to consume her, her tormentor would have a final victory.

She sought counseling and medical help and began to realize that, for her, the best path for healing was to understand and accept that darkness exists—but not to dwell there. For, as she now knew, light also exists—and that is where she chose to dwell.

Given her dark past, Jane could easily have become vindictive, venomous, or violent. But she didn't. She resisted the temptation to spread the darkness, refusing to lash out in anger, hurt, or cynicism. Instead, she held fast to the hope that with God's help she could be healed. She chose to radiate light and devote her life to helping others. This decision enabled her to leave the past behind and to step into a glorious, bright future.

She became a schoolteacher, and today, decades later, her love has influenced the lives of hundreds of children, helping them to know that they have worth, that they are important.



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Gérald Causse
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Claudio D. Zivic



W. Craig Zwick



Latter-day Saints throughout the world gather for the 183rd Annual General Conference. Pictured clockwise from top left are Church members and missionaries in Guayaquil, Ecuador; Pretoria, South Africa; Santiago, Chile; Copenhagen, Denmark; New York City, New York, USA; Brasilia, Brazil; and Edinburgh, Scotland.

She has become a tireless defender of the weak, the victimized, and the discouraged. She builds, strengthens, and inspires everyone around her.

Jane learned that healing comes when we move away from the darkness and walk toward the hope of a brighter light. It was in the practical application of faith, hope, and charity that she not only transformed her own life but forever blessed the lives of many, many others.

Light Cleaveth unto Light

There may be some among you who feel darkness encroaching upon you. You may feel burdened by worry, fear, or doubt. To you and to all of us, I repeat a wonderful and certain truth: God's light is real. It is available to all! It gives life to all things.¹ It has the power to soften the sting of the deepest wound. It can be a healing balm for the loneliness and sickness of our souls. In the furrows of despair, it can plant the seeds of a brighter hope. It can enlighten the deepest valleys of sorrow. It can illuminate the path before us and lead us through the darkest night into the promise of a new dawn.

This is "the Spirit of Jesus Christ," which gives "light to every man that cometh into the world."²

Nevertheless, spiritual light rarely comes to those who merely sit in darkness waiting for someone to flip a switch. It takes an act of faith to open our eyes to the Light of Christ. Spiritual light cannot be discerned by carnal eyes. Jesus Christ Himself taught, "I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."³ For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."⁴



So how do we open our eyes to the hope of God's light?

First, start where you are.

Isn't it wonderful to know that we don't have to be perfect to experience the blessings and gifts of our Heavenly Father? We don't have to wait to cross the finish line to receive God's blessings. In fact, the heavens begin to part and the blessings of heaven begin to distill upon us with the very first steps we take toward the light.

The perfect place to begin is exactly where you are right now. It doesn't matter how unqualified you may think you are or how far behind others you may feel. The very moment you begin to seek your Heavenly Father, in that moment, the hope of His light will begin to awaken, enliven, and ennoble your soul.⁵ The darkness may not dissipate all at once, but as surely as night always gives way to dawn, the light will come.

Second, turn your heart toward the Lord.

Lift up your soul in prayer and

explain to your Heavenly Father what you are feeling. Acknowledge your shortcomings. Pour out your heart and express your gratitude. Let Him know of the trials you are facing. Plead with Him in Christ's name for strength and support. Ask that your ears may be opened, that you may hear His voice. Ask that your eyes may be opened, that you may see His light.

Third, walk in the light.

Your Heavenly Father knows that you will make mistakes. He knows that you will stumble—perhaps many times. This saddens Him, but He loves you. He does not wish to break your spirit. On the contrary, He desires that you rise up and become the person you were designed to be.

To that end, He sent His Son to this earth to illuminate the way and show us how to safely cross the stumbling blocks placed in our path. He has given us the gospel, which teaches the way of the disciple. It teaches us the things we must know, do, and be to walk in His light, following in



the footsteps of His Beloved Son, our Savior.

Light Overcomes Darkness

Yes, we will make mistakes.

Yes, we will falter.

But as we seek to increase our love for God and strive to love our neighbor, the light of the gospel will surround and uplift us. The darkness will surely fade, because it cannot exist in the presence of light. As we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.⁶ And day by day, the hope of God's light will grow within us, "brighter and brighter until the perfect day."⁷

To all who feel they walk in darkness, I invite you to rely on this certain promise spoken by the Savior of mankind: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁸

A Light in Africa

Some years ago my wife, Harriet, and I had a memorable experience in which we saw this promise fulfilled.

We were in West Africa, a beautiful part of the world where the Church is growing and the Latter-day Saints are delightful. However, West Africa also has many challenges. In particular, I was sorrowed by the poverty that I saw. In the cities there is high unemployment, and families often struggle to provide for their daily needs and for their safety. It broke my heart to know that many of our precious members of the Church live in such deprivation. But I also learned that these fine members help each other to lighten their heavy burdens.

We eventually arrived at one of our meetinghouses near a large city. But instead of finding a people burdened and absorbed by darkness, we discovered a joyful people who were radiating with light! The happiness they felt for the gospel was contagious and lifted our spirits. The love they expressed for us was humbling. Their smiles were genuine and infectious.

I remember wondering at the time if there could possibly be a happier

people on the face of the planet. Even though these dear Saints were surrounded by difficulties and trials, they were filled with light!

The meeting began, and I started to speak. But soon the power went out in the building, and we were left in complete darkness.

For a while I could hardly see anyone in the congregation, but I could see and feel the brilliant and beautiful smiles of our Saints. Oh, how I loved being with these wonderful people!

The darkness in the chapel continued, and so I sat next to my wife and waited for the power to be restored. As we waited, something remarkable happened.

A few voices began singing one of the hymns of the Restoration. And then others joined in. And then more. Soon, a sweet and overwhelming chorus of voices filled the chapel.

These members of the Church did not need hymnbooks; they knew every word of every hymn they sang. And they sang one song after another with an energy and spirit that touched my soul.

Eventually, the lights sparked back on and bathed the room with light. Harriet and I looked at each other, our cheeks wet with tears.

In the midst of great darkness, these beautiful, wonderful Saints had filled this Church building and our souls with light.

It was a profoundly moving moment for us—one Harriet and I will never forget.

Come to the Light

Yes, from time to time our lives may seem to be touched by, or even wrapped in, darkness. Sometimes the night that surrounds us will appear oppressive, disheartening, and frightening.

My heart grieves for the many sorrows some of you face, for the painful loneliness and wearisome fears you may be experiencing.

Nevertheless, I bear witness that our living hope is in Christ Jesus! He is the true, pure, and powerful entrance to divine enlightenment.

I testify that with Christ, darkness cannot succeed. Darkness will not gain victory over the light of Christ.

I bear witness that darkness cannot stand before the brilliant light of the Son of the living God!

I invite each of you to open your heart to Him. Seek Him through study and prayer. Come to His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Learn of Him and of His gospel, participate actively, help each other, and joyfully serve our God.

Brothers and sisters, even after the darkest night, the Savior of the world will lead you to a gradual, sweet, and bright dawn that will assuredly rise within you.

As you walk toward the hope of God's light, you will discover the compassion, love, and goodness of a loving Heavenly Father, "in [whom there] is no darkness at all."⁹ Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:11–13.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:45–46.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 6:21.
4. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
5. See Alma 34:31.
6. See James 4:8; Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
8. John 8:12.
9. 1 John 1:5.



Short Video Highlight

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By Elder Neil L. Andersen

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

It's a Miracle

If you're not a full-time missionary with a missionary badge pinned on your coat, now is the time to paint one on your heart—painted, as Paul said, "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

The mortal life of Jesus Christ was filled with miracles: a virgin mother, a new star, angels appearing to shepherds, the blind seeing, the lame walking, angels in Gethsemane and at the tomb, and the greatest miracle of all—His glorious Resurrection.

Can you imagine the scene of the eleven Apostles on the mountain near Galilee when the risen Lord came to them and said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?"¹ "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."²

"All nations"? "All the world"? "Every creature"? Was it possible? Although Jesus reassured them, they must have wondered if miracles really would accompany them in spreading the gospel.³

Faith overcame doubt, and Peter lifted his voice, saying:

"All ye that dwell at Jerusalem, . . . hearken to my words: . . .

". . . Jesus of Nazareth, . . . [whom] ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: . . .

"This Jesus . . . God [hath] raised up, [and] we all are witnesses."⁴

There was an undeniable spiritual

outpouring that day, and 3,000 souls were baptized. As Jesus promised, signs and miracles were following the faith of the believers.

As the Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth 183 years ago, the Lord's charge to His small band of disciples echoed His words spoken centuries before: "The voice of warning shall be unto all people."⁵ "For, verily, the sound must go forth . . . into all the world, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."⁶

"All people"? "All the world"? "The uttermost parts of the earth"? Was it possible?

The Savior reassured His Latter-day Saints,⁷ but could they foresee the reach and destiny of this marvelous work? They must have wondered if miracles really would accompany them in spreading the gospel.

Again, faith overcame doubt, and thousands were baptized. In England, Elder Wilford Woodruff found an entire community awaiting his arrival. The Spirit of the Lord fell upon them, and he baptized 45 preachers and several hundred members during his first month at Benbow farm.⁸

Our day is no different. When Elder David A. Bednar and I were

missionaries approximately 40 years ago (and I can assure you that we are not the oldest of the returned missionaries sitting in the red chairs), there were 16,000 missionaries. As President Thomas S. Monson reported yesterday, we now have 65,000—more than ever before. There were then 562 stakes. Today there are more than 3,000. At that time, our wards and branches were in 59 countries. Today we have congregations in 189 of the 224 nations and territories of the world. We are few in number, just as Nephi foretold.⁹ But at the same time, you and I are eye-witnesses of Daniel's prophetic words: the "stone . . . cut . . . without hands . . . [is filling] the whole earth."¹⁰

Our day is a remarkable time of miracles. Six months ago as President Monson announced the age change for young men and young women desiring to serve missions, there was an undeniable spiritual outpouring. Faith overcame doubt, and young men and women moved forward. The Thursday following conference, I was assigned to recommend missionary calls to the First Presidency. I was amazed to see the applications of 18-year-old men and 19-year-old women who had already adjusted their plans, visited their doctors, been interviewed by their bishops and stake presidents, and submitted their missionary applications—all in just five days. Thousands more have now joined them. It's a miracle.

We are grateful for the energizing faith of our sisters, the growing number of missionaries from countries across the world, and the increasing number of couples ready to serve. Fifty-eight new missions have been announced, and our bulging missionary training center in Provo has amazingly found a new companion in Mexico City.

President Thomas S. Monson has

said: "We take most seriously the Savior's mandate . . . , 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"¹¹ "This . . . cause . . . will continue to go forth, changing and blessing lives. . . . No force in the entire world can stop the work of God."¹²

We are witnessing the miracles of the Lord as His gospel is spreading across the world.

Brothers and sisters, as surely as the Lord has inspired more missionaries to serve, He is also awakening the minds and opening the hearts of more good and honest people to receive His missionaries. You already know them or will know them. They are in your family and live in your neighborhood. They walk past you on the street, sit by you in school, and connect with you online. You too are an important part of this unfolding miracle.

If you're not a full-time missionary with a missionary badge pinned on your coat, now is the time to paint one on your heart—painted, as Paul said, "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."¹³ And returned missionaries, find your old missionary tag. Don't wear it, but put it where you can see it. The Lord needs you now more than ever to be

an instrument in His hands. All of us have a contribution to make to this miracle.

Every righteous member of the Church has thought about how to share the gospel. Some share the gospel naturally, and we can learn a lot from them.¹⁴ Some struggle and wonder how to do better, wishing that guilty feeling we sometimes feel would find somewhere else to go.

Our desire to share the gospel takes all of us to our knees, and it should, because we need the Lord's help.

President Monson has asked that we pray for "those areas where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely."¹⁵ As we earnestly and unitedly petition our Father in Heaven, the Lord will continue to open important doors for us.

We also pray for our own opportunities to share the gospel. The Apostle Peter said, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason [for] the hope that is in you."¹⁶

With the confusion¹⁷ and commotion¹⁸ of today's world, it's not surprising that fewer people are attending their places of worship. Although many want to be closer to God and to better understand the purpose of life, they have unanswered questions. Many have hearts open to the truth, but as the prophet Amos described, "they [are running] to and fro [seeking] the word of the Lord, and [cannot] find it."¹⁹ You can help answer their questions. In your everyday conversations you can add to their faith in Christ.²⁰

The Savior said: "Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up."²¹

I promise you, as you pray to know with whom to speak, names and faces will come into your mind. Words to speak will be given in the very moment





Married on Friday and baptized with their older children on Saturday, these couples from Mozambique chose to follow the Savior Jesus Christ.

you need them.²² Opportunities will open to you. Faith will overcome doubt, and the Lord will bless you with your very own miracles.

The Savior taught us how to share the gospel. I like the story of Andrew, who asked, “Master, where dwellest thou?”²³ Jesus could have responded with the location of where He lived. But instead He said to Andrew, “Come and see.”²⁴ I like to think that the Savior was saying, “Come and see not only where I live but how I live. Come and see who I am. Come and feel the Spirit.” We don’t know everything about that day, but we do know that when Andrew found his brother Simon, he declared, “We have found . . . the Christ.”²⁵

To those who show an interest in our conversations, we can follow the Savior’s example by inviting them to “come and see.” Some will accept our invitation, and others will not. We all know someone who has been invited several times before accepting an invitation to “come and see.” Let’s also think about those who once were with us but who now we rarely see, inviting them to come back and see once more.

We respect each person’s choice and timing. The Lord said, “Let every man choose for himself.”²⁶ A person’s lack of interest need not diminish our bonds of friendship and love. Whether or not the invitation is accepted as you invite others to “come and see,” you will feel the approval of the Lord and, with that approval, an added measure of faith to share your beliefs again and again.

For those using the Internet and mobile phones, there are new ways to invite others to “come and see.” Let’s make sharing our faith online more a part of our daily life. LDS.org, Mormon.org, Facebook, Twitter—all provide opportunities.

To share the gospel, young members in Boston started several blogs.²⁷ Those who joined the Church began their learning online, followed by discussions with the missionaries. This experience also helped the youth have greater faith in talking about the gospel in person. One of them said, “This isn’t missionary work. This is missionary fun.”²⁸

We are all in this together. With fellow ward members and missionaries,

we plan and pray and help one another. Please keep the full-time missionaries in your thoughts and prayers. Trust them with your family and friends. The Lord trusts them and has called them to teach and bless those who seek Him.

President Paulo Kretly of the Mozambique Maputo Mission shared this experience: “It is common in Mozambique [for] couples to live their lives together [without being married because] African tradition require[s] an expensive dowry to marry, a dowry most couples can’t afford.”²⁹

Members and missionaries thought and prayed about how to help.

The answer to their prayers was that they would emphasize the law of chastity and the importance of marriage and eternal families. And while helping couples to repent and legally marry, they would teach of the happiness that only comes through following Jesus Christ.

This is a picture of couples from two different cities in Mozambique. Married on Friday, they were baptized with their older children on Saturday.³⁰ Friends and family were invited to



true principles in the world and treasure them up" (*History of the Church*, 5:517). "We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have . . . ; we only ask them to come and get more. What if all the world should embrace this Gospel? They would then see eye to eye, and the blessings of God would be poured out upon the people, which is the desire of my whole soul" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 155). President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "Let me say that we appreciate the truth in all churches and the good which they do. We say to the people, in effect, you bring with you all the good that you have, and then let us see if we can add to it. That is the spirit of this work. That is the essence of our missionary service" ("Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, Aug. 1998, 72; "Words of the Living Prophet," *Liahona*, Apr. 1999, 19). "We must be a friendly people. We must recognize the good in all people. We don't go about tearing down other churches. We preach and teach in a positive and affirmative way. We say to those of other faiths, 'you bring with you all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it.' That is essentially the essence of our great missionary program and it yields results" ("Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley," *Church News*, Nov. 7, 1998, 2; see ldschurchnews.com).

"come and see," and hundreds did "come and see."

Following the baptism, one sister said, "We needed to choose whether to follow the traditions of our fathers or to follow Jesus Christ. We chose to follow Christ."³¹

You may not live in Mozambique, but in your own way, in your own culture, you can share the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pray to your Heavenly Father. This is His sacred work. He will guide you in what to do. He will open doors, remove roadblocks, and help you overcome obstacles. The Lord declared, "The voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, . . . and none shall stay them."³²

I testify that "the voice of the Lord [shall be] unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear."³³ It's a miracle. It is a miracle. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 28:19.
2. Mark 16:15.
3. See Matthew 28:20; Mark 16:17–18.
4. Acts 2:14, 22–23, 32.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 58:64.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:5.
8. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 89–92.
9. See 1 Nephi 14:12.
10. Daniel 2:34–35.
11. Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 5.
12. Thomas S. Monson, "As We Gather Once Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 4.
13. 2 Corinthians 3:3.
14. See Clayton M. Christensen, *The Power of Everyday Missionaries: The What and How of Sharing the Gospel* (2013).
15. Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 6.
16. 1 Peter 3:15.
17. They observe long-held truths being redefined or ignored; see Doctrine and Covenants 1:16; see also Doctrine and Covenants 132:8.
18. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
19. Amos 8:12.
20. The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. . . . We should gather all the good and
21. 3 Nephi 18:24.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:85; 100:6.
23. John 1:38.
24. John 1:39.
25. John 1:41.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 37:4.
27. See, for example, youngandmormon.com.
28. Telephone conversation with Jackson Haight on March 22, 2013.
29. Personal email from President Paulo V. Kretly, March 6, 2013.
30. Photos provided by President Paulo V. Kretly. The first group was from Maputo; they were married on November 30, 2012, and baptized on December 1, 2012. The second group was from Beira; they were married on March 1, 2013, and baptized on March 2, 2013.
31. Personal email from President Paulo V. Kretly, March 6, 2013.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4–5.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 1:11.



Short Video Highlight

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By Rosemary M. Wixom
Primary General President

The Words We Speak

How we speak to our children and the words we use can encourage and uplift them and strengthen their faith.

A young father recently learned of the passing of his extraordinary second-grade teacher. In memory of her, he wrote: “Of all the feelings and experiences I remember, the feeling most prevalent in my mind is ‘comfort.’ She may have taught me spelling, grammar, and math, but far more importantly she taught me to love being a child. In her classroom, it was OK to spell a word wrong here and there; ‘We’ll work on it,’ she’d say. It was OK to spill or tear or smudge; ‘We’ll fix it and we’ll clean it up,’ she would respond. It was OK to try, OK to stretch, OK to dream, and OK to enjoy those pleasures that come from the insignificant things that only children find exciting.”

One of the greatest influences a person can have in this world is to influence a child. Children’s beliefs and self-worth are shaped early in their lives. Everyone within the sound of my voice has the power to increase a child’s confidence in himself or herself and to increase a child’s faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ through the words they speak.

In Helaman chapter 5 we read, “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation.”¹

These were the *words* Helaman taught his sons. And we read on: “And they did remember his *words*; and . . . they went forth . . . to teach the word of God among all the people.”²

Even though Helaman’s sons were persecuted and put in prison, those words they had heard never failed them. They were protected and encircled about with a pillar of fire. Then came a voice, saying to their captors:

“Repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants. . . .

“ . . . It was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great

tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul.”³

We can learn from that voice from heaven. It was not loud, scolding, or demeaning; it was a still voice of perfect mildness, giving firm direction while giving hope.

How we speak to our children and the words we use can encourage and uplift them and strengthen their faith to stay on the path back to Heavenly Father. They come to this earth ready to listen.

An example of a child listening happened in a fabric store. The store was crowded with shoppers when it became obvious to everyone that a mother was panicked because she had lost her young son. At first, she was calling his name. “Connor,” she would say as she briskly walked around the store. As time passed, her voice got louder and more frantic. Soon the store security officers were notified, and everyone in the store was involved in looking for the child. Several minutes passed with no success of finding him. Connor’s mother, understandably, was becoming more





frantic by the minute and was rapidly yelling his name over and over again.

One patron, after saying a silent prayer, had the thought that Connor may be frightened as he listened to his mother scream his name. She mentioned this to another woman involved in the search, and they quickly made a plan. Together they began to walk between the tables of fabric, quietly repeating the words “Connor, if you can hear my voice, say, ‘Here I am.’” As they walked slowly toward the back of the store repeating that phrase, sure enough, they heard a timid, soft voice say, “Here I am.” Connor was hiding between the bolts of fabric under a table. It was a voice of perfect mildness that encouraged Connor to respond.

Pray to Know a Child’s Needs

To speak to a child’s heart, we must know a child’s needs. If we pray to know those needs, the very words we say may have the power to reach into their hearts. Our efforts are magnified when we seek the direction of the Holy Ghost. The Lord said:

“Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, . . .

“For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.”⁴

Disconnect and Listen with Love

Unfortunately, the distractions of this world prevent many children from hearing encouraging words that could shape their view of themselves.

Dr. Neal Halfon, a physician who directs the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities, refers to “parental benign neglect.” One example involved an 18-month-old and his parents:

“Their son seemed happy, active and engaged, clearly enjoying time and pizza with his parents. . . . At the end of dinner, Mom got up to run an errand, handing over care to Dad.’

“Dad . . . started reading phone messages while the toddler struggled to get his attention by throwing bits of pizza crust. Then the dad re-engaged, facing his child and playing with him. Soon, though, he substituted watching

a video on his phone with the toddler until his wife returned.

“. . . [Dr.] Halfon observed a dimming of the child’s internal light, a lessening of the connection between parent and child.”⁵

The answer to our prayer of how to meet our children’s needs may be to more often technologically disconnect. Precious moments of opportunity to interact and converse with our children dissolve when we are occupied with distractions. Why not choose a time each day to disconnect from technology and reconnect with each other? Simply turn everything off. When you do this, your home may seem quiet at first; you may even feel at a loss as to what to do or say. Then, as you give full attention to your children, a conversation will begin, and you can enjoy listening to each other.

Write to Persuade Our Children

We can also influence our children through the words we write to them. Nephi writes, “We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children . . . to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God.”⁶

President Thomas S. Monson shared the experience of Jay Hess, an airman who was shot down over North Vietnam in the 1960s: “For two years his family had no idea whether he was dead or alive. His captors in Hanoi eventually allowed him to write home but limited his message to less than 25 words.” President Monson asks: “What would you and I say to our families if we were in the same situation—not having seen them for over two years and not knowing if we would ever see them again? Wanting to provide something his family could recognize as having come from him and also wanting to give them valuable counsel, Brother

Hess wrote [the following words]: 'These things are important: temple marriage, mission, college. Press on, set goals, write history, take pictures twice a year.'⁷

What words would you write to your children if you had 25 words or less?

The young father I spoke about earlier, who wrote about his memories of his second-grade teacher, is now raising a beautiful baby daughter. He feels the heavenly trust that has been placed in him. As she grows up, what will be her future? What will he say that will sink deep into her heart? What words will encourage her, lift her, and help her to stay on the path? Will it make a difference if he takes time to whisper, "You are a child of God"? Will she remember someday that her father often said the words, "I love everything about you"?

Isn't that what our Heavenly Father was saying to His Son and to all of us when He said, "This is my beloved Son" and then added, "in whom I am well pleased"?⁸

May the words we speak and write to our children reflect the love our Heavenly Father has for His Son, Jesus Christ, and for us. And then may we pause to listen, for a child is most capable of speaking great and marvelous things in return. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Helaman 5:12.
2. Helaman 5:14; emphasis added.
3. Helaman 5:29–30.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6.
5. Lois M. Collins, "Baby's Development Potentially Harmed by Parents Texting," *Deseret News*, June 4, 2012, deseretnews.com/article/print/865556895/Babys-development-potentially-harmed-by-parents-texting.html.
6. 2 Nephi 25:23.
7. Thomas S. Monson, "Finding Joy in the Journey," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 86.
8. Matthew 3:17.



By Elder L. Whitney Clayton
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Marriage: Watch and Learn

The promises of the Lord are extended to all those who follow the pattern of life that builds happy, holy marriage relationships.

One evening several years ago, my wife and I were visiting the home of one of our sons and his wife and children for dinner. It was a typical event for a family with small children: there was much noise and even more fun. Shortly after dinner our four-year-old granddaughter, Anna, and I were still sitting at the table. Realizing that she had my full attention, she stood up straight on a bench and fixed her eyes on me. When she was sure that I was looking at her, she solemnly ordered me to "watch and learn." She then danced and sang a song for me.

Anna's instruction to "watch and learn" was wisdom from the mouth of a babe. We *can* learn so much by watching and then considering what we have seen and felt. In that spirit, let me share with you a few principles I have observed by watching and learning from wonderful, faithful marriages. These principles build strong, satisfying marriages that are compatible with heavenly principles. I invite you to watch and learn with me.

First, I have observed that in the happiest marriages both the husband

and wife consider their relationship to be a pearl beyond price, a treasure of infinite worth. They both leave their fathers and mothers and set out together to build a marriage that will prosper for eternity. They understand that they walk a divinely ordained path. They know that no other relationship of any kind can bring as much joy, generate as much good, or produce as much personal refinement. Watch and learn: the best marriage partners regard their marriages as priceless.

Next, faith. Successful eternal marriages are built on the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and adherence to His teachings.¹ I have observed that couples who have made their marriages priceless practice the patterns of faith: they attend sacrament and other meetings every week, hold family home evening, pray and study the scriptures together and as individuals, and pay an honest tithing. Their mutual quest is to be obedient and good. They do not consider the commandments to be a buffet from which they can pick and choose only the most appealing offerings.



Faith is the foundation of every virtue that strengthens marriage. Strengthening faith strengthens marriage. Faith grows as we keep the commandments, and so do the harmony and joy in marriage. Thus, keeping the commandments is fundamental to establishing strong eternal marriages. Watch and learn: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of happy eternal marriages.

Third, repentance. I have learned that happy marriages rely on the gift of repentance. It is an essential element in every good marital relationship. Spouses who regularly conduct honest self-examination and promptly take needed steps to repent and improve experience a healing balm in their marriages. Repentance helps restore and maintain harmony and peace.

Humility is the essence of repentance. Humility is selfless, not selfish. It doesn't demand its own way or speak with moral superiority. Instead,

humility answers softly² and listens kindly for understanding, not vindication. Humility recognizes that no one can change someone else, but with faith, effort, and the help of God, *we* can undergo *our own* mighty change of heart.³ Experiencing the mighty change of heart causes us to treat others, especially our spouses, with meekness.⁴ Humility means that both husbands and wives seek to bless, help, and lift each other, putting the other first in every decision. Watch and learn: repentance and humility build happy marriages.

Fourth, respect. I have observed that in wonderful, happy marriages, husbands and wives treat each other as equal partners. Practices from any place or any time in which husbands have dominated wives or treated them in any way as second-class partners in marriage are not in keeping with divine law and should be replaced by correct principles and patterns of behavior.

Husbands and wives in great marriages make decisions unanimously, with each of them acting as a full participant and entitled to an equal voice and vote.⁵ They focus first on the home and on helping each other with their shared responsibilities.⁶ Their marriages are based on cooperation, not negotiation. Their dinner hour and the family time that follows become the center of their day and the object of their best efforts. They turn off electronics and forgo personal entertainment in order to help with household duties. To the extent possible, they read with their children every night and both participate in putting the little ones to bed. They retire to their bed together. As their duties and circumstances permit, husbands and wives work side by side in doing the most important work there is—the work we do in our own homes.

Where there is respect, there is also transparency, which is a key element of happy marriages. There are no secrets about relevant matters in marriages based on mutual respect and transparency. Husbands and wives make all decisions about finances together, and both have access to all information.

Loyalty is a form of respect. Prophets teach that successful marriage partners are “fiercely loyal” to each other.⁷ They keep their social media use fully worthy in every way. They permit themselves no secret Internet experiences. They freely share with each other their social network passwords. They do not look at the virtual profiles of anyone in any way that might betray the sacred trust of their spouse. They never do or say anything that approaches the appearance of impropriety, either virtually or physically. Watch and learn: terrific marriages are completely

respectful, transparent, and loyal.

Fifth, love. The happiest marriages I have seen radiate obedience to one of the happiest commandments—that we “live together in love.”⁸ Speaking to husbands, the Lord commanded, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.”⁹ A Church handbook teaches: “The word *cleave* means to be completely devoted and faithful to someone. Married couples cleave to God and one another by serving and loving each other and by keeping covenants in complete fidelity to one another and to God.” Both the husband and wife “leave behind their single life and establish their marriage as [their] first priority. . . . They allow no other person or interest to have greater priority . . . than keeping the covenants they have made with God and each other.”¹⁰ Watch and learn: successful couples love each other with complete devotion.

There are those whose marriages are not as happy as they would wish, as well as those who have never married, are divorced, are single parents, or for various reasons are not in a position to marry. These circumstances can be full of challenge and heartbreak, but they need not be eternal. To those of you in such situations who nevertheless “cheerfully do all things that lie in [your] power”¹¹ to persevere, may heaven bless you richly. Seek after the ideal of forming an eternal marriage, including by striving or preparing to be a worthy spouse. Keep the commandments, and trust the Lord and His perfect love for you. One day every promised blessing concerning marriage will be yours.¹²

One of the sweetest verses in the Book of Mormon states simply, “And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which



the Lord had made unto them.”¹³ The promises of the Lord are extended to all those who follow the pattern of life that builds happy, holy marriage relationships. Such blessings come as the delightful, predictable consequences of faithfully living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for my wonderful wife, Kathy, who is the love of my life.

Marriage is a gift from God to us; the quality of our marriages is a gift from us to Him. I bear testimony of the marvelous plan of our loving Heavenly Father, which provides for eternal, wondrous marriage. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. See Proverbs 15:1.
3. See Alma 5:11–12, 26–31.
4. See Moroni 7:43–48; 8:25–26.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:27–31.
6. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
7. See Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 68; Gordon B. Hinckley, “Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 4; *Liahona*, May 1999, 4.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 42:22.
10. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.1.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:17.
12. See *Handbook 2*, 1.3.3.
13. 4 Nephi 1:11.



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

Obedience to Law Is Liberty

Men and women receive their agency as a gift from God, but their liberty and, in turn, their eternal happiness come from obedience to His laws.

I received a special gift last Christmas that brought with it many memories. My niece gave it to me. It had been among the things I had left in our old family home when I moved out after I was married. The gift was this little brown book I hold in my hand. It is a book that was given to LDS servicemen who entered the armed forces during World War II. I personally viewed the book as a gift from President Heber J. Grant and his counselors, J. Reuben Clark Jr. and David O. McKay.

In the front of the book, these three prophets of God wrote: “The incidents of the armed service do not permit our keeping in constant personal touch with you, either directly or by personal representation. Our next best course is to put in your hands such portions of modern revelation and of explanations of the principles of the Gospel as shall bring to you, wherever you may be, renewed hope and faith, as likewise comfort, consolation, and peace of spirit.”¹

Today we find ourselves in another war. This is not a war of armaments. It is a war of thoughts, words, and

deeds. It is a war with sin, and more than ever we need to be reminded of the commandments. Secularism is becoming the norm, and many of its beliefs and practices are in direct conflict with those that were instituted by the Lord Himself for the benefit of His children.

In the little brown book, immediately after the letter from the First Presidency, there is a “Prefatory Note to Men in the Service,” titled “Obedience to Law Is Liberty.” The note draws a parallel between military law, which is “for the good of all who are in the service,” and divine law.

It states, “In the universe, too, where God is in command, there is law—universal, eternal . . . law—with certain blessings and immutable penalties.”

The final words of the note focus on obedience to God’s law: “If you wish to return to your loved ones with head erect, . . . if you would be a man and live abundantly—then observe God’s law. In so doing you can add to those priceless freedoms which you are struggling to preserve, another on which the others may well depend,

freedom from sin; for truly ‘obedience to law is liberty.’”²

Why did the phrase “obedience to law is liberty” ring so true to me at the time? Why does it ring true to all of us now?

Perhaps it is because we have a revealed knowledge of our premortal history. We recognize that when God the Eternal Father presented His plan to us at the beginning of time, Satan wanted to alter the plan. He said he would redeem all mankind. Not one soul would be lost, and Satan was confident he could deliver on his proposal. But there was an unacceptable cost—the destruction of man’s agency, which was and is a gift given by God (see Moses 4:1–3). About this gift, President Harold B. Lee said, “Next to life itself, free agency is God’s greatest gift to mankind.”³ Then it was no small thing for Satan to disregard man’s agency. In fact, it became the principal issue over which the War in Heaven was fought. Victory in the War in Heaven was a victory for man’s agency.

Satan, however, was not done. His backup plan—the plan he has been executing since the time of Adam and Eve—was to tempt men and women, essentially to prove we are undeserving of the God-given gift of agency. Satan has many reasons for doing what he does. Perhaps the most powerful is the motive of revenge, but he also wants to make men and women miserable like he is miserable. None of us should ever underestimate how driven Satan is to succeed. His role in God’s eternal plan creates “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) and tests our agency. Each choice you and I make is a test of our agency—whether we choose to be obedient or disobedient to the commandments of God is actually a choice between “liberty and



eternal life” and “captivity and death.”

This fundamental doctrine is clearly taught in 2 Nephi, the second chapter: “Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

In many respects, this world has always been at war. I believe when the First Presidency sent me my little brown book, they were more concerned about a greater war than World War II. I also believe they hoped the book would be a shield of faith against Satan and his armies in this greater war—the war against sin—and serve as a reminder to me to live the commandments of God.

One way to measure ourselves and compare us to previous generations is by one of the oldest standards known to man—the Ten Commandments. For much of the civilized world, particularly the Judeo-Christian world, the

Ten Commandments have been the most accepted and enduring delineation between good and evil.

In my judgment, four of the Ten Commandments are taken as seriously today as ever. As a culture, we disdain and condemn murder, stealing, and lying, and we still believe in the responsibility of children to their parents.

But as a larger society, we routinely dismiss the other six commandments:

- If worldly priorities are any indication, we certainly have “other gods” we put before the true God.
- We make idols of celebrities, of lifestyles, of wealth, and yes, sometimes of graven images or objects.
- We use the name of God in all kinds of profane ways, including our exclamations and our swearing.
- We use the Sabbath day for our biggest games, our most serious recreation, our heaviest shopping, and virtually everything else but worship.
- We treat sexual relations outside marriage as recreation and entertainment.

- And coveting has become a far too common way of life. (See Exodus 20:3–17.)

Prophets from all dispensations have consistently warned against violations of two of the more serious commandments—the ones relating to murder and adultery. I see a common basis for these two critical commandments—the belief that life itself is the prerogative of God and that our physical bodies, the temples of mortal life, should be created within the bounds God has set. For man to substitute his own rules for the laws of God on either end of life is the height of presumption and the depth of sin.

The main effects of these depreciating attitudes about the sanctity of marriage are the consequences to families—the strength of families is deteriorating at an alarming rate. This deterioration is causing widespread damage to society. I see direct cause and effect. As we give up commitment and fidelity to our marriage partners, we remove the glue that holds our society together.



A useful way to think about the commandments is they are loving counsel from a wise, all-knowing Heavenly Father. His goal is our eternal happiness, and His commandments are the road map He has given us to return to Him, which is the only way we will be eternally happy. How significant are the home and the family to our eternal happiness? On page 141 of my little brown book, it states, “Indeed our heaven is little more than a projection of our homes into eternity.”⁴

The doctrine of the family and the home was recently reiterated with great clarity and forcefulness in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” It declared the eternal nature of families and then explained the connection to temple worship. The proclamation also declared the law upon which the eternal happiness of families is predicated, namely, “The sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”⁵

God reveals to His prophets that there are moral absolutes. Sin will

always be sin. Disobedience to the Lord’s commandments will always deprive us of His blessings. The world changes constantly and dramatically, but God, His commandments, and promised blessings do not change. They are immutable and unchanging. Men and women receive their agency as a gift from God, but their liberty and, in turn, their eternal happiness come from obedience to His laws. As Alma counseled his errant son Corianton, “Wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10).

In this day of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel, the Lord has again revealed to us the blessings promised us for being obedient to His commandments.

In Doctrine and Covenants 130 we read:

“There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21).

Surely there could not be any doctrine more strongly expressed in the scriptures than the Lord’s unchanging commandments and their connection to our happiness and well-being as individuals, as families, and as a society. There are moral absolutes. Disobedience to the Lord’s commandments will always deprive us of His blessings. These things do not change.

In a world where the moral compass of society is faltering, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ never wavers, nor should its stakes and wards, its families, or its individual members. We must not pick and choose which commandments we think are important to keep but acknowledge all of God’s commandments. We must stand firm and steadfast, having perfect confidence in the Lord’s consistency and perfect trust in His promises.

May we ever be a light on the hill, an example in keeping the commandments, which have never changed and will never change. Just as this small book encouraged LDS servicemen to stand morally firm in times of war, may we, in this latter-day war, be a beacon to all the earth and particularly to God’s children who are seeking the Lord’s blessings. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. First Presidency, in *Principles of the Gospel* (1943), i.
2. *Principles of the Gospel*, v, vii, viii.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 4.
4. Stephen L. Richards, in *Principles of the Gospel*, 141.
5. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

Obedience Brings Blessings

A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God.

My beloved brothers and sisters, how grateful I am to be with you this morning. I seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I respond to the privilege to address you.

Throughout the ages, men and women have sought for knowledge and understanding concerning this mortal existence and their place and purpose in it, as well as for the way to peace and happiness. Such a search is undertaken by each of us.

This knowledge and understanding are available to all mankind. They are contained in truths which are eternal. In Doctrine and Covenants section 1, verse 39, we read, “Behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever.”

The poet wrote:

*Tho the heavens depart and the earth's
fountains burst,
Truth, the sum of existence, will
weather the worst,
Eternal, unchanged, evermore.¹*

Some would ask, “Where is such truth to be found, and how are we

to recognize it?” In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, in May of 1833, the Lord declared:

“Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . .

“The Spirit of truth is of God. . . .

“And no man receiveth a fulness unless he keepeth his commandments.

“He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”²

What a glorious promise! “He that keepeth [God’s] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.”

There is no need for you or for me, in this enlightened age when the fulness of the gospel has been restored, to sail uncharted seas or to travel unmarked roads in search of truth. A loving Heavenly Father has plotted our course and provided an unfailing guide—even *obedience*. A knowledge of truth and the answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God.

We learn obedience throughout our lives. Beginning when we are very young, those responsible for our care set forth guidelines and rules to ensure our safety. Life would be simpler for all of us if we would obey such rules completely. Many of us, however, learn through experience the wisdom of being obedient.

When I was growing up, each summer from early July until early September, my family stayed at our cabin at Vivian Park in Provo Canyon in Utah.

One of my best friends during those carefree days in the canyon was Danny Larsen, whose family also owned a cabin at Vivian Park. Each day he and I roamed this boy’s paradise, fishing in the stream and the river, collecting rocks and other treasures, hiking, climbing, and simply enjoying each minute of each hour of each day.

One morning Danny and I decided we wanted to have a campfire that evening with all our canyon friends. We just needed to clear an area in a nearby field where we could all gather. The June grass which covered the field had become dry and prickly, making the field unsuitable for our purposes. We began to pull at the tall grass, planning to clear a large, circular area. We tugged and yanked with all our might, but all we could get were small handfuls of the stubborn weeds. We knew this task would take the entire day, and already our energy and enthusiasm were waning.

And then what I thought was the perfect solution came into my eight-year-old mind. I said to Danny, “All we need is to set these weeds on fire. We’ll just *burn* a circle in the weeds!” He readily agreed, and I ran to our cabin to get a few matches.

Lest any of you think that at the tender age of eight we were

permitted to use matches, I want to make it clear that both Danny and I were forbidden to use them without adult supervision. Both of us had been warned repeatedly of the dangers of fire. However, I knew where my family kept the matches, and we needed to clear that field. Without so much as a second thought, I ran to our cabin and grabbed a few matchsticks, making certain no one was watching. I hid them quickly in one of my pockets.

Back to Danny I ran, excited that in my pocket I had the solution to our problem. I recall thinking that the fire would burn only as far as we wanted and then would somehow magically extinguish itself.

I struck a match on a rock and set the parched June grass ablaze. It ignited as though it had been drenched in gasoline. At first Danny and I were thrilled as we watched the weeds disappear, but it soon became apparent that the fire was not about to go out on its own. We panicked as we realized there was nothing we could do to stop it. The menacing flames began to follow the wild grass up the mountainside, endangering the pine trees and everything else in their path.

Finally we had no option but to run for help. Soon all available men and women at Vivian Park were dashing back and forth with wet burlap bags, beating at the flames in an attempt to extinguish them. After several hours the last remaining embers were smothered. The ages-old pine trees had been saved, as were the homes the flames would eventually have reached.

Danny and I learned several difficult but important lessons that day—not the least of which was the importance of obedience.

There are rules and laws to help ensure our physical safety. Likewise,

the Lord has provided guidelines and commandments to help ensure our spiritual safety so that we might successfully navigate this often-treacherous mortal existence and return eventually to our Heavenly Father.

Centuries ago, to a generation steeped in the tradition of animal sacrifice, Samuel boldly declared, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”³

In this dispensation, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that He requires “the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days.”⁴

All prophets, ancient and modern, have known that obedience is essential to our salvation. Nephi declared, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.”⁵ Though others faltered in their faith and their obedience, never once did Nephi fail to do that which the Lord asked of him. Untold generations have been blessed as a result.

A soul-stirring account of obedience is that of Abraham and Isaac. How painfully difficult it must have been for Abraham, in obedience to God’s command, to take his beloved Isaac into the land of Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice. Can we imagine the heaviness of Abraham’s heart as he journeyed to the appointed place? Surely anguish must have racked his body and tortured his mind as he bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, and took the knife to slay him. With unwavering faith and implicit trust in the Lord, he responded to the Lord’s command. How glorious was the pronouncement, and with what wondered welcome did it come: “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing

thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”⁶

Abraham had been tried and tested, and for his faithfulness and obedience the Lord gave him this glorious promise: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”⁷

Although we are not asked to prove our obedience in such a dramatic and heart-wrenching way, obedience is required of us as well.

Declared President Joseph F. Smith in October 1873, “Obedience is the first law of heaven.”⁸

Said President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The happiness of the Latter-day Saints, the peace of the Latter-day Saints, the progress of the Latter-day Saints, the prosperity of the Latter-day Saints, and the eternal salvation and exaltation of this people lie in walking in obedience to the counsels of . . . God.”⁹

Obedience is a hallmark of prophets; it has provided strength and knowledge to them throughout the ages. It is essential for us to realize that we, as well, are entitled to this source of strength and knowledge. It is readily available to each of us today as we obey God’s commandments.

Throughout the years, I have known countless individuals who have been particularly faithful and obedient. I have been blessed and inspired by them. May I share with you an account of two such individuals.

Walter Krause was a steadfast member of the Church who, with his family, lived in what became known as East Germany following the Second World War. Despite the hardships he faced because of the lack of freedom in that area of the world at the time, Brother Krause was a man who loved and served the Lord. He faithfully and



conscientiously fulfilled each assignment given to him.

The other man, Johann Denndorfer, a native of Hungary, was converted to the Church in Germany and was baptized there in 1911 at the age of 17. Not too long afterward he returned to Hungary. Following the Second World War, he found himself virtually a prisoner in his native land, in the city of Debrecen. Freedom had also been taken from the people of Hungary.

Brother Walter Krause, who did not know Brother Denndorfer, received the assignment to be his home teacher

and to visit him on a regular basis. Brother Krause called his home teaching companion and said to him, "We have received an assignment to visit Brother Johann Denndorfer. Would you be available to go with me this week to see him and give him a gospel message?" And then he added, "Brother Denndorfer lives in Hungary."

His startled companion asked, "When will we leave?"

"Tomorrow," came the reply from Brother Krause.

"When will we return home?" asked the companion.

Brother Krause responded, "Oh, in about a week—if we *get* back."

Away the two home teaching companions went to visit Brother Denndorfer, traveling by train and bus from the northeastern area of Germany to Debrecen, Hungary—a substantial journey. Brother Denndorfer had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw these servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed with gratitude that they had come. At first he declined to shake hands with them. Rather, he went to his



bedroom and took from a small cabinet a box containing his tithing that he had saved for years. He presented the tithing to his home teachers and said, "Now I am current with the Lord. *Now* I feel worthy to shake the hands of servants of the Lord!" Brother Krause told me later that he had been touched beyond words to think that this faithful brother, who had no contact with the Church for many years, had obediently and consistently taken from his meager earnings 10 percent with which to pay his tithing. He had saved it not knowing when or if he might have the privilege of paying it.

Brother Walter Krause passed away nine years ago at the age of 94. He served faithfully and obediently throughout his life and was an inspiration to me and to all who knew him. When asked to fulfill assignments, he never questioned, he never murmured, and he never made excuses.

My brothers and sisters, the great test of this life is obedience. "We will prove them herewith," said the Lord, "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."¹⁰

Declared the Savior, "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall

abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world."¹¹

No greater example of obedience exists than that of our Savior. Of Him, Paul observed:

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."¹²

The Savior demonstrated genuine love of God by living the perfect life, by honoring the sacred mission that was His. Never was He haughty. Never was He puffed up with pride. Never was He disloyal. Ever was He humble. Ever was He sincere. Ever was He obedient.

Though He was tempted by that master of deceit, even the devil, though He was physically weakened from fasting 40 days and 40 nights and was an hungered, yet when the evil one proffered Jesus the most alluring and tempting proposals, He gave to us a divine example of obedience by refusing to deviate from what He knew was right.¹³

When faced with the agony of Gethsemane, where He endured such pain that "his sweat was as it were

great drops of blood falling down to the ground,"¹⁴ He exemplified the obedient Son by saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."¹⁵

As the Savior instructed His early Apostles, so He instructs you and me, "Follow thou me."¹⁶ Are we willing to obey?

The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord's commandments. I quote once again the words of the Lord: "He that keepeth [God's] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things."¹⁷

It is my humble prayer that we may be blessed with the rich rewards promised to the obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "Oh Say, What Is Truth?" *Hymns*, no. 272.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:24, 26–28.
3. 1 Samuel 15:22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
5. 1 Nephi 3:7.
6. Genesis 22:12.
7. Genesis 22:18.
8. Joseph F. Smith, "Discourse," *Deseret News*, Nov. 12, 1873, 644.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "If Ye Be Willing and Obedient," *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 125.
10. Abraham 3:25.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 132:5.
12. Hebrews 5:8–9.
13. See Matthew 4:1–11.
14. Luke 22:44.
15. Luke 22:42.
16. John 21:22.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 93:28.



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

"Lord, I Believe"

Honestly acknowledge your questions and your concerns, but first and forever fan the flame of your faith, because all things are possible to them that believe.

On one occasion Jesus came upon a group arguing vehemently with His disciples. When the Savior inquired as to the cause of this contention, the father of an afflicted child stepped forward, saying he had approached Jesus's disciples for a blessing for his son, but they were not able to provide it. With the boy still gnashing his teeth, foaming from the mouth, and thrashing on the ground in front of them, the father appealed to Jesus with what must have been last-resort desperation in his voice:

"If thou canst do any thing," he said, "have compassion on us, and help us.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."¹

This man's initial conviction, by his own admission, is limited. But he has an urgent, emphatic desire in behalf of his only child. We are told that is good enough for a beginning. "Even if ye can no more than *desire to believe*,"

Alma declares, "let this desire work in you, even until ye believe."² With no other hope remaining, this father asserts what faith he has and pleads with the Savior of the world, "If *thou* canst do *any thing*, have compassion on *us*, and help *us*."³ I can hardly read those words without weeping. The plural pronoun *us* is obviously used intentionally. This man is saying, in effect, "Our whole family is pleading. Our struggle never ceases. We are exhausted. Our son falls into the water. He falls into the fire. He is continually in danger, and we are continually afraid. We don't know where else to turn. Can *you* help us? We will be

grateful for *anything*—a partial blessing, a glimmer of hope, some small lifting of the burden carried by this boy's mother every day of her life."

"If *thou* canst do *any thing*," spoken by the father, comes back to him "If *thou* canst *believe*," spoken by the Master.⁴

"Straightway," the scripture says—not slowly nor skeptically nor cynically but "straightway"—the father cries out in his unvarnished parental pain, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." In response to new and still partial faith, Jesus heals the boy, almost literally raising him from the dead, as Mark describes the incident.⁵

With this tender scriptural record as a backdrop, I wish to speak directly to the young people of the Church— young in years of age or young in years of membership or young in years of faith. One way or another, that should include just about all of us.

Observation number one regarding this account is that when facing the challenge of faith, the father asserts his strength first and only then acknowledges his limitation. His initial declaration is affirmative and without hesitation: "Lord, I believe." I would say to all who wish for more faith, remember this man! In moments of fear





or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. In the growth we all have to experience in mortality, the spiritual equivalent of this boy's affliction or this parent's desperation is going to come to all of us. When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes*. It was of this very incident, this specific miracle, that Jesus said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."⁶ The size of your faith or the degree of your knowledge is not the issue—it is the integrity you demonstrate toward the faith you do have and the truth you already know.

The second observation is a variation of the first. When problems come and questions arise, do not start your quest for faith by saying how much you do *not* have, leading as it were with your "unbelief." That is like trying to stuff a turkey through the beak! Let me be clear on this point: I am not asking you to pretend to faith you do not have. I *am* asking you to be true to the faith you *do* have. Sometimes we act as if an honest declaration of doubt is a higher manifestation of moral courage

than is an honest declaration of faith. It is not! So let us all remember the clear message of this scriptural account: Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you and your family want to be healed, don't let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle.

Furthermore, you have more faith than you think you do because of what the Book of Mormon calls "the greatness of the evidences."⁷ "Ye shall know them by their fruits," Jesus said,⁸ and the fruit of living the gospel is evident in the lives of Latter-day Saints everywhere. As Peter and John said once to an ancient audience, I say today, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," and what we have seen and heard is that "a notable miracle hath been done" in the lives of millions of members of this Church. That cannot be denied.⁹

Brothers and sisters, this is a divine work in process, with the manifestations and blessings of it abounding in every direction, so please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. They do and they will. *In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know. And remember, in this world, everyone is to walk by faith.*

So be kind regarding human

frailty—your own as well as that of those who serve with you in a Church led by volunteer, mortal men and women. Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. And when you see imperfection, remember that the limitation is *not* in the divinity of the work. As one gifted writer has suggested, when the infinite fulness is poured forth, it is not the oil's fault if there is some loss because finite vessels can't quite contain it all.¹⁰ Those finite vessels include you and me, so be patient and kind and forgiving.

Last observation: When doubt or difficulty come, do not be afraid to ask for help. If we want it as humbly and honestly as this father did, we can get it. The scriptures phrase such earnest desire as being of "real intent," pursued "with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God."¹¹ I testify that in response to *that* kind of importuning, God will send help from both sides of the veil to strengthen our belief.

I said I was speaking to the young. I still am. A 14-year-old boy recently said to me a little hesitantly, "Brother Holland, I can't say yet that I know the Church is true, but I believe it is." I hugged that boy until his eyes bulged out. I told him with all the fervor of my soul that *belief* is a precious word, an even more precious act, and he need never apologize for "only believing." I told him that Christ Himself said, "Be not afraid, only believe,"¹² a phrase which, by the way, carried young Gordon B. Hinckley into the mission field.¹³ I told this boy that belief was always the first step toward conviction and that the definitive articles of our collective faith forcefully reiterate the phrase "We believe."¹⁴

And I told him how very proud I was of him for the honesty of his quest.

Now, with the advantage that nearly 60 years give me since I was a newly believing 14-year-old, I declare some things I now know. I know that God is at all times and in all ways and in all circumstances our loving, forgiving Father in Heaven. I know Jesus was His only perfect child, whose life was given lovingly by the will of both the Father and the Son for the redemption of all the rest of us who are not perfect. I know He rose from that death to live

again, and because He did, you and I will also. I know that Joseph Smith, who acknowledged that he wasn't perfect,¹⁵ was nevertheless the chosen instrument in God's hand to restore the everlasting gospel to the earth. I also know that in doing so—particularly through translating the Book of Mormon—he has taught me more of God's love, of Christ's divinity, and of priesthood power than any other prophet of whom I have ever read, known, or heard in a lifetime of seeking. I know that President Thomas S. Monson, who

moves devotedly and buoyantly toward the 50th anniversary of his ordination as an Apostle, is the rightful successor to that prophetic mantle today. We have seen that mantle upon him again in this conference. I know that 14 other men whom you sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators sustain him with their hands, their hearts, and their own apostolic keys.

These things I declare to you with the conviction Peter called the “more sure word of prophecy.”¹⁶ What was once a tiny seed of belief for me has grown into the tree of life, so if your faith is a little tested in this or any season, I invite you to lean on mine. I know this work is God's very truth, and I know that only at our peril would we allow doubt or devils to sway us from its path. Hope on. Journey on. Honestly acknowledge your questions and your concerns, but first and forever fan the flame of your faith, because all things are possible to them that believe. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mark 9:22–24; see also verses 14–21.
2. Alma 32:27; emphasis added.
3. Mark 9:22; emphasis added.
4. Mark 9:22, 23; emphasis added.
5. See Mark 9:24–27.
6. Matthew 17:20.
7. Helaman 5:50.
8. Matthew 7:16.
9. See Acts 4:16, 20.
10. Adapted from Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (1883), 2:108.
11. 2 Nephi 31:13.
12. Mark 5:36.
13. See Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 114.
14. See Articles of Faith 1:1–13.
15. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522.
16. 2 Peter 1:19.



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

Followers of Christ

Following Christ is not a casual or occasional practice but a continuous commitment and way of life that applies at all times and in all places.

One of our most beloved hymns, performed by the Tabernacle Choir this morning, begins with these words:

*“Come, follow me,” the Savior said.
Then let us in his footsteps tread,
For thus alone can we be one
With God’s own loved, begotten Son.”¹*

Those words, inspired by the Savior’s earliest invitation to His disciples (see Matthew 4:19), were written by John Nicholson, a Scottish convert. Like many of our early leaders, he had little formal schooling but a profound love for our Savior and the plan of salvation.²

All of the messages of this conference help us follow in the footsteps of our Savior, whose example and teachings define the path for every follower of Jesus Christ.

Like all other Christians, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints study the life of our Savior as reported in the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I will review examples and teachings contained in these four books of the Holy Bible and invite each of us and all other Christians to consider how this restored Church

and each of us qualify as followers of Christ.

Jesus taught that baptism was necessary to enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:5). He began His ministry by being baptized (see Mark 1:9), and He and His followers baptized others (see John 3:22–26). We do likewise.

Jesus began His preaching by inviting His listeners to repent (see Matthew 4:17). That is still His servants’ message to the world.

Throughout His ministry Jesus gave commandments. And He taught, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15; see also verses 21, 23). He affirmed that keeping His commandments would require His followers to leave what He called “that which is highly esteemed among men”

(Luke 16:15) and “the tradition of men” (Mark 7:8; see also verse 13). He also warned, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19). As the Apostle Peter later declared, the followers of Jesus were to be “a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9).

Latter-day Saints understand that we should not be “of the world” or bound to “the tradition of men,” but like other followers of Christ, we sometimes find it difficult to separate ourselves from the world and its traditions. Some model themselves after worldly ways because, as Jesus said of some whom He taught, “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43). These failures to follow Christ are too numerous and too sensitive to list here. They range all the way from worldly practices like political correctness and extremes in dress and grooming to deviations from basic values like the eternal nature and function of the family.

Jesus’s teachings were not meant to be theoretical. Always they were to be acted upon. Jesus taught, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man” (Matthew 7:24; see also Luke 11:28) and “Blessed is that servant,





whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). In another beloved hymn we sing:

*Savior, may I learn to love thee,
Walk the path that thou hast shown. . . .
Savior, may I learn to love thee—
Lord, I would follow thee.*³

As Jesus taught, those who love Him will keep His commandments. They will be obedient, as President Thomas S. Monson taught this morning. Following Christ is not a casual or occasional practice but a continuous commitment and way of life that applies at all times and in all places. The Savior taught this principle and how we should be reminded and strengthened to follow it when He instituted the ordinance of the sacrament (communion, as others call it). We know from modern revelation that He commanded His followers to partake of the emblems in remembrance of Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22 [in Matthew 26:26, footnote c], 24 [in the Bible appendix]; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:21–24 [in the Bible appendix]). Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follow that commandment each week by attending a worship service in which we partake of the bread and water and covenant that we

will always remember Him and keep His commandments.

Jesus taught that "men ought always to pray" (Luke 18:1). He also set that example, such as when He "continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12) before He called His Twelve Apostles. Like other Christians, we pray in all our worship services. We also pray for guidance, and we teach that we should have frequent personal prayers and daily kneeling prayers as a family. Like Jesus, we pray to our Father in Heaven, and we do so in the sacred name of Jesus Christ.

The Savior called Twelve Apostles to assist in His Church and gave them the keys and authority to carry on after His death (see Matthew 16:18–19; Mark 3:14–15; 6:7; Luke 6:13). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as the restored Church of Jesus Christ, follows this example in its organization and in its conferral of keys and authority on Apostles.

Some whom Jesus called to follow Him did not respond immediately but sought a delay to attend to proper family obligations. Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Many Latter-day Saints practice the priority Jesus taught. This includes the wonderful example of thousands of senior

missionaries and others who have left children and grandchildren to perform the missionary duties to which they have been called.

Jesus taught that God created male and female and that a *man* should leave his parents and cleave to his *wife* (see Mark 10:6–8). Our commitment to this teaching is well known.

In the familiar parable of the lost sheep, Jesus taught that we should go out of our way to seek after any of the flock who have strayed (see Matthew 18:11–14; Luke 15:3–7). As we know, President Thomas S. Monson has given great emphasis to this direction in his memorable example and teachings about rescuing our fellow men and women.⁴

In our efforts to rescue and serve, we follow our Savior's unique example and tender teachings about love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). He even commanded us to love our enemies (see Luke 6:27–28). And in His great teachings at the end of His mortal ministry, He said:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).



As part of loving one another, Jesus taught that when we are wronged by persons, we should forgive them (see Matthew 18:21–35; Mark 11:25–26; Luke 6:37). While many struggle with this difficult commandment, we all know of inspiring examples of Latter-day Saints who have given loving forgiveness, even for the most serious wrongs. For example, Chris Williams drew upon his faith in Jesus Christ to forgive the drunken driver who caused the death of his wife and two of their children. Only two days after the tragedy and still deeply distraught, this forgiving man, then serving as one of our bishops, said, “As a disciple of Christ, I had no other choice.”⁵

Most Christians give to the poor and the needy, as Jesus taught (see Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 14:7). In following this teaching of our Savior, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members excel. Our members make generous contributions to charities and give personal service and other gifts to the poor and needy. In addition, our members fast for two meals each month and donate at least the cost of these meals as a fast offering, which our bishops and branch presidents use to help our needy members. Our fasting to help the hungry is an act of charity and, when done with pure intent, is a spiritual feast.

Less well known is our Church’s global humanitarian service. Using funds donated by generous members,

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sends food, clothing, and other essentials to relieve the suffering of adults and children all over the world. These humanitarian donations, totaling hundreds of millions of dollars in the last decade, are made without any consideration of religion, race, or nationality.

Our massive relief effort following the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami provided \$13 million in cash and relief supplies. In addition, more than 31,000 Church-sponsored volunteers gave more than 600,000 hours of service. Our humanitarian assistance to the victims of Hurricane Sandy in the eastern United States included large donations of various resources, plus almost 300,000 hours of service in cleanup efforts by about 28,000 Church members. Among many other examples last year, we provided 300,000 pounds (136,000 kg) of clothing and shoes for the refugees in the African nation of Chad. During the last quarter century we have assisted nearly 30 million people in 179 countries.⁶ Truly, the people called “Mormons” know how to give to the poor and needy.

In His last biblical teaching, our Savior directed His followers to take His teachings to every nation and every creature. From the beginning of the Restoration, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has sought to follow that teaching. Even when we were a poor and struggling new

church with only a few thousand members, our early leaders sent missionaries across the oceans, east and west. As a people, we have continued to teach the Christian message until today our unique missionary program has more than 60,000 full-time missionaries, plus thousands more who serve part-time. We have missionaries in over 150 countries and territories worldwide.

As part of His great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The purpose of this teaching and the purpose of following our Savior is to come to the Father, whom our Savior referred to as “my Father, and your Father; and . . . my God, and your God” (John 20:17).

From modern revelation, unique to the restored gospel, we know that the commandment to seek perfection is part of God the Father’s plan for the salvation of His children. Under that plan we are all *heirs* of our heavenly parents. “We are the children of God,” the Apostle Paul taught, “and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16–17). This means, as we are told in the New Testament, that we are “heirs . . . of eternal life” (Titus 3:7) and that if we come to the Father, we are to “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7)—all that He has—a concept our mortal minds can hardly grasp. But at least we can understand that achieving this ultimate destiny in eternity is possible only if we follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, who taught that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). We seek to follow Him and become more like Him, here and hereafter. So it is that in the final verses of our hymn “Come, Follow Me,” we sing:

*Is it enough alone to know
That we must follow him below,
While trav'ling thru this vale of tears?
No, this extends to holier spheres. . . .*

*For thrones, dominions, kingdoms,
pow'rs,
And glory great and bliss are ours,
If we, throughout eternity,
Obey his words, "Come, follow me."⁷*

I testify of our Savior, Jesus Christ, whose teachings and example we seek to follow. He invites all of us who are heavy laden to come unto Him, to learn of Him, to follow Him, and thus to find rest to our souls (see Matthew 4:19; 11:28). I testify of the truth of His message and of the divine mission and authority of His restored Church in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. "Come, Follow Me," *Hymns*, no. 116.
2. See Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (1988), 142–43, 419.
3. "Lord, I Would Follow Thee," *Hymns*, no. 220.
4. See, for example, Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson* (2010), 149–61; Thomas S. Monson, "To the Rescue," *Ensign*, May 2001, 48–50; *Liahona*, July 2001, 57–60.
5. Chris Williams, in Jessica Henrie, "Father Relies on Faith to Forgive Intoxicated Teen Driver," *Deseret News*, Aug. 1, 2012, deseretnews.com/article/865559847/Let-It-Go-Chris-Williams-shares-his-story-of-tragedy-and-forgiveness.html; see also Chris Williams, *Let It Go: A True Story of Tragedy and Forgiveness* (2012).
6. See "Emergency Response: Church Assists Worldwide," *Church News*, Mar. 9, 2013, 9; Welfare Services Emergency Response, "2012 Year in Review," 8.
7. *Hymns*, no. 116.



Short Video Highlight

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By Elder Christoffel Golden Jr.
Of the Seventy

The Father and the Son

At the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its power to save is a correct understanding of the Father and the Son.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am grateful to address you this afternoon in the setting of this inspiring general conference!

In addressing a topic that to my mind is most sacred, I wish first to acknowledge with gratitude the devotion of so many Christians throughout the ages, including my ancestry of French Protestants and Irish Catholics. Because of their faith and worship of God, many of them sacrificed position, possessions, and even their lives in

defense of their God and their faith.¹

As Latter-day Saints and as Christians, we likewise have a strong and deep faith in God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Devotion to God ever remains a sacred and personal matter between each of us and our Maker.

Our quest for eternal life is nothing other than a quest to understand who God is and for us to return to live with Him. The Savior prayed to His Father, "And this is life eternal, that they might



know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”²

Even in the light of this declaration by our Savior Himself, the prevailing view of the nature of the Father and the Son throughout the many centuries and among much of mankind is clearly inconsistent with the teachings of the holy scriptures.

We respectfully submit that at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its power to save is a correct understanding of the Father and the Son.³

The importance of this most fundamental principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ is confirmed by the First Vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1820. The Prophet wrote: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁴

This experience by the boy Joseph, followed by many other visions and revelations, reveals that God actually exists; the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are two separate and distinct beings; man is created in the image of God; our Heavenly Father is literally the Father of Jesus Christ; God continues to reveal Himself to man; God is ever near and interested in us; and He answers our prayers.

Even though similar appearances of the Father and the Son in holy writ are relatively rare, the remarkable fact of the First Vision is that it agrees so well with other recorded events in the holy scriptures.

In the New Testament, for example, we read of Stephen’s final testimony at his martyrdom. Said he, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”⁵

While in mighty vision on the Isle

of Patmos, the Apostle John sees the “Lord God Almighty”⁶ as well as the Lamb of God, who “redeemed us . . . by [His] blood.”⁷

In the Book of Mormon, the doctrine of the Father and the Son stands in majestic testimony alongside the Holy Bible. The Book of Mormon records the visitation of our Savior to the Nephites, in which the voice of the Father, in the presence of some 2,500 Nephites, introduces the risen Christ: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”⁸

In the four Gospels, Christ Himself refers to His Father in Heaven 160 times, while during His brief three-day ministry among the Nephites, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, He mentions His Father 122 times.

For example, in Matthew, Jesus says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of *my Father* which is in heaven.”⁹

In John, He testifies, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth *the Father* do.”¹⁰

And in Luke, He exclaims, “*Father*, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”¹¹

Every time our Lord refers to His Heavenly Father, He does so with the utmost reverence and submissiveness.

In saying this, I hope there will be no misunderstanding. Jesus Christ is the great Jehovah, the God of Israel, the promised Messiah, and because of His infinite Atonement, He is our Savior and the Redeemer of the world. Of Him the Apostle Paul declared, “Then cometh the end, when [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when [Christ] shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”¹²

On the eve of the Savior’s Atonement, He offered up His great Intercessory Prayer to His Father. He prayed:

“Neither pray I for these [in other words, His Apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

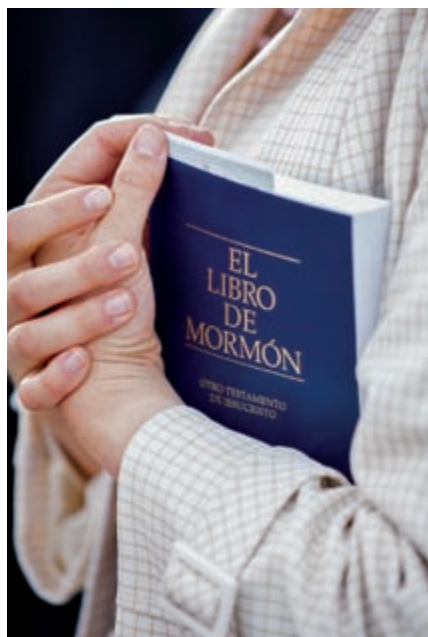
“That they all may be *one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”¹³

The Father and the Son are distinctly separate beings, but They are perfectly united and one in power and purpose. Their oneness is not reserved for Them alone; rather, They desire this same oneness for everyone who will, with devotion, follow and obey Their commandments.

How is the earnest seeker of God able to become acquainted with the Father and the Son? Our Savior promised, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things.”¹⁴

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi, when speaking of the doctrine of Christ, declared that the Holy Ghost





“witnesses of the Father and the Son.”¹⁵

It is true that the power or influence of the Holy Ghost may on occasion be felt, according to the will of the Lord, by any person irrespective of that person’s religious persuasion. But the full measure, or gift, of the Holy Ghost comes only after a person has received, with “a broken heart and a contrite spirit,”¹⁶ the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost¹⁷ by the laying on of hands. These and other sacred ordinances may be performed only under the direction and power of the priesthood of God. In this regard, we are taught:

“And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”¹⁸

Seen in its true light, the doctrine of the Father and the Son is the doctrine

of the eternal family. Every human being has existed previously as a spirit child with heavenly parents,¹⁹ with Christ being the Firstborn of the Father in this heavenly family.²⁰

So it is with all of us. We are the children of our Heavenly Father.

President Ezra Taft Benson with prophetic insight said, “Nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father [in Heaven] and how familiar his face is to us.”²¹

I have learned that it is not possible to convey in the language of man those things which are made known only by the Holy Ghost and power of God. It is in this spirit that I bear my solemn witness and testimony of the reality, nearness, and goodness of our Eternal Father and His holy Son, Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Volume 1: Beginnings*

to 1500, rev. ed. (1975) and *A History of Christianity, Volume 2: Reformation to the Present*, rev. ed. (1975); see also Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (2003).

2. John 17:3.
3. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38–44.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. Acts 7:56.
6. Revelation 4:8.
7. Revelation 5:9.
8. 3 Nephi 11:7.
9. Matthew 7:21; emphasis added.
10. John 5:19; emphasis added.
11. Luke 23:46; emphasis added.
12. 1 Corinthians 15:24. For further understanding of the Savior and His mission, see “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2–3.
13. John 17:20–22; emphasis added.
14. John 14:26.
15. 2 Nephi 31:18.
16. 3 Nephi 9:20; Moroni 6:2.
17. See John 3:5; 3 Nephi 11:31–38.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.
19. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
20. See Colossians 1:15; Doctrine and Covenants 93:21.
21. Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” in *Speeches of the Year, 1974* (1975), 313; see also “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 6; *Tambuli*, May 1977, 24.



By Elder Enrique R. Falabella
Of the Seventy

The Home: The School of Life

Lessons are learned in a home—the place that can become a piece of heaven here on earth.

Some parents excuse themselves for mistakes they have made at home, stating that the reason for this is that there is not a school for parenting.

In reality, such a school does exist and it can be the best of all. This school is called *home*.

As I travel back to the past on the wings of my memory, I recall cherished moments I have experienced with my wife. As I share these memories with you, you may recall experiences of your own—both happy and sad; we learn from them all.

1. The Temple Is the Place

When I returned from my mission, I met a beautiful young woman with long black hair down to her waist. She had beautiful, big honey eyes and a contagious smile. She captivated me from the first moment I saw her.

My wife had set the goal to get married in the temple, although back then the nearest temple required a trip of over 4,000 miles (6,400 km).

Our civil marriage ceremony was both happy and sad, for we were married with an expiration date. The

officer pronounced the words “And now I declare you husband and wife,” but immediately after, he said, “until death do you part.”

So with sacrifice we set out to purchase a one-way ticket to the Mesa Arizona Temple.

In the temple, as we were kneeling down at the altar, an authorized servant pronounced the words I longed for, which declared us husband and wife for time and for all eternity.

A friend took us to Sunday School. During the meeting he stood up and introduced us to the class. As the meeting came to a close, a brother approached me and shook my hand, leaving a 20-dollar bill in it. Soon after, another brother reached out to me as well, and to my surprise, he also left a bill in my hand. I quickly looked for my wife, who was across the room, and shouted, “Blanquy, shake hands with everyone!”

Soon we had gathered enough money to return to Guatemala.

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood.”¹

2. To Contend, You Need Two People

One of my wife’s mottoes has been “In order to contend, you need two people, and I will never be one of them.”

The Lord has clearly described the attributes which should guide our dealings with other people. These are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned.²

Physical abuse in the family is a practice that is occurring less often in certain societies, and we rejoice in that. However, we are still far from eliminating emotional abuse. The harm caused by this form of abuse dwells in our memory, it wounds our personality, it sows hatred in our hearts, it lowers our self-esteem, and it fills us with fear.

Participating in the ceremony of celestial marriage is not enough. We also have to live a celestial life.

3. A Child Who Sings Is a Happy Child

This is another motto my wife mentions frequently.

The Savior understood the importance of sacred music. After He observed Passover with His disciples, the scriptures relate, “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”³

And speaking through the Prophet Joseph, He said, “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”⁴

How touching it is to hear the song of a little one who has been taught by his or her parents to sing, “I am a child of God.”⁵

4. I Need You to Hug Me

The words “I love you,” “Thank you very much,” and “Forgive me” are like a balm for the soul. They transform



tears into happiness. They provide comfort to the weighed-down soul, and they confirm the tender feelings of our heart. Just as plants wither with the lack of precious water, our love languishes and dies as we put to rest the words and acts of love.

I remember the days when we used to send love letters through standard post or how we collected a few coins to call our loved ones from a phone booth or how we would draw and write love poems on plain paper.

Today all of this sounds like museum material!

Technology in this day and age allows us to do wonders. How easy it is to send a text message of love and gratitude! Youth do it all the time. I wonder if this and other beautiful

practices continue once our home is established. One of the recent text messages I received from my wife reads like this: “A hug like heaven, a kiss like the sun, and an evening like the moon. Happy day, I love you.”

I cannot resist feeling like I am in heaven when I get a message like this.

Our Father in Heaven is a perfect example of expressing love. As He presented His Son, He used the words “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”⁶

5. I Love the Book of Mormon and My Savior, Jesus Christ

I am filled with emotion when I see my wife read the Book of Mormon every day. As she does so, I can feel her testimony just by seeing the joy in

her countenance as she reads over the passages that testify of the mission of the Savior.

How wise are the words of our Savior: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”⁷

Inspired by this, I asked my grandchild Raquel, who had recently learned how to read, “What would you say about setting a goal to read the Book of Mormon?”

Her answer was “But, Grandpa, it’s so hard. It’s a big book.”

Then I asked her to read me a page. I took out a stopwatch and timed her. I said, “You took only three minutes, and the Spanish version of the Book of Mormon has 642 pages, so you need 1,926 minutes.”

This could have scared her even more, so I divided that number by 60 minutes and told her she would need only 32 hours to read it—less than a day and a half!

Then she said to me, “That’s so easy, Grandpa.”

In the end, Raquel, her brother, Esteban, and our other grandchildren took more time than this because this is a book which needs to be read with a spirit of prayer and meditation.

With time, as we learn to delight in the scriptures, we shall exclaim as the Psalmist: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”⁸

6. It Is Not Enough to Know the Scriptures; We Have to Live Them

I remember when I was a returned missionary, and having searched the scriptures diligently, I thought I knew it all. During our courtship, Blanquy and I would study the scriptures together. I used many of my notes and references to share my knowledge of the gospel with her. After we married

I came to a serious realization as I learned a great lesson from her: I may have tried to *teach* her the gospel, but she taught me how to *live* it.

When the Savior concluded the Sermon on the Mount, He gave this wise counsel: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”⁹

Those who live the celestial principles found in the scriptures give comfort to those who suffer. They bring joy to those who are depressed, direction to those who are lost, peace to those who are distressed, and a sure guidance to those who seek the truth.

In summary:

1. The temple is the place.
2. To contend, you need two people, and I will never be one of them.
3. A child who sings is a happy child.
4. I need you to hug me.
5. I love the Book of Mormon and my Savior, Jesus Christ.
6. It is not enough to know the scriptures; we have to live them.

These and many other lessons are learned in a home—the place that can become a piece of heaven here on earth.¹⁰ I testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the plan of our Heavenly Father provide a sure direction in this life and the promise of eternal life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–2.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
3. Mark 14:26.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
5. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
6. Matthew 3:17; see also Mark 1:11; 3 Nephi 11:7.
7. John 5:39.
8. Psalm 119:103.
9. Matthew 7:24.
10. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), 43, 150.



By Elder Erich W. Kopischke
Of the Seventy

Being Accepted of the Lord

Seeking and receiving the acceptance of the Lord will lead to the knowledge that we are chosen and blessed by Him.

When I was a boy, I remember my father sometimes taking me with him to work on projects. We had a little garden a few kilometers from where we lived, and there was always so much to do to prepare the garden each season. We worked on the gazebo or built or repaired fences. In my memory this work always occurred in the freezing cold, heavy snow, or pouring rain. But I loved it. My father would teach me how to do things with patience and acceptance.

One day he invited me to tighten a screw and warned, “Remember, if you put it in too tight, it will break.” Proudly, I wanted to show him what I could do. I tightened with all my might, and, of course, I broke the screw. He made a funny comment, and we started over. Even when I “messed up,” I always felt his love and confidence in me. He passed away more than 10 years ago, but I can still hear his voice, sense his love, enjoy his encouragement, and feel his acceptance.

The feeling of being accepted by someone we love is a basic human need. Being accepted by good people motivates us. It increases our sense

of self-worth and self-confidence. Those who cannot find acceptance from desirable sources often seek it elsewhere. They may look to people who are not interested in their well-being. They may attach themselves to false friends and do questionable things to try to receive the acknowledgment they are seeking. They may seek acceptance by wearing a particular brand of clothing to generate a feeling of belonging or status. For some, striving for a role or a position of prominence can also be a way of seeking acceptance. They may define their worth by a position they hold or status they obtain.

Even in the Church we are not always free from this type of thinking. Seeking acceptance from the wrong sources or for incorrect reasons puts us on a dangerous path—one that is likely to lead us astray and even to destruction. Instead of feeling cherished and self-confident, we will eventually feel abandoned and inferior.

Alma counseled his son Helaman, “See that ye look to God and live.”¹ The ultimate source of empowerment and lasting acceptance is our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They

know us. They love us. They do not accept us because of our title or position. They do not look at our status. They look into our hearts. They accept us for who we are and what we are striving to become. Seeking and receiving acceptance from Them will always lift and encourage us.

I will share a simple pattern which, if applied, can help every one of us find ultimate acceptance. This pattern was given by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”²

This pattern consists of three simple steps:

1. Know that our hearts are honest and broken,
2. Know that our spirits are contrite, and
3. Be willing to observe our covenants by sacrifice, as commanded by the Lord.

First, we need to know that our hearts are honest and broken. How do we know that? We begin by engaging in sincere self-reflection. The heart is the center of our feelings. As we look into our hearts, we screen ourselves. What no one around us knows, we surely know. We know our motives and desires. When we engage in sincere, honest reflection, we do not rationalize or deceive ourselves.

There is also a way to judge if our hearts are broken. A broken heart is a soft, an open, and a receptive heart. When I hear the Savior say, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,”³ I hear Him knocking at the door of my

heart. If I open this door to Him, I am more responsive to the invitations of the Spirit, and I am more accepting of God’s will.

As we sincerely and prayerfully ponder the extent to which our hearts are honest and broken, we will be taught by the Holy Ghost. We will receive a sweet confirmation or gentle correction, inviting us to act.

Second, we have to know that our spirit is contrite. The word *contrite* in the Oxford dictionary is defined as “feeling or expressing remorse at the recognition that one has done wrong.”⁴ If we have a contrite spirit, we acknowledge our sins and shortcomings. We are teachable “concerning [all] things pertaining to righteousness.”⁵ We feel godly sorrow and are willing to repent. A contrite spirit is willing to listen “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.”⁶

A contrite spirit is manifest by our willingness and determination to act. We are willing to humble ourselves before God, willing to repent, willing to learn, and willing to change. We are

willing to pray, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”⁷

The third step to being accepted by the Lord is a conscious decision to observe our covenants through sacrifice, “yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command.”⁸ Too often we think that the word *sacrifice* refers to something big or hard for us to do. In certain situations this may be true, but mostly it refers to living day-to-day as a true disciple of Christ.

One way we observe our covenants by sacrifice is worthily partaking of the sacrament each week. We consciously prepare ourselves for the sacred ordinance. We renew and confirm our sacred promises to the Lord. In this way we feel His acceptance and receive His assurance that our efforts are recognized and our sins are forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. During this ordinance, the Lord promises us that as we are willing to take upon us the name of His Son and always remember Him and keep His commandments, we will always have His Spirit to be with us.





Having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion is the ultimate indicator of being accepted of God.

Other ways to observe our covenants by sacrifice are as simple as accepting a calling in the Church and faithfully serving in that calling or following the invitation of our prophet, Thomas S. Monson, to reach out to those who are standing at the wayside and need to be spiritually rescued. We observe our covenants by sacrifice by giving silent service in our neighborhood or community or by finding the names of our ancestors and doing temple work for them. We observe our covenants by sacrifice by simply striving for righteousness, being open, and listening to the promptings of the Spirit as we live our daily lives. Sometimes observing our covenants means nothing more than standing firmly and faithfully when the storms of life are raging all around us.

After explaining the pattern of how to be accepted by Him, the Lord uses a wonderful illustration to show how we profit as individuals and

families as we seek His acceptance. He said, “For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.”⁹

As we are personally in tune with the Spirit of the Lord and feel His acceptance, we will be blessed above our understanding and bring forth many fruits of righteousness. We will be among those to whom He has said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”¹⁰

Seeking and receiving the acceptance of the Lord will lead to the knowledge that we are chosen and blessed by Him. We will gain increased confidence that He will lead us and direct us for good. His tender mercies will become evident in our hearts, in our lives, and in our families.

With all my heart I invite you to seek the Lord’s acceptance and enjoy His promised blessings. As we follow the simple pattern the Lord has laid

out, we will come to know that we are accepted of Him, regardless of our position, status, or mortal limitations. His loving acceptance will motivate us, increase our faith, and help us deal with everything we face in life. Despite our challenges, we will be successful, prosper,¹¹ and feel at peace.¹² We will be among those to whom the Lord said:

“Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me;

“And none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost.”¹³

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Alma 37:47.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
3. Revelation 3:20.
4. *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, “contrite,” oxforddictionaries.com.
5. Alma 21:23.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Luke 22:42.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 97:8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 97:9.
10. Matthew 25:21.
11. See Mosiah 2:22.
12. See Mosiah 2:41.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 50:41–42.



By Elder Bruce D. Porter
Of the Seventy

Beautiful Mornings

*We need not fear the future, nor falter in hope
and good cheer, because God is with us.*

On a Thursday evening in Jerusalem, Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room to observe Passover. The men who joined Him did not know that this meal would someday be called the Last Supper. Had they known this and what it meant, they would have wept.

Their Master, however, perfectly understood that the ordeal of Gethsemane and of Golgotha would shortly begin. The darkest hours in the history of the world were imminent; nevertheless, Jesus said to them, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

We live today in an era of turbulence and uncertainty, a time the Lord prophesied to Enoch would be marked by “days of wickedness and vengeance” (Moses 7:60). Tribulation and difficult times may lie ahead, yet we too have cause for good cheer and rejoicing, for we live in the last dispensation, when God has restored His Church and kingdom to the earth in preparation for the return of His Son.

President Boyd K. Packer once spoke of his grandchildren and the increasingly troubled world in which they live. He said: “They will see many events transpire in the course of their lifetime. Some of these shall tax their

courage and extend their faith. But if they seek prayerfully for help and guidance, they shall be given power over adverse things.”

And later he added: “The moral values upon which civilization itself must depend spiral downward at an ever-increasing pace. Nevertheless, I do not fear the future” (“Do Not Fear,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 77, 78).

Brothers and sisters, we need not fear the future, nor falter in hope and good cheer, because God is with us. Among the first recorded words of counsel that Jesus gave to His newly called disciples in Galilee was the two-word admonition, “Fear not” (Luke 5:10). He repeated that counsel many times during His ministry. To His Saints in our day, the Savior has said, “Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for

I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you” (D&C 68:6).

The Lord will stand by His Church and people and keep them in safety until His coming. There will be peace in Zion and in her stakes, for He has proclaimed “that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6).

The Church stands as a bulwark of safety for its members. Though conditions in the world may become very vexing at times, faithful Latter-day Saints will find sanctuary in the stakes of Zion. The Lord has decreed that the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth until it has filled the whole earth (see Daniel 2:31–45; D&C 65:2). And no human power can stay its course, for God is the author of this work and Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone.

The prophet Nephi beheld in vision that in the last days, the power of the Lamb of God would descend “upon the covenant people of the Lord” and they would be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14).

Every one of us, and our families, can be armed with the power of God





as a defense if we will but remain true to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and let the Spirit be our guide. Trials may come, and we may not understand everything that happens to us or around us. But if we humbly, quietly trust in the Lord, He will give us strength and guidance in every challenge we face. When our only desire is to please Him, we will be blessed with a deep inner peace.

In the early days of the Restoration, the members of the Church faced severe trials. President Brigham Young said of that time: “When surrounded by mobs, with death and destruction threatening on every hand, I am not aware but that I felt just as joyful [and] well in my spirits, as I do now. Prospects might appear dull and very dark, but I have never seen a time in this Gospel but what I knew that the result would be beneficial to the cause of truth” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 357).

My missionary companion, Paul, was someone who always radiated good cheer. As a young father, he was stricken with multiple sclerosis. Yet despite the adversity that followed, he continued serving others with joy and good humor. He once entered my office seated in his first wheelchair and declared, “Life begins with a motorized wheelchair!” I will always

remember him, a few years before he died, holding high the Olympic torch while riding in his wheelchair as hundreds cheered. Like that ever-burning flame, Paul’s faith never dimmed in the storm of life.

When I was a student at Brigham Young University, I lived in a house with several young men. My roommate, Bruce, was the most optimistic person I have ever known. We never once heard him say anything negative about any person or any circumstance, and it was impossible not to feel buoyed up in his presence. His good cheer flowed from an abiding trust in the Savior and in His gospel.

One cold, wintry day, another friend of mine, Tom, was walking across the university campus. It was only 7:00 in the morning, and the campus was deserted and dark. Heavy snow was falling, with a brisk wind. “What miserable weather,” Tom thought. He walked farther, and out in the darkness and snow, he heard someone singing.

Sure enough, through the driving snow came our ever-optimistic friend, Bruce. With his arms outstretched to the sky, he was singing a number from the Broadway musical *Oklahoma*: “Oh, what a beautiful morning! Oh, what a beautiful day! I’ve got a beautiful feeling, everything’s going my

way” (see Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’” [1943]).

In the intervening years, that bright voice in a dark storm has become for me a symbol of what faith and hope are all about. Even in a darkening world, we as Latter-day Saints may sing with joy, knowing that the powers of heaven are with God’s Church and people. We may rejoice in the knowledge that a beautiful morning lies ahead—the dawn of the millennial day, when the Son of God shall rise in the East and reign again on the earth.

I think also of two other beautiful mornings in the history of the world. In the spring of 1820, on the morning of a beautiful, clear day in Palmyra, New York, a young man named Joseph Smith entered a grove of trees and knelt in prayer. The answer to that prayer, the appearance of the Father and the Son, ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times and the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ to the earth.

And yet another beautiful morning dawned nearly 2,000 years ago just outside the city wall of Jerusalem. The sun no doubt shone with exceptional radiance that Easter morning. A small company of women had come to visit a garden tomb, hoping to anoint the body of their crucified Lord. Two angels met them and declared: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:5–6).

Of the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death, I bear witness. Of the merciful plan of our Eternal Father and His everlasting love, I testify. As we rise up each morning, may we look to heaven in faith and say, “Oh, what a beautiful morning,” I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



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

Redemption

Inasmuch as we follow Christ, we seek to participate in and further His redemptive work.

In colonial times, labor was in great demand in America. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, potential immigrant laborers were recruited in Great Britain, Germany, and other European countries, but many who were willing to go could not afford the cost of travel. It was not uncommon for these to travel under an indenture or contract, promising to work after their arrival for a certain period of time without wages as payment for their passage. Others came with the promise that family members already in America would pay their fare upon arrival, but if that didn't happen, the newcomers were obliged to pay their own costs through indentured service. The term used to describe these indentured immigrants was "redemptioners." They had to redeem the cost of their passage—in a sense, purchase their freedom—by their labor.¹

Among the most significant of Jesus Christ's descriptive titles is Redeemer. As indicated in my brief account of immigrant "redemptioners," the word *redeem* means to pay off an obligation or a debt. *Redeem* can also mean to rescue or set free as by paying a ransom. If someone commits a mistake and then corrects it or makes amends, we say he has redeemed himself. Each of these meanings suggests different

facets of the great Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ through His Atonement, which includes, in the words of the dictionary, "to deliver from sin and its penalties, as by a sacrifice made for the sinner."²

The Savior's Redemption has two parts. First, it atones for Adam's transgression and the consequent Fall of man by overcoming what could be called the direct effects of the Fall—physical death and spiritual death. Physical death is well understood;

spiritual death is the separation of man from God. In the words of Paul, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). This redemption from physical and spiritual death is both universal and without condition.³

The second aspect of the Savior's Atonement is redemption from what might be termed the indirect consequences of the Fall—our own sins as opposed to Adam's transgression. By virtue of the Fall, we are born into a mortal world where sin—that is, disobedience to divinely instituted law—is pervasive. Speaking of all of us, the Lord says:

"Even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.

"And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves" (Moses 6:55–56).

Because we are accountable and we make the choices, the redemption





from our own sins is conditional—conditioned on confessing and abandoning sin and turning to a godly life, or in other words, conditioned on repentance (see D&C 58:43). “Wherefore,” commands the Lord, “teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence” (Moses 6:57).

The Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane and His agony on the cross redeem us from sin by satisfying the demands that justice has upon us. He extends mercy and pardons those who repent. The Atonement also satisfies the debt justice owes to us by healing and compensating us for any suffering we innocently endure. “For behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21; see also Alma 7:11–12).⁴

Inasmuch as we follow Christ, we seek to participate in and further His redemptive work. The greatest service we can provide to others in this life, beginning with those of our own family, is to bring them to Christ through faith and repentance so they may experience His Redemption—peace and joy now and immortality

and eternal life in the world to come. The work of our missionaries is a magnificent expression of the Lord’s redeeming love. As His authorized messengers, they offer the incomparable blessings of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, opening the way to spiritual rebirth and redemption.

We can also assist in the Lord’s redemption of those beyond the grave. “The faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead” (D&C 138:57). With the benefit of vicarious rites we offer them in the temples of God, even those who died in bondage to sin can be freed.⁵

While the most important aspects of redemption have to do with repentance and forgiveness, there is a very significant temporal aspect as well. Jesus is said to have gone about doing good (see Acts 10:38), which included healing the sick and infirm, supplying food to hungry multitudes, and teaching a more excellent way. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

So may we, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, go about doing good in the redemptive pattern of the Master.

This kind of redemptive work means helping people with their problems. It means befriending the poor and the weak, alleviating suffering, righting wrongs, defending truth, strengthening the rising generation, and achieving security and happiness at home. Much of our redemptive work on earth is to help others grow and achieve their just hopes and aspirations.

An example from Victor Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables*, though fictional, has always touched and inspired me. Near the beginning of the story, Bishop Bienvenu gives food and overnight shelter to the homeless Jean Valjean, who has just been released from 19 years in prison for having stolen a loaf of bread to feed his sister’s starving children. Hardened and embittered, Valjean rewards Bishop Bienvenu’s kindness by stealing his silver goods. Later detained by suspicious gendarmes, Valjean falsely claims the silver was a gift to him. When the gendarmes drag him back to the bishop’s house, to Valjean’s great surprise, Bishop Bienvenu confirms his story and for good effect says, “‘But! I gave you the candlesticks also, which are silver like the rest, and would bring two hundred francs. Why did you not take them along with your plates?’ . . .

“The bishop approached him, and said, in a low voice:

“‘Forget not, never forget that you have promised me to use this silver to become an honest man.’

“Jean Valjean, who had no recollection of this promise, stood confounded. The bishop . . . continued, solemnly:

“‘Jean Valjean, my brother: you



belong no longer to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God!"

Jean Valjean indeed became a new man, an honest man and a benefactor to many. Throughout his life he kept the two silver candlesticks to remind him that his life had been redeemed for God.⁶

Some forms of temporal redemption come by collaborative effort. It is one of the reasons the Savior created a church. Being organized in quorums and auxiliaries and in stakes, wards, and branches, we can not only teach and encourage each other in the gospel, but we can also bring to bear people and resources to deal with the exigencies of life. People acting alone or in ad hoc groups cannot always provide means on a scale needed to address larger challenges. As followers of Jesus Christ we are a community of Saints organized to help redeem the needs of our fellow Saints and as many others as we can reach across the globe.

Because of our humanitarian efforts, mentioned by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, specifically this past year, 890,000 people in 36 countries have clean water, 70,000 people in 57 countries have wheelchairs, 75,000 people in 25 countries have improved vision, and people in 52 countries received aid following natural disasters. Acting with others, the Church has helped immunize some 8 million children and has helped Syrians in refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan with the necessities of life. At the same time, members of the Church in need received millions of dollars in fast-offering and other welfare assistance during 2012. Thank you for your generosity.

All of this does not begin to count the individual acts of kindness and support—gifts of food, clothing, money, care, and a thousand other forms of comfort and compassion—by which we may participate in the Christlike work of redemption. As a boy I witnessed my own mother's actions to redeem a woman in need. Many years ago when her children

were young, my mother underwent a serious operation that nearly took her life and left her bedridden much of the time for nearly a year. During this time, family and ward members helped Mother and our family. For additional help, the ward Relief Society president, Sister Abraham, recommended that my parents hire a woman in the ward who desperately needed work. In recounting this story, I will use the fictional names Sara and Annie for this woman and her daughter. This is my mother's account:

"I can see it as plain as if it were only yesterday. There I lay in bed, and Sister Abraham brought Sara to the bedroom door. My heart sank. There stood the least attractive person I had ever met—so thin; scraggly, unkempt hair; round-shouldered; head bowed looking at the floor. She wore an old housedress four sizes too big. She wouldn't look up and spoke so softly I couldn't hear her. Hiding behind her was a little girl about three years old. What in the world was I to do with this creature? After they left the room, I cried and cried. I needed help,



not more problems. Sister Abraham stayed awhile with her, and they soon whipped the house into shape and prepared some good meals. Sister Abraham asked me to try it for a few days, [saying] that this girl had had a really hard time and needed help.

“The next morning when Sara came, I finally got her to come over by the bed where I could hear her. She asked what I wanted her to do. I told her and then said, ‘But the most important thing is my boys; spend time with them, read to them—they are more important than the house.’ She was a good cook and kept the house clean, the washing done, and she was good to the boys.

“Through the weeks, I learned Sara’s story. [Because she was hard of hearing, she didn’t do well in school and eventually dropped out. She married young to a dissolute man. Annie was born and became the joy of Sara’s life. One winter night her husband came home drunk, forced Sara and Annie into the car in their bedclothes, and then dropped them off by the side of the highway. They never saw him again. Barefoot and freezing, Sara and Annie walked several miles to her mother’s home.] Her mother agreed to let them stay in exchange for doing all the housework and cooking, and caring for her sister and brother who were in high school.

“We took Sara to an ear doctor, and she got a hearing aid. . . . We got her to take adult schooling, and she got

her high school diploma. She went to night school and later graduated from college and taught special education. She bought a little home. Annie was married in the temple and had two children. Sara eventually had some operations on her ears and was finally able to hear well. Years later she retired and served a mission. . . . Sara thanked us often and said she learned so much from me, especially when I told her that my sons were more important than the house. She said it taught her to be that way with Annie. . . . Sara is a very special woman.”

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we ought to do all we can to redeem others from suffering and burdens. Even so, our greatest redemptive service will be to lead them to Christ. Without His Redemption from death and from sin, we have only a gospel of social justice. That may provide some help and reconciliation in the present, but it has no power to draw down from heaven perfect justice and infinite mercy. Ultimate redemption is in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. I humbly and gratefully acknowledge Him as the Redeemer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (1993), “redemption.”
2. *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (1988), “redeem.”
3. “The Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world” (Moses 6:54). By the Redemption of Christ, all overcome the grave and are resurrected to immortality. In addition, all overcome spiritual death by being brought back into the presence of God to be judged. Jesus said, “As I have been lifted up [upon the cross] by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works” (3 Nephi 27:14). Those who are cleansed from sin will remain with God in the heavenly kingdom, but those who have not repented and are

unclean cannot dwell with a holy God, and after the Judgment they must depart and thereby suffer spiritual death again. This is sometimes referred to as a second death or suffering spiritual death a second time. (See Helaman 14:15–18.)

4. It is with respect to our own sins that the scriptures speak of some not receiving the benefit of redemption: “The wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death” (Alma 11:41). “He that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” (Alma 34:16). If a man rejects the Savior’s Atonement, he must redeem his debt to justice himself. Jesus said, “For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–17). An unredeemed individual’s suffering for sin is known as hell. It means being subject to the devil and is described in scriptural metaphors as being in chains or a lake of fire and brimstone. Lehi begged his sons to choose Christ’s Redemption “and not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom” (2 Nephi 2:29). Even so, because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, hell has an end, and those who are obliged to pass through it are “redeemed from the devil [in] the last resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:85). The relatively few “sons of perdition” are “the only ones on whom the second death shall have any [lasting] power; yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:32, 37–38).
5. The Prophet Joseph Smith exulted, “Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free” (Doctrine and Covenants 128:22).
6. See Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (1992), 91–92.



Short Video Highlight

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By President Thomas S. Monson

Until We Meet Again

I pray that the Lord will bless and keep you, my brothers and sisters. May His promised peace be with you now and always.

My brothers and sisters, what a glorious conference we have had. I know you will agree with me that the messages have been inspiring. Our hearts have been touched, and our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened as we have felt the Spirit of the Lord. May we long remember what we have

heard these past two days. I urge you to study the messages further when they are printed in coming issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines.

We express our gratitude to each one who has spoken to us, as well as to those who have offered prayers. In addition, the music has been uplifting and inspiring. We love our wonderful

Tabernacle Choir and thank all others who provided music as well.

We join together in expressing our gratitude to those of the presidency and board of the general Young Women, who were released yesterday. Their service has been outstanding and their dedication complete.

We have sustained, by uplifted hands, brethren and sisters who have been called to new positions during this conference. We want all of them to know that we look forward to serving with them in the cause of the Master.

We are a worldwide Church, brothers and sisters. Our membership is found across the globe. I admonish you to be good citizens of the nations in which you live and good neighbors in your communities, reaching out to those of other faiths as well as to our own. May we be tolerant of, as well as





kind and loving to, those who do not share our beliefs and our standards. The Savior brought to this earth a message of love and goodwill to all men and women. May we ever follow His example.

I pray that we may be aware of the needs of those around us. There are some, particularly among the young, who are tragically involved in drugs, immorality, pornography, and so on. There are those who are lonely, including widows and widowers, who long for the company and concern of others. May we ever be ready to extend to them a helping hand and a loving heart.

We live at a time in the world's history when there are many difficult challenges but also great opportunities and reasons for rejoicing. There are, of course, those times when we experience disappointments, heartaches, and even tragedies in our lives. However, if we will put our trust in the Lord, He will help us through our

difficulties, whatever they may be. The Psalmist provided this assurance: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."¹

My brothers and sisters, I want you to know how grateful I am for the gospel of Jesus Christ, restored in these latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is the key to our happiness. May we be humble and prayerful, having the faith that our Heavenly Father can guide and bless us in our lives.

I bear my personal witness and testimony to you that God lives, that He hears the prayers of humble hearts. His Son, our Savior and Redeemer, speaks to each of us: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."² May we believe these words and take advantage of this promise.

As this conference now concludes, I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you. May your homes be

filled with peace, harmony, courtesy, and love. May they be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. May you nurture and nourish your testimonies of the gospel, that they will be a protection to you against the buffetings of Satan.

Until we meet again in six months, I pray that the Lord will bless and keep you, my brothers and sisters. May His promised peace be with you now and always. Thank you for your prayers in my behalf and in behalf of all of the General Authorities. We are deeply grateful for you. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, whom we serve, even Jesus Christ, the Lord, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Psalm 30:5.
2. Revelation 3:20.



Short Video Highlight

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By Ann M. Dibb

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Your Holy Places

Whether [your holy places] are geographic or moments in time, they are equally sacred and have incredible strengthening power.



Our 2013 Mutual theme comes from the 87th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. This instruction is found in three separate sections; obviously the admonition is important. It explains how we can receive protection, strength, and peace in unsettling times. The inspired instruction is to “stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”¹

As I have pondered this theme, I can’t help but wonder, “What are the ‘holy places’ Heavenly Father is referring to?” President Ezra Taft Benson counseled, “Holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are . . . ‘for a defense, and for a refuge.’”² In addition to these, I believe we can each find many more places. We might first consider the word *place* as a physical environment or a geographic location. However, a *place* can be “a distinct condition, position, or state of mind.”³ This means holy places can also include *moments in time*—moments when the Holy Ghost testifies to us, moments when we feel Heavenly Father’s love, or moments when we receive an answer to our prayers. Even more, I believe any time you have the courage to stand for what is right, especially in situations where no one else is willing to do so, you are creating a holy place.

Throughout Joseph Smith’s short but magnificent life, he truly “[stood] in holy places” and was not moved. As a young teenager, he was troubled by the religious turmoil in his community and wanted to know which of all the churches was true. The wooded area close to his home became a holy place as he knelt among the trees and offered his first vocal prayer. His prayer was answered, and today Latter-day Saints refer to these woods as the Sacred Grove.



Young women around the world stand in holy places in nature at Young Women camp. A leader shared with me the story of one young woman's experience. This girl was less active and was a bit skeptical about having a spiritual experience in the woods. After the first day, she reported to the leader, "I'm having a great time, but could we please cut out all of the talk about the Spirit? I'm here to camp, enjoy nature, be with my friends, and have some fun!" However, at the concluding testimony meeting, this same girl tearfully admitted, "I don't want to go home. How can I have what I am feeling right now, this Spirit, with me all the time?" She had discovered a holy place.

Another holy place in Joseph Smith's life was his own bedroom. This may be hard to believe because, like many of you, he shared his bedroom with siblings. It became a holy place when he prayed with great faith, humility, and need. He explained, "After I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies."⁴ The three years which had passed since Joseph had the vision in the Sacred Grove had not been easy. Seventeen-year-old Joseph had endured endless mockery, ridicule, and bullying. But that night in Joseph's bedroom, the angel Moroni appeared in answer to his pleadings. Joseph

received knowledge and comfort. That night, his bedroom became a holy place.

While watching a Mormon Message for Youth, I witnessed another bedroom that had become a holy place. The video shows Ingrid Delgado, a young woman from El Salvador, sharing her feelings about the temple. She says, "It is good to know we have a place where we can get away from the things of the world and receive sacred ordinances and help those who couldn't receive them in this life." As she speaks, the video shows Ingrid reading her scriptures, surrounded by Mormonads, quotations, a Personal Progress book, pictures of her family and the temple, and yes, her favorite stuffed animals.⁵ Perhaps without even realizing it, she has created her holy place away from the things of the world. I wonder how many times Ingrid has read her scriptures, felt the Spirit, and received answers to her prayers in her holy place.

Yet another unexpected holy place in Joseph Smith's life was Liberty Jail. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said, "There was no more burdensome time in Joseph's life than this cruel, illegal, and unjustified incarceration." Elder Holland went on to explain that Liberty Jail has been referred to as a "prison-temple" because of the sacred experiences the Prophet Joseph Smith had there.⁶

Some of you young women may

be experiencing your own Liberty Jail, a place where you face humiliation, a place where you feel no loving-kindness, a place where you are mocked, bullied, or even physically harmed. To you young women I offer Elder Holland's words: "You can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experiences with the Lord *in the most miserable experiences of your life* . . . , while enduring the most painful injustices, when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition you have ever faced."⁷ In other words, just like the Prophet Joseph Smith, *you* can create and stand in holy places even in the hardest times you have ever experienced.

A young adult, Kirsten, shared with me her painful experience. High school had been her Liberty Jail. Fortunately, the band room provided relief. She said: "When I stepped into this room, it was as if I stepped into a safe place. There were no degrading or belittling remarks, no profanity. Instead, we heard words of encouragement and love. We exercised kindness. It was a happy place. The band room was filled with the Spirit as we practiced and performed music. The room was like this in large measure because of the influence of the band instructor. He was a good Christian man. Looking back, high school was a refining place. It was difficult, but I learned resilience. I will forever be grateful for my refuge, my holy place, the band room."⁸

Tonight, have you been reflecting upon your holy places? I've asked hundreds of young women to share their holy places with me. Whether they are geographic or moments in time, they are equally sacred and have incredible strengthening power. Here are nine of their tender responses:

- One: "I was in the hospital, holding my new baby brother."
- Two: "Each time I read my patriarchal blessing, I feel I am known and loved by my Heavenly Father."
- Three: "The day I turned 12, the young women in the ward decorated my door with paper hearts.⁹ I felt loved, accepted, and happy!"
- Four: "As I was reading my scriptures one day, a phrase 'popped out.' I had found an answer to my prayers."
- Five: "I walked into a party where people were drinking and participating in other unacceptable activities. The Spirit told me to turn around and go home. I did, and yes, there were social consequences. However, that moment gave me the confidence I needed to know that I could live the gospel."
- Six: "During the sacrament, I was thinking about the Atonement. I recognized I needed to forgive someone I was angry with. My choosing to forgive was a positive action that would bring the Atonement into my daily life."
- Seven: "After attending New Beginnings with my mom, she kissed me on the cheek and told me she loved me. This was the first time I could remember her doing this."
- Eight: "With my bishop's assurance, I knew that the promise the scriptures provided was true: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.'¹⁰ I felt hope and knew I could begin my lengthy process of repentance."
- Lastly: "One evening, I summoned the courage to share my feelings about the gospel and a Book of Mormon with my best friend. Later, it was a privilege to attend her baptism. Now we attend church together."

May I share with you one of my holy places? Once, I was feeling overwhelmed, fearful, and completely alone. Silently, I prayed: "Heavenly Father, I do not know how to do this. Please, please, help me!" Soon, an individual unexpectedly came forward, placed a hand on my shoulder, and offered sincere, encouraging words. In that moment, I felt peace. I felt acknowledged. Everything had changed. The words of President Spencer W. Kimball came to mind: "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs."¹¹ For me, that moment, that place, had become holy.

Dear young women, there are countless other holy places I wish we could share with one another. When you return home tonight, I encourage you to record in your journal those places which you are recognizing and remembering. It is clear to me that thousands of *you* are standing in holy places. These places are providing you with protection, strength, and peace in unsettling times. Your testimonies are becoming stronger because you are standing for truth and righteousness in *glorious* ways.

You, the noble youth of the Church, are my heroes. I love you. I feel Heavenly Father's incredible love for you, and I bear you my testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. He is waiting, ready to buoy you up as you "stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved." I love and sustain President Thomas S. Monson, our true and encouraging prophet. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8; see also Doctrine and Covenants 45:32; 101:22.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, "Prepare Yourself for the Great Day of the Lord," *New Era*, May 1982, 50; see also Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
3. Merriam-Webster Online, "place," merriam-webster.com/dictionary/place.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:29.
5. See "Practice, Celebration, Dedication: Temple Blessings in El Salvador," lds.org/youth/video.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lessons from Liberty Jail," *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 26, 28.
7. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lessons from Liberty Jail," 28.
8. Personal conversation with author.
9. Sometimes referred to in the United States as a "heart attack."
10. Isaiah 1:18.
11. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Abundant Life," *Ensign*, July 1978, 4; *Tambuli*, June 1979, 3.



San Salvador, El Salvador



By Mary N. Cook

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

When You Save a Girl, You Save Generations

Your virtuous lives will bless your ancestors, your families now, and family members yet to come.

It is an honor for me to address the valiant young women of the Church. We see you progressing on the path of those who honor their covenants, and we know your virtuous lives will bless your ancestors, your families now, and family members yet to come, for as President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, “When you save a girl, you save generations.”¹

Your covenant path began at the time when you were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It continues weekly in sacrament meeting, a holy place where you renew your baptismal covenant. Now is the time for you to prepare to make temple covenants. The “sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for [us] to return to the presence of God and for [our] families to be united eternally.”²

Stand in holy places for your ancestors. “Every human being who comes to this earth is the product of generations of parents. We have a natural yearning to connect with our ancestors.”³ As you participate in family history and temple work, you weave

your life with the lives of your ancestors by providing saving ordinances for them.

Stand in holy places for yourself and your immediate family. Your righteous example will be a source of great joy, regardless of your family circumstances. Your righteous choices will qualify you to make and keep sacred covenants that will bind your family together eternally.

Stand in holy places for your future family. Commit to being sealed to your husband by the holy priesthood in the temple as you begin an eternal family unit. Your children will be blessed with truth as you weave your virtuous example and unshakable testimony into their lives and show them the way on the covenant path.

I saw these eternal principles displayed at the recent International Art Competition for Youth. Megan Warner Taylor digitally composed a work of photography, taking a modern approach to Christ’s parable of the ten virgins.⁴ I met Megan, and she explained the symbolism of the tenth virgin, whom she described as a young woman of virtue and faith,

prepared to make and keep sacred temple covenants. As with all the wise virgins, her individual preparation came as she added oil to her lamp, one drop at a time, by consistent righteous living. I noted the beautiful braid in her hair. Megan explained that the braid represented the weaving of this young woman’s virtuous life into countless generations. One strand represented the weaving of her love and respect for her ancestors, the second the weaving of her righteous influence upon her current family, and the third strand the weaving of her prepared life into the lives of generations to come.

I met another young woman whose early spiritual preparation has woven a life of righteousness into many generations.

On a beautiful September afternoon, my husband and I were in the temple awaiting the opportunity to participate in temple ordinances. Chris, a friend of ours, entered the room. It was great to see this young man, who had recently returned from a mission to Russia.

As the session was about to begin, a lovely young woman sat next to me. She was radiant, smiling, and filled with light. I wanted to know her, so I quietly introduced myself. She whispered her name, Kate, and I recognized her last name as a family that had lived in Michigan, where my family once lived. Kate was their grown-up daughter, who five weeks earlier had returned from her mission to Germany.

During the session the thought kept entering my mind: “Introduce Kate to Chris.” I put this prompting aside, thinking, “When, where, how?” As we were preparing to leave, Chris came over to tell us good-bye and I seized the opportunity. I pulled Kate over



Queen Creek, Arizona, USA

and whispered, “You are two virtuous young people who need to know each other.” I left the temple satisfied that I had acted upon my prompting.

On the way home, my husband and I discussed our recollections of the challenges that had come to Kate’s family. I have since come to know Kate better, and she has helped me understand the reasons for the joyful countenance I observed in the temple that day.

Kate has always tried to stay on her covenant path by seeking holy places. She was raised in a home where having family home evening, praying together, and studying the scriptures made her home a holy place. As a child, she learned about the temple, and the song “I Love to See the Temple” was a favorite for family home evening.⁵ As a little girl, she watched her parents set an example of seeking a holy place as they went to the temple on a weekend evening instead of going to a movie or to dinner.

She loved her father dearly, and he used his priesthood authority to help her make her first covenant of baptism. She then had hands laid on her head and received the Holy Ghost. Kate said, “I was excited to receive the Holy Ghost, and I knew that it would help me stay on the path to eternal life.”

Life continued on for Kate in a very blessed and happy way. When she was 14, she started high school and loved seminary, another holy place to learn about the gospel. One day her teacher started to talk about trials and guaranteed that we would all face them. She said to herself, “I don’t want trials; I don’t want to hear this.”

It was just a few weeks later that her father woke up on Easter Sunday extremely ill. Kate said: “My father was a very healthy person; he was a marathon runner. My mother was so alarmed by how sick he was that she took him to the hospital. Within 36 hours he had a massive stroke that shut down most of his body. He could blink, but the rest of his body was not

working. I remember seeing him and thinking, ‘Oh no, it’s happening. My seminary teacher was right. I am having a trial.’” Within a few days Kate’s father passed away.

Continuing, Kate said: “It was so hard. You never want to lose the hero of your life. I knew I could make it a springboard for growth or allow it to be a roadblock. I didn’t want to let it ruin my life, because I was only 14 years old. I tried to be as close to the Lord as possible. I read my scriptures a lot. Alma chapter 40 assured me that the resurrection is real and through Christ’s Atonement, I could be with my father again. I prayed a lot. I wrote in my journal as often as I could. I kept my testimony vibrant by writing it down. I went to church and to Young Women every week. I surrounded myself with good friends. I kept close to caring relatives and especially to my mom, who was the anchor in our family. I sought out priesthood blessings from my grandfather and other priesthood holders.”



These consistent choices, like those of the wise virgin, added oil to Kate's lamp. She was motivated by her desire to be with her father again. Kate knew her father was aware of her choices, and she did not want to disappoint him. She wanted an eternal relationship with him, and she understood that staying on her covenant path would keep her life woven tightly with his.

The trials didn't end, however. When Kate was 21 and submitting her mission papers, her mother was diagnosed with cancer. Kate had to make an important decision in her life. Should she stay home and support her mother or go on her mission? Her mother was given a priesthood blessing promising that she would survive the illness. Assured by this blessing, Kate went forward with faith and continued her plans to serve a mission.

Kate said: "It was taking a step in the dark, but while I was on my mission, the light eventually came and I

received news that my mother's blessing was realized. I was so glad that I didn't put off serving the Lord. When hard things come, I think it's easy to become stagnant and not really want to move forward, but if you put the Lord first, the adversities can lead to beautiful blessings. You can see His hand and witness miracles." Kate experienced the reality of President Thomas S. Monson's words: "Our most significant opportunities will be found in times of greatest difficulty."⁶

Kate had this kind of faith because she understood the plan of salvation. She knew we lived before, that earth is a time of testing, and that we will live again. She had faith that her mother would be blessed, but from her experience with her father, she knew that if her mother were to pass away, it would be all right. She said: "I didn't just survive my dad's death; it became part of my identity for good, and had my mom been taken away, it would have done the same thing. It would have woven a greater testimony into my life."⁷

Kate was seeking a holy place the night I met her in the temple. Desiring to weave tightly the eternal relationships that come through temple service, she followed the pattern set by her parents of regular temple attendance.

Not much happened the night I introduced Kate to Chris, but in seeking another holy place the following Sunday, Kate saw Chris amid hundreds of young single adults at an institute devotional. There they found out more about each other. A few weeks later, Chris invited her to watch general conference with him. They continued seeking places that invited the Spirit throughout their courtship and were eventually sealed in the temple, the holy place where they were introduced. Both are now fulfilling the sacred responsibility of parenthood, weaving their testimonies of the plan of salvation into the lives of three little boys, showing them the way on the covenant path.

"When you save a girl, you save

generations.” Kate’s decision as a 14-year-old to stay on the path, to consistently add oil to her lamp, and to stand in holy places *has* and *will* save generations. Seeking out her ancestors and serving in the temple have woven her heart with theirs. Participating in family history and temple work will likewise weave your hearts together and give your ancestors the opportunity of eternal life.

Living the gospel in your home will also add oil to your lamp and weave spiritual strength into your home now and bless your future family in countless ways. And furthermore, as Elder Robert D. Hales has said, “If the example we have received from our parents was not good, it is our responsibility to break the cycle . . . and teach correct traditions for the generations that follow.”⁸

Decide now to do all you can to fill your lamps, that your strong testimony and example may be woven into the lives of many generations—past, present, and future. I testify that your virtuous life will not only save generations, but it will also save *your* eternal life, for it is the only way to return to our Father in Heaven and find true joy now and throughout eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, “Our Responsibility to Our Young Women,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 10.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Generations Linked in Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 92.
4. See Matthew 25:1–13.
5. See “I Love to See the Temple,” *Children’s Songbook*, 95.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Meeting Your Goliath,” *New Era*, June 2008, 7.
7. Personal interview with author, 2013.
8. Robert D. Hales, “How Will Our Children Remember Us?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 10.



By Elaine S. Dalton

Young Women General President

Be Not Moved!

Stand firm. Be steadfast. “Stand for truth and righteousness.” Stand as a witness. Be a standard to the world. Stand in holy places.

Tonight I stand in a holy place at this pulpit, in the presence of prophets, seers, and revelators and royal daughters of God. This is a magnificent time to be on the earth and to be a young woman. You are the elect daughters of our Father in Heaven. I hope you sense your identity and how beloved you are of our Father in Heaven. He loves each of you, and I do too.

On the desk in my office, I have a bronze replica of a sculpture of a young woman whose name is Kristina. The original life-sized sculpture of Kristina stands on a pier in Copenhagen, Denmark, positioned so that she is looking out over the sea

toward Zion. Her decision to join the Church and leave her home was not an easy one, and you can see that the opposing winds are blowing fiercely against her. She is standing firm, doing a very hard thing but one she knows to be right. Her descendants placed this sculpture there on that pier as a tribute to Kristina, for her decision that day had eternal significance for generations.

For me this sculpture of Kristina represents each one of you. Like Kristina, you are standing on the edge of many important decisions and making choices daily, some of them difficult, that will shape not only your future but also the destiny of generations. You too are facing gale-force winds of opposition, adversity, peer pressure, and moral pollution. And yet you are standing immovable and living the gospel in the face of these raging storms in our society. Like Kristina, you are led by the Holy Ghost. You are making correct decisions. You are loyal, and you are royal.

I can think of no more important counsel from a loving Heavenly Father than His admonition for each of you to “stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved.”¹ He is saying: Stand firm.



Be steadfast.² “Stand for truth and righteousness.”³ Stand as a witness.⁴ Be a standard to the world. Stand in holy places. And so my message to each of you is a simple one: Be not moved.

First, be not moved in choosing right. In these latter days, there are no small decisions. The choices you are making right now are of critical importance. Agency, or the ability to choose, is one of God’s greatest gifts to His

children. It is part of the plan of happiness you and I chose and defended in our premortal existence. Live your lives in such a way that you can listen to and hear the Holy Ghost, and He will help you make correct decisions. In fact, He will tell you “all things what ye should do.”⁵

Several weeks ago I returned to my old high school for the first time in years. I was visiting a stake conference

that was being held in the school’s auditorium. As I walked down the halls, a flood of memories began to pour into my mind. I remembered exactly how I felt when I attended high school as a young woman—insecure, unsure of myself, self-conscious, and so, so desirous to fit in. I went into the auditorium. Again a flood of memories came to mind. I was familiar with every detail of that auditorium. Only one thing had changed—me.

That day I had the opportunity to stand on the stage as I had done in high school many times as a student officer. I even saw some of my former classmates in the audience—some I had dated! But this time, instead of conducting an assembly, I had the privilege—there in my high school auditorium—to “stand as a witness”⁶ and bear my testimony of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Young women, make sure your relationships with others are such that 40 years from now, you will not be embarrassed. No amount of peer pressure, no acceptance, no popularity is worth a compromise. Your influence on the young men will help them remain worthy of their priesthood power, of temple covenants, and of serving a mission. And who knows? Forty years from now, you may even have one of them walk up to you, there in your high school auditorium, and thank you for helping him remain worthy to fulfill his priesthood duty to serve an honorable mission. And who knows? You may even receive a letter from one of those young men’s wives, thanking *you* for the influence you had on her husband and their future family clear back in your high school days. Your choices matter. Your choices now not only affect you, but they also affect others. They are of eternal significance. Be not moved!





Second, be not moved in your desire and commitment to remain virtuous and sexually pure. Cherish virtue.

Your personal purity is one of your greatest sources of power. When you came to the earth, you were given the precious gift of a body. Your body is the instrument of your mind and a divine gift with which you exercise your agency. This is a gift that Satan was denied, and thus he directs nearly all of his attacks on your body. He wants you to disdain, misuse, and abuse your body. Immodesty, pornography, immorality, tattoos and piercings, drug abuse, and addictions of all kinds are all efforts to take possession of this precious gift—your body—and to make it difficult for you to exercise your agency. Paul asks, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”⁷

Your body is a temple. Why? Because it has the capacity to house not only your eternal spirit but also the eternal spirits of others who will come to the earth as part of your eternal family. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “The power to create mortal life is [an] exalted power.”⁸ Your role is an exalted role. God has given you a sacred trust! You are preparing

to be future mothers of generations to come. Keep yourselves pure and worthy, and guard that which is “most dear and precious above all”—your virtue and chastity.⁹ Heavenly Father’s wise counsel to you personally, His elect daughters, is to “walk . . . the paths of virtue.”¹⁰

Virtue is the golden key to the temple. *So, third, be not moved in being worthy to make and keep sacred covenants.* The covenant you make at baptism will tether you to the path of virtue and happiness as you renew that covenant each week by partaking of the sacrament. As you keep your baptismal covenant, you will look different, dress different, and act different from the world. Keeping this covenant will enable you to be guided by the Holy Ghost. Stand in holy places, and do not even go near those environments or music, media, or associations that might cause you to lose the companionship of the Holy Ghost.¹¹ And as you keep your covenants, you will remain worthy and prepared to enter the Lord’s holy temples.

Last, be not moved in your acceptance of the Savior’s Atonement. The Atonement is for you and for me. It is an enabling and a redeeming power.

If you are not feeling worthy to stand in holy places, do not carry this burden one day longer. In mortality, we will all make mistakes. Be assured that the Savior loves you so much that He made it possible for you to change and to repent if you make a mistake. Satan does not want you to think you can change.¹² He will try to convince you that all is lost. That is a lie. You can return. You can repent. You can be pure and holy because of the Savior’s infinite Atonement.

Now let me close with one of the greatest love stories ever told. You might ask, “What does a love story have to do with standing in holy places?” It has everything to do with standing in holy places. This is the story of a young woman named Rebekah.¹³

As this story unfolds, Abraham charges his servant with finding a worthy young woman to be his son Isaac’s wife. She must be one who qualifies for a covenant marriage—virtuous and pure and worthy. And so he sends his servant on a long and dangerous journey to a place called Haran. The reason he must go there is clear—holy men need holy women to stand by their sides. As the servant approached the city of Nahor, he stopped at a well



Brasília, Brazil

to water his camels and he prayed that he would be led to the right young woman and that he would recognize her by her offer to get water for him and his 10 camels. Now, I have ridden a camel, and this much I know—camels drink a *lot* of water!

In Genesis we read that Rebekah not only went down to the well and got water, but she “hasted,”¹⁴ or hurried, to accomplish this task. The servant then placed bracelets and jewelry on Rebekah and asked if there was room in her father’s home for him to stay. I am sure the jewelry helped! The scripture reads, “And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother’s house these things.”¹⁵ Rebekah must have been a runner!

The servant told Rebekah’s family the purpose of his long journey, and Rebekah agreed to become Isaac’s wife. The servant desired to leave the very next day with Rebekah, but her family entreated her to stay with them at least 10 more days. Then they asked Rebekah what she wanted to do, and her response was simply “I will go.”¹⁶ Does that response sound familiar to the response of thousands who

resolutely responded, “I will go; I will do”¹⁷ when our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, announced the opportunity for young men and young women to serve missions at a younger age?

Now the moral and ending of this love story: Rebekah was prepared and worthy to make and keep sacred covenants and to become a covenant wife of Isaac. She did not have to wait and prepare herself. Prior to her departure from her family, she was given a blessing, and the words are stirring to me, for she was promised that she would become “the mother of thousands of millions.”¹⁸ But the best part of this love story is when Rebekah first saw Isaac and he first saw her. It doesn’t say this in the Bible, but I think it was love at first sight! For “virtue loveth virtue; [and] light cleaveth unto light.”¹⁹ When Isaac went out to meet the caravan, Rebekah “lighted off [her] camel.”²⁰ And then it says, “And he loved her.”²¹ This is where I sigh!

For both Rebekah and Kristina, standing in holy places was not easy. Being not moved was not easy. The

winds blew fiercely, the water from the well was heavy, and departing from their familiar homes and former lives certainly was not easy. But they made correct choices. They were guided by the Holy Ghost. They were virtuous, and they prepared themselves to make and keep sacred covenants. The Savior descended through Rebekah’s lineage. Did she know then that this would happen? No! Do your choices now matter? Yes!

Young women, generations are depending on the choices you make, your purity, and your worthy lives. Be not moved. You have a great destiny before you. This is your moment! I truly believe that one virtuous young woman, led by the Spirit, can change the world!

I testify that the Savior lives! He will be with you. He will enable you. And in difficult moments, His “angels [will be] round about you, to bear you up.”²² In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
2. See Mosiah 5:15.
3. Young Women motto, in *Young Women Personal Progress* (booklet, 2009), 2.
4. See Mosiah 18:9.
5. 2 Nephi 32:5.
6. See Mosiah 18:9.
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
8. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 74.
9. Moroni 9:9.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 25:2.
11. See 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22; Doctrine and Covenants 9:13.
12. See *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 28–29.
13. See Genesis 24.
14. Genesis 24:20.
15. Genesis 24:28.
16. Genesis 24:58.
17. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
18. Genesis 24:60.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 88:40.
20. Genesis 24:64.
21. Genesis 24:67.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.



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

Your Wonderful Journey Home

As you joyfully use the map your loving Father has provided for your journey, it will lead you to holy places and you will rise to your supernal potential.

We are honored this evening with the presence of President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. President, we always pray for you.

My dear sisters, thank you for the music and the spoken word. All was so inspiring and so fitting for Easter, the sacred season we celebrate this week.

It is a joy to be with you precious young sisters, together with your mothers and your wonderful leaders. You have radiant spirits and contagious smiles. Surely the Lord is mindful of you and looks lovingly from heaven upon you.

I grew up in Zwickau, in the former East Germany. When I was about 11 years old, my father fell under increased scrutiny as a political dissenter, and my parents felt that the only safe choice for our family would be to flee to West Germany. It was decided that the safest plan was to leave at different times and follow different routes to the West, leaving all our belongings behind.

Since my father was at greatest risk, he took the quickest journey, through

Berlin. My older brothers headed north, and each found his own way west. My sister—who would have been the age of many of you here today—together with Helga Fassmann, her teacher in Young Women, and some others took a train that passed briefly through West Germany. They paid a porter to unlock one of the doors for them, and after the train crossed the West German border, they jumped from the moving train to freedom. How I admired my sister for her courage.

I was the youngest child, and my mother decided that she and I would walk across a mountain range separating the two countries. I remember that she packed a lunch as if we were going for a hike or a picnic in the mountains.

We took a train as far as we could and then walked for long hours, getting ever closer to the West German border. The borders were tightly controlled, but we had a map and knew of a time and a place where it might be safe to cross. I could sense my mother's anxiety. She observed the area intensely to see if we were being followed. With each step, her legs and knees seemed to become weaker. I helped carry her heavy bag filled with food, vital documents, and family photos as we climbed up one last, long hill. Surely, she thought, we had passed the border by now. When she finally felt safe, we sat down and started to eat our picnic lunch. For the first time that day, I'm sure, she breathed more easily.

It was only then that we noticed the border sign. It was still far ahead of us! We were having our picnic on the wrong side of the border. We were still in East Germany!



Sobral, Brazil



Border guards could show up any moment!

My mother frantically packed up our lunch, and we hurried up the hillside as quickly as we could. This time we didn't dare stop until we knew with certainty that we had reached the other side of the border.

Even though each member of our family had taken very different routes and experienced very different hardships along the way, eventually all of us made it to safety. We were finally reunited as a family. What a glorious day that was!

Journey Stories

What I have just told you is an experience that is to me a very precious journey. I can now look back on my life and recognize a number of such "journeys" I have taken over time. Not all of them involved crossing mountain ranges or political boundaries; some had more to do with overcoming trials or growing in spirituality. But they were all journeys. I believe that every life is a collection of individual "journey stories."

I am sure you are aware that every cultural tradition is rich with journey stories. For instance, you may be familiar with the journey of Dorothy

and her dog, Toto, in *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy and Toto are swept up in a tornado and deposited in the Land of Oz. There, Dorothy finds that distinctive, yellow-brick road that marks the path for a journey that eventually leads her home.

Then there is Charles Dickens's Ebenezer Scrooge, whose journey takes him not from place to place but from time to time. It's a journey right within his own heart that helped him to understand why he became the way he was and to see what would happen to him if he continued on his path of selfishness and ingratitude.¹

One of the great classical novels of Chinese literature is *Journey to the West*. Written in the 16th century, it tells beautifully the adventure story and pilgrimage of a monk who, with the help of four friendly characters, journeys toward spiritual enlightenment.

And of course there is Bilbo Baggins, the small, unassuming hobbit who would have very much preferred to stay home and eat his soup. But after a knock at his door, he follows the call of the great unknown and steps out into the world, together with a wizard and a band of dwarfs, to fulfill a dangerous but vitally important mission.²

A Universal Story

Don't we love these journey stories because we can see ourselves in the travelers? Their successes and failures can help us find our own way through life. The video we saw a few minutes ago also tells a beautiful journey story. Perhaps these stories also remind us of a journey we all should be familiar with—a journey story in which each one of us plays an important part.

This story begins a very long time ago, long before the earth began spinning in its orbit, long before the sun began to reach its fiery arms into the cold of space, long before creatures great and small had populated our planet. At the beginning of this story, you lived in a faraway, beautiful place.

We do not know many details about life in that premortal sphere, but we do know some. Our Heavenly Father has revealed to us who He is, who we are, and who we can become.

Back in that first estate, you knew with absolute certainty that God existed because you saw and heard Him. You knew Jesus Christ, who would become the Lamb of God. You had faith in Him. And you knew that your destiny was not to stay in the security of your premortal home. As much as you loved that eternal sphere, you knew you wanted and needed to embark on a journey. You would depart from the arms of your Father, pass through a veil of forgetfulness, receive a mortal body, and learn and experience things that hopefully would help you grow to become more like Father in Heaven and return to His presence.

In that sacred place, surrounded by those you knew and loved, the great question on your lips and in your heart must have been "Will I return safely to my heavenly home?"



Copenhagen, Denmark

There were so many things that would be out of your control. Mortal life would be hard at times, filled with unexpected bends in the road: sickness, heartbreak, accidents, conflict.

Without a memory of your previous existence—without remembering that you once walked with your Father in Heaven—would you still recognize His voice amid all the noise and distractions of mortal life?

The journey ahead seemed so long and uncertain—so filled with risk.

It wouldn't be easy, but you knew it was worth every effort.

So, there you stood on the edge of eternity, looking forward with unspeakable excitement and hope—and, I imagine, also with a degree of worry and fear.

In the end, you knew God would be just—that His goodness would triumph. You had participated in the great heavenly councils and knew that your Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, would provide a way for you to be cleansed from sin and rescued from physical death. You had faith that, in the end, you would rejoice and join your voice with a heavenly chorus singing praises to His holy name.

And so, you took a deep breath . . .
And a great step forward . . .
And here you are!

You have, each one of you, embarked on your own wonderful journey back to your heavenly home!

Your Map

Now that you are here on earth, it might be wise to ask yourself how your journey is going. Are you on the right course? Are you becoming the person you were designed to be and wanted to become? Are you making choices that will help you to return to your Father in Heaven?

He didn't send you on this journey only to wander aimlessly on your own. He wants you to come home to Him. He has given you loving parents and faithful Church leaders, along with a map that describes the terrain and identifies the dangers; the map shows you where peace and happiness can be found and will help you plot your course back home.

Now, where do you find this map?

- In the sacred scriptures.
- In the words of prophets and apostles.

- And through personal revelation from the Holy Ghost.

This map is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news, and the joyful way of a disciple of Christ. It is the commandments and example given to us by our Advocate and Mentor, who knows the way because He *is* the way.³

Of course, simply having a map doesn't do any good unless you study it—unless you use it to navigate through life. I invite you to make it a high priority to study and apply God's word. Open your heart to the Holy Ghost so that He can direct you along your journey through life.

Your map is full of encouraging and instructive messages from your Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Today I would like to share with you three of those messages that will help you to have a successful journey back to your heavenly home.

The first message: “Do not fear, for I the Lord am with you.”⁴

You are not alone on this journey. Your Heavenly Father knows you. Even when no one else hears you, He hears you. When you rejoice in

righteousness, He rejoices with you. When you are beset with trial, He grieves with you.

Heavenly Father's interest in you does not depend on how rich or beautiful or healthy or smart you are. He sees you not as the world sees you; He sees who you really are. He looks on your heart.⁵ And He loves you⁶ because you are His child.

Dear sisters, seek Him earnestly, and you will find Him.⁷

I promise you, you are not alone.

Now, take a moment right now and look at the people around you. Some may be your leaders, friends, or family members. Others you may have never met before. Nevertheless, everyone you see around you—in this meeting or at any other place, today or at any other time—was valiant in the premortal world. That unassuming and ordinary-looking person sitting next to you may have been one of the great figures you loved and admired in the sphere of spirits. You may have been

such a role model yourself!

Of one thing you can be certain: every person you see—no matter the race, religion, political beliefs, body type, or appearance—is family. The young woman you look at has the same Heavenly Father as you, and she left His loving presence just as you did, eager to come to this earth and live so that she could one day return to Him.

However, she might feel alone, just as you sometimes do. She may even occasionally forget the purpose of her journey. Please remind her through your words and your actions that she is not alone. We are here to help each other.

Life can be difficult, and it can harden hearts to the point where certain people seem unreachable. Some may be filled with anger. Others may mock and ridicule those who believe in a loving God. But consider this: though they do not remember, they too at one time yearned to return to their Father in Heaven.



Sydney, Australia

It is not your responsibility to convert anyone. That is the work of the Holy Ghost. Your task is to share your beliefs and to not be afraid. Be a friend to all, but never compromise your standards. Stand true to your convictions and faith. Stand tall, because you are a daughter of God, and He stands with you!

The second message: “Love one another, as I have loved you.”⁸

Have you ever wondered what language we all spoke when we lived in the presence of God? I have strong suspicions that it was German, though I suppose no one knows for sure. But I do know that in our premortal life we learned firsthand, from the Father of our spirits, a universal language—one that has the power to overcome emotional, physical, and spiritual barriers.

That language is the pure love of Jesus Christ.

It is the most powerful language in the world.

The love of Christ is not a pretend love. It is not a greeting-card love. It is not the kind of love that is praised in popular music and movies.

This love brings about real change of character. It can penetrate hatred and dissolve envy. It can heal resentment and quench the fires of bitterness. It can work miracles.

We received our “first lessons”⁹ in this language of love as spirits in God's presence, and here on earth we have opportunities to practice it and become fluent. You can know if you are learning this language of love by evaluating what motivates your thoughts and actions.

When your primary thoughts are focused on how things will benefit you, your motivations may be selfish and shallow. That is not the language you want to learn.



But when your primary thoughts and behaviors are focused on serving God and others—when you truly desire to bless and lift up those around you—then the power of the pure love of Christ can work in your heart and life. That is the language you want to learn.

As you become fluent in this language and use it in your interactions with others, they will recognize something in you that may awaken in them a long-hidden feeling to search for the right way on the journey back to their heavenly home. After all, the language of love is their true native language too.

This deep and abiding influence is a language that reaches to the very soul. It is a language of understanding, a language of service, a language of lifting and rejoicing and comforting.

Learn to use the universal language of Christ's love.

And the third message: “Be of good cheer.”¹⁰

Sometimes we become impatient with where we are in our journey, don't we? If you are 12 years old, you might wish you were 14. At 14, you might wish you were 18. And at 18, occasionally you might even wish

you were 12 again and could start all over.

There will always be things to complain about—things that don't seem to go quite right. You can spend your days feeling sad, alone, misunderstood, or unwanted. But that isn't the journey you had hoped for, and it's not the journey Heavenly Father sent you to take. Remember, you are truly a daughter of God!

With this in mind, I invite you to walk confidently and joyfully. Yes, the road has bumps and detours and even some hazards. But don't focus on them. Look for the happiness your Father in Heaven has prepared for you in every step of your journey. Happiness is the destination, but it's also the path. “Peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” is what He promises.¹¹ That is why He commands us to “be of good cheer.”

As you joyfully use the map your loving Father has provided for your journey, it will lead you to holy places and you will rise to your supernal potential. You will grow into the daughter of God you hoped you would become.

Dear sisters, dear young women of the Church, dear young friends, as

an Apostle of the Lord I leave you a blessing that you will find your way on this journey home and that you will be an inspiration to your fellow travelers. It is also my promise and prayer that as you honor and live true to the covenants, the principles, and the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ, at the end of your journey Heavenly Father will be there. He will embrace you, and you will know once and for all that you have made it home safely. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*.
2. See J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*.
3. See John 14:6.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6; see also Isaiah 41:10; John 14:18.
5. See 1 Samuel 16:7.
6. See 1 Peter 5:6–7.
7. See Jeremiah 29:13.
8. John 15:12; see also John 13:34; Moroni 7:45–48.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 138:56.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 78:18; see also John 16:33; 3 Nephi 1:13.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.



Short Video Highlight

Scan this QR code or visit lds.org/go/Apr13conf21 to watch or share a short video clip of this message.

Making Conference Part of Our Lives

Consider using some of these activities and questions as a starting point for family discussion or personal pondering.

The page numbers listed with the idea indicate the first page of the talk.

For Children

- President Thomas S. Monson spoke about the importance of obedience and how disobedience always brings consequences (page 89).



Think about a time you obeyed family rules. What about a time when you obeyed God's rules? How did being obedient make you feel?

- Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told the story of a little girl who planted a tomato from a small seed (page 18). Read or retell this story as a family and talk about what it teaches about how you can become like Heavenly Father. You could set a goal to do one thing to grow closer to Heavenly Father.
- Elder Enrique R. Falabella of the Seventy spoke about what makes families strong (page 102). He taught that some of the most important words to use with your family are "I love you," "Thank you very much," and "Forgive me." Sister Rosemary M. Wixom, Primary general president, suggested saying, "I love everything about you" (page 81). See what happens when you use these words with your family. Does it make them happy? How do you feel?

For Youth

- President Thomas S. Monson taught four principles for preparing to do missionary work—not just as

a full-time missionary but also as a Church member (page 66). You could study his talk with this question in mind: What can I do to be a better missionary now?

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that it's OK to have doubts and questions, but he also taught: "Hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes. . . . Be true to the faith you *do* have" (page 93). Consider writing in your journal your beliefs, testimony, and some spiritual experiences you have had. Also write down questions you have and keep them so that as you read the scriptures and this issue, you can look for answers.
- Many speakers talked about obedience and its blessings. For example, President Monson taught, "A knowledge of truth and the



answers to our greatest questions come to us as we are obedient to the commandments of God” (page 89). Consider searching this issue to highlight or write down the many blessings of obedience. Identifying these blessings can inspire you to continue to live righteously.

- Several speakers taught that you can serve anytime, not just during service projects. “Minister every day,” taught Brother David L. Beck, Young Men general president. “Opportunities are all around you.” In Brother Beck’s talk, you can read some examples of youth serving others (page 55).

For Adults

- Many of the speakers testified of Jesus Christ. What can you learn about His divine character, mission, and ministry from the talks on pages 22, 70, 96, 99, and 109?



- May’s youth curriculum topic is on prophets and revelation. If you teach youth at church or have teenage children, you could discuss with them the curriculum and this question: Why is it important to listen to and follow the living prophets? Consider studying this issue to identify prophecies and warnings that, if heeded, will help us thrive in troubled times.

- Several speakers focused on strengthening the family. For example, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “When [the Savior] is the center of your home, there is peace and serenity” (page 29). Look for ways to make the Savior the center of your home as you study Elder Scott’s talk as well as the talks on pages 6, 81, 83, and 102. ■



TEACHING FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Consider studying these scriptures, which were quoted or referred to several times in general conference:

1 Samuel 16:7*
Matthew 7:24; 28:19
John 13:34–35; 14:6; 16:33
Mosiah 3:19*; 18:8–9
Helaman 5:12*
3 Nephi 11:7

Moroni 9:9
Doctrine and Covenants 42:22;
59:23; 64:34; 84:88; 87:8;
115:6
Joseph Smith—History 1:17*
* Seminary scripture-mastery verses

Conference Story Index

The following list of selected experiences from general conference can be used in personal study, family home evening, and other teaching. The number refers to the first page of the talk.

SPEAKER	STORY
Elder Neil L. Andersen	(77) Couples in Mozambique follow the Savior instead of their traditions.
Elder M. Russell Ballard	(18) A seven-year-old granddaughter revives a wilted tomato plant.
David L. Beck	(55) Aaronic Priesthood holders befriend a young woman who faces bullying. A deacon in Bangalore, India, helps activate all the young men in his branch.
Elder Tad R. Callister	(52) Seventeen-year-old George F. Richards learns of priesthood power by giving his mother a blessing.
Elder D. Todd Christofferson	(109) The mother of D. Todd Christofferson helps a young woman in need to reach her potential.
Mary N. Cook	(118) A young woman faces her father's death and her mother's battle with cancer by exercising faith.
Elder Quentin L. Cook	(32) A Hindu woman feels peace during the open house of the Suva Fiji Temple.
Bishop Dean M. Davies	(9) The Loma Prieta, California, USA, earthquake in 1989 reaffirms in the mind and heart of Dean M. Davies the importance of building our lives on a firm foundation.
Ann M. Dibb	(115) A less-active young woman feels the Spirit during Young Women camp.
President Henry B. Eyring	(62) An orphan boy becomes the first member of the Church in a city of 130,000. While serving in New Mexico, USA, and in New England, USA, Henry B. Eyring sees God's hand in building His kingdom.
Elder Enrique R. Falabella	(102) Church members in Arizona, USA, give Enrique R. Falabella and his wife money so they can return to Guatemala following their temple marriage.
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland	(93) Jeffrey R. Holland tells a 14-year-old boy he need never apologize for "only believing."
President Thomas S. Monson	(66) A man in Canada investigates and joins the Church after two full-time missionaries bear powerful testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. By expressing love in his weekly letters, a full-time missionary brings his father into the Church. (89) Eight-year-old Thomas S. Monson learns obedience after lighting a field on fire. A faithful Church member in Hungary saves his tithing for years until he can give it to his home teachers.
Elder Richard G. Scott	(29) A full-time missionary wants to pattern his future family after his mission president's family.
President Dieter F. Uchtdorf	(70) West African Saints begin singing hymns after the electrical power goes out in their meetinghouse. The gospel helps a young woman overcome the darkness of an abusive upbringing. (125) Dieter F. Uchtdorf and members of his family flee from East Germany.

Teachings for Our Time

Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays will be devoted to “Teachings for Our Time.” Each lesson can be prepared from one or more talks given in the most recent general conference (see chart below). Stake and district presidents may choose which talks should be used, or they may assign this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents. Leaders emphasize the value of Melchizedek Priesthood brethren and Relief Society sisters studying the same talks on the same Sundays.

Those attending fourth-Sunday lessons are encouraged to study and bring to class the latest general conference issue of the magazine.

Suggestions for Preparing a Lesson from Talks

Pray that the Holy Spirit will be with you as you study and teach the talk(s).

You may be tempted to prepare the lesson using other materials, but the conference talks are the approved curriculum. Your assignment is to help others learn and live the gospel as taught in the most recent general conference of the Church.

Review the talk(s), looking for principles and doctrines that meet the needs of class members. Also look for stories, scripture references, and statements from the talk(s) that will help you teach these truths.

Make an outline of how to teach the principles and doctrines. Consider including questions that help class members:

- Look for principles and doctrines in the talk(s).
- Think about their meaning.
- Share understanding, ideas, experiences, and testimonies.
- Apply these principles and doctrines in their lives. ■

MONTHS LESSONS ARE TAUGHT

April 2013–October 2013

October 2013–April 2014

FOURTH-SUNDAY LESSON MATERIALS

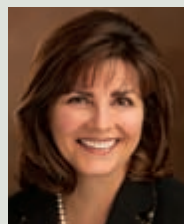
Talks given in the April 2013 general conference*

Talks given in the October 2013 general conference*

* For the April and October fourth-Sunday lessons, talk(s) may be selected from the previous conference or from the most recent one. The talks are available in many languages at conference.lds.org.

General Auxiliary Presidencies

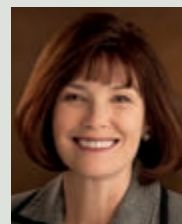
RELIEF SOCIETY



Carole M. Stephens
First Counselor



Linda K. Burton
President



Linda S. Reeves
Second Counselor

YOUNG WOMEN



Carol F. McConkie
First Counselor

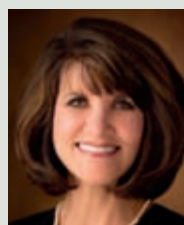


Bonnie L. Oscarson
President

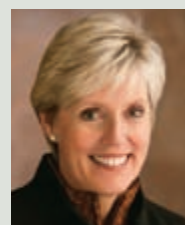


Neill F. Marriott
Second Counselor

PRIMARY



Jean A. Stevens
First Counselor



Rosemary M. Wixom
President



Cheryl A. Esplin
Second Counselor

YOUNG MEN



Larry M. Gibson
First Counselor



David L. Beck
President

SUNDAY SCHOOL



David M. McConkie
First Counselor



Russell T. Osguthorpe
President



Matthew O. Richardson
Second Counselor

183rd Annual General Conference Includes Sustaining of New Young Women General Presidency

"Our hearts have been touched," said President Thomas S. Monson in the closing session of the 183rd Annual General Conference on April 7, 2013, "and our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened as we have felt the Spirit of the Lord. May we long remember what we have heard these past two days."

More than 100,000 people attended the five sessions of general conference at the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, on April 6 and 7. Millions worldwide watched or listened via TV, satellite, radio, and Internet broadcasts. Between live broadcasts and online video, audio, and text of the conference on LDS.org, members were able to access the conference in 95 languages.

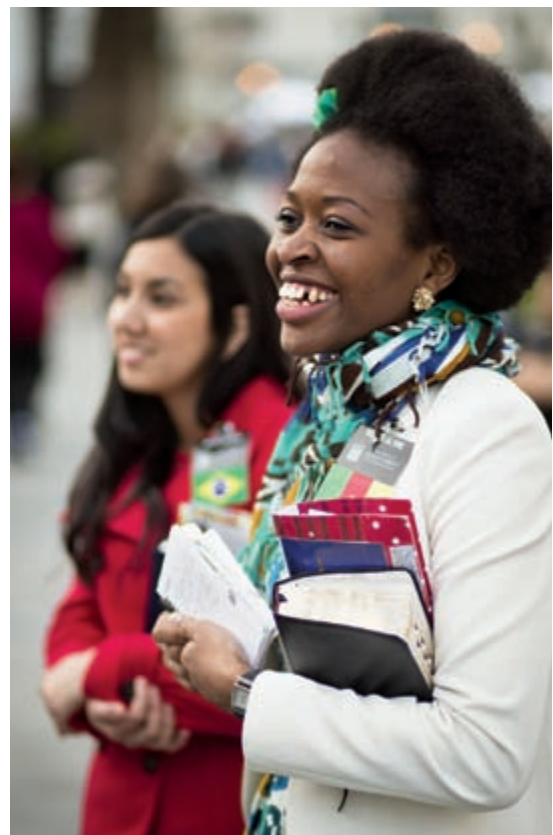
President Monson opened the annual conference by announcing plans to build temples in Cedar City, Utah, USA, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil—bringing the total number of temples announced or under construction to 29. Currently, 141 temples are in operation.

Several changes were made in Church leadership during the Saturday afternoon session. All members of the Young Women general presidency were released, and Elder Walter F. González was released as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy. Fifty-one Area Seventies were also released.

Elder Ulisses Soares of the First Quorum of the Seventy was sustained as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Sustained as the new Young Women general presidency were Bonnie Lee Green Oscarson, president; Carol Foley McConkie, first counselor; and Neill Foote Marriott, second counselor.

Three new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy were also sustained: Elder Edward Dube of Zimbabwe; Elder S. Gifford Nielsen of Sugar Land, Texas, USA; and Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela of Queretaro, Mexico. Five new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy were also sustained.



Elaine S. Dalton, former Young Women general president, served in the Young Women general presidency, either as a counselor or as president, for 11 years before her release in April.

See a complete list of sustainings and releases on page 26.

Find biographies of the newly called leaders starting on page 139. ■

YOU CAN HELP

Both President Thomas S. Monson and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged members to contribute to the General Missionary Fund. As of April 4, 2013, 65,634 full-time missionaries were serving, with more than 20,000 more who had received calls.

During the opening session of general conference, President Monson remarked, "To help maintain this missionary force,

and because many of our missionaries come from modest circumstances, we invite you, as you are able, to contribute generously to the General Missionary Fund of the Church."

Members can donate using a tithing donation slip and entering the amount they wish to contribute under the General Missionary Fund. Members can also donate online through ldsphilanthropies.org.

The Church Needs Senior Couples' Maturity and Experience

Along with the increase in the number of young missionaries due to the lowering of missionary age, senior couples are also greatly needed in missions throughout the world. With the recent creation of 58 new missions, many more senior couples will be needed to provide the leadership experience and other support that are so vital to a successful mission.

In the April 2013 conference, President Thomas S. Monson spoke of the rapidly increasing number of missionaries and expressed his love for those willing to serve the Lord in the mission field (see pages 4, 66). Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

specifically encouraged senior couples to serve. "You senior couples, you plan for the day when you can go on your mission. We will be most grateful for your service," he said (see page 45).

In the opening moments of the October 2012 general conference, President Monson said: "We continue to need many more senior couples. As your circumstances allow, as you are eligible for retirement, and as your health permits, I encourage you to make yourselves available for full-time missionary service. Both husband and wife will have a greater joy as they together serve our Father's children" ("Welcome to Conference," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 5).

For many years, Church leaders have encouraged senior couples to serve. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "Missions everywhere need more couples. Their maturity and experience make them some of the best missionaries we have. Their special skills . . . enable them to train local leaders effectively, strengthen and reactivate members, and bring nonmembers to Christ" ("Missionary Couples—Trading Something Good for Something Better," *Ensign*, June 1988, 9, 11).

Worthy couples who wish to serve as missionaries are encouraged to let their bishops or branch presidents know of their desire to serve. Length of service can vary between 6 and 23 months.

Those who have questions about senior missions may call 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-6741 (or 1-801-240-6741), or email SeniorMissionaryServices@ldschurch.org to receive a response to specific questions. ■

The maturity and experience of senior couples allow them to train local leaders and strengthen members as well as bring nonmembers to Christ.



PHOTOGRAPH BY DON L. SEARLE © IRI



New Online Tools Help Preserve and Share Family Photos and Memories

Visitors to FamilySearch.org will notice some significant changes as of April 2013. Fresh, bright colors, inviting pictures, and a host of new features offer a variety of experiences beyond research. Although the site will still be a great destination for genealogists and researchers, the new features will attract a much broader swath of visitors.

The new features help move family history beyond research and appeal to a larger audience of novice family historians young and old. Visitors can now collaboratively build their family tree online and preserve and share family photos and stories—all free of charge.

Family photos and stories bring ancestors to life. The real people behind the dates can teach us principles such as the value of hard work, how to deal with life's challenges, and how choices impact our lives.

Making it easier to record and preserve family histories helps us connect with our past and create a legacy for the future.

New Features at FamilySearch.org

FamilySearch Family Tree. For the first time on FamilySearch.org, individuals can start collaboratively building their shared family tree entirely online, beginning by adding information about themselves and then expanding to past generations.

Family Tree key points:

- Find it at FamilySearch.org under the “Family Tree” tab.
- The tree is prepopulated with over 900 million individual names contributed by patrons.
- It's free of charge.
- It enables individuals to collaboratively build, manage, and share their family history entirely online.
- Users can discover what others may have already found about their family history.
- Users can readily attach photos and stories and link sources.
- Users can permanently preserve their shared family tree for future generations.
- The easy “grab and pull” feature allows users to move up and down their family tree with ease.
- Patrons will have access to billions of free records on FamilySearch.org to help fill in the missing branches of their Family Tree.

Photos. Users can preserve favorite photos of ancestors, attach them to their profiles in the FamilySearch Family Tree, and share them through social media. Over 200,000 photos have already been contributed, preserved, and shared.

Stories. Users can write favorite stories about a specific ancestor in the FamilySearch Family Tree. This feature enables families to gather,



share, and perpetually preserve their family stories.

Interactive Fan Chart. In 2012 FamilySearch tested a feature that enabled individuals to see themselves and their ancestry in the context of a colorful fan chart. This feature is now enhanced and available on FamilySearch.org.

Family Tree Wizard. Those new to creating their family tree will find this tool useful. In an inviting interview style, the tool asks questions about your living and deceased ancestors, then builds those connections into the family tree to get you started.

Live Help. Interest in family history is growing worldwide. FamilySearch has launched a global online community that provides free product help and personal research assistance by phone and web chat 24 hours a day—now in 10 languages.

Languages. All of the new features and services will be available in 10 languages. A collection of free how-to videos and other online resources are available for all features. Just click on the Help button for more details. ■

Family History Changes Hearts

By R. Scott Lloyd
Church News

Many family history centers of the future will be in the home, predicted Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy in an address given on March 23 in conjunction with the RootsTech 2013 Family History and Technology Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

Elder Foster, an Assistant Executive Director of the Family History Departments, said that there will soon be nine billion people on the earth and that the Lord has prepared technology that will make it possible to “bind and connect all those families together.”

He emphasized the importance of doing family history, learning the stories of our ancestors—not

just genealogy, finding names and dates. The gravestones of any cemetery in the world contain a name, birth date, a dash, and then a death date, he said. “That little dash between the birth and death date seems so small and insignificant, but our whole history lies within it,” he remarked. “So while we often focus on discovering those dates, our love of our ancestors—the turning of our hearts to our fathers—comes forth from discovering the dash.”

Family history brings us together as we share stories and work together, he explained. “Therefore, genealogy changes our charts; family history changes our hearts.” ■

Elder Eldred G. Smith Dies at Age 106

By Sarah Jane Weaver
Church News

Elder Eldred G. Smith, who served as Patriarch to the Church from 1947 to 1979, died on April 4, 2013, at his home. He was 106 years old.

Believed to be the oldest man in Utah, Elder Smith lived longer than any former General Authority.

Church President Thomas S. Monson visited Elder Smith on the latter's birthday, January 9, 2013. "Eldred Smith is my good friend," said President Monson. "We have traveled many miles together. I love and respect this man."

Eldred G. Smith was called as Patriarch to the Church on April 10, 1947, by then-Church President George Albert Smith and was the last person to hold the position. He was given emeritus status in 1979. The office originated in 1833 with the calling of Joseph Smith Sr., father of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Elder Smith is the great-great-grandson of the Prophet's brother Hyrum.

During his service as Church Patriarch, Elder Smith traveled to many areas of the world and gave many patriarchal blessings in areas where there was no patriarch. In 1966 he traveled with then-Elder Monson to Australia



President Thomas S. Monson, right, visits with Elder Eldred G. Smith, who served as Patriarch to the Church from 1947 to 1979, on his 106th birthday, January 9, 2013. Elder Smith died on April 4 at his home.

and Samoa to give patriarchal blessings to members there. It was the first time a presiding patriarch had ever visited Samoa. Today most stakes have a patriarch residing within the stake.

President Monson and Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles both spoke at Elder Smith's funeral. President Monson read a letter of condolence to the family from the First Presidency, then added, "Temporarily, I have lost a good friend."

Elder Ballard, who is also a great-great-grandson of Hyrum Smith, spoke of Elder Smith's contributions to keeping alive the history of their family. "We celebrate him

as Patriarch to the Church and patriarch of our extended family," he said. He added that he knew Elder Smith felt his greatest accomplishment was his family.

Eldred Smith married Jeanne Audrey Ness in 1932; they had five children. Following her death in June 1977, he married Hortense Child; she was then serving as a counselor in the Young Women general presidency. She died in May 2012.

Elder Smith is survived by two sons and two daughters (another daughter is deceased), 22 grandchildren (two others are deceased), 63 great-grandchildren, and 22 great-great-grandchildren. ■

Gerry Avant contributed to this article.



Elder Ulisses Soares

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

Elder Ulisses Soares, who began serving in the Presidency of the Seventy in January 2013, has witnessed firsthand the rapid growth of the Church in several parts of the world.

Elder Soares was born in São Paulo, Brazil, in October 1958. His parents, Aparecido and Mercedes Soares, joined the Church when he was five. They attended meetings in a room above a bakery. Elder Soares remembers the excitement he felt as an eight-year-old when the first stake in South America was organized in São Paulo in 1966. The Church in Brazil grew rapidly to 50 stakes by 1990 and more than 200 stakes by 2000.

Elder Soares, who earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and economics from Pontificia Catholic University and an MBA from the National Institute of Postgraduate Study, was working for a multinational tire company when he was offered a position with the Church. Hired to work for the Finance Department, he soon became director for temporal affairs in the Church area office in São Paulo, providing support to the Area Presidency for 10 years. He also served as the first president of the São Paulo Brazil Cotia Stake.

He served as president of the Portugal Porto Mission from 2000 to 2003 and was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy in April 2005. He has served in the Brazil and the Africa Southeast Area Presidencies.

"These experiences have given me the perspective to see that the Church can be established wherever we have faithful people," he said, "and the perspective to see what I must learn to better serve."

Elder Soares and his wife, Rosana Fernandes Morgado, were married in October 1982 in the São Paulo Brazil Temple. They are the parents of three children.

Elder Soares served a full-time mission in the Brazil Rio de Janeiro Mission. He has also served as elders quorum president, counselor in a bishopric, high councilor, stake executive secretary, and regional welfare agent. ■



Elder Edward Dube

Of the Seventy

Elder Edward Dube was introduced to the gospel in 1981 by an employer in whose home he worked. The man gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon. He did not read it until 1983 but then was so impressed with Joseph Smith's testimony of the visitation of Moroni that he responded to an invitation to attend a fast and testimony meeting at the meetinghouse in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe.

He felt uncomfortable at first, feeling that he was in a servant relationship to most of those in attendance.

"But as they bore their testimonies about the Book of Mormon, I felt some connection with these people," he recalled, "and I was able to share my feelings about the Book of Mormon."

He would later receive missionary lessons, be baptized, and eventually serve in the Zimbabwe Harare Mission.

During that time, he taught the family of Naume Keresiya Salazani, then age 16. They continued their acquaintance after his mission and were married in Kwekwe on December 9, 1989. In May 1992 they were sealed in the Johannesburg South Africa Temple. They are the parents of three daughters and a son.

Born in May 1962 in the village of Chirumanzu, Zimbabwe, to Clement and Rosemary Dube, Elder Dube earned a diploma in education from Zimbabwe E. D. College in 1992 and then went to work for the Church Educational System, establishing seminaries and institutes of religion in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. He has been blessed to see many of the students to whom he has handed certificates of graduation go on to serve in Church leadership positions in those countries as the Church has grown.

He has served as elders quorum president, branch president, district president, stake president, counselor in a mission presidency, and, from 2009 to 2012, president of the Zimbabwe Harare Mission. Prior to his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy he was serving as an Area Seventy. ■



Elder S. Gifford Nielsen

Of the Seventy

Elder Stanley Gifford Nielsen is passionate about athletics, but sports are not the most important thing in his life. He believes balance is critical and the gospel is the foundation for happiness now and in the eternities.

Born in October 1954 to Harry and Lois Nielsen, he lived in Provo, Utah, USA, until graduating from college. His parents taught him a gospel-centered value system that has guided his life.

After suffering a devastating injury that ended his college football career, Elder Nielsen said he learned that the most important things in life couldn't be taken away by an injury.

After a successful recovery, he played quarterback in the National Football League, but his career fell apart after three years. He was publicly ridiculed. It was a time of self-reflection and finding out what he truly believed. "I learned that the Savior never leaves you, no matter what," said Elder Nielsen, who now lives in Sugar Land, Texas.

If there is a scripture that he has tried to pattern his life after, it is Matthew 5:14–16: "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"The Lord opens His arms to you," said Elder Nielsen. "You love Him by living the gospel."

It was during college that he met Wendy Olson. They were married in the Provo Utah Temple on April 23, 1975. He earned a degree in communications from Brigham Young University. He was quarterback for the Houston Oilers and sports director for KHOU television prior to his call to serve full-time for the Church.

The father of six children, Elder Nielsen has served as a seminary teacher, Young Men president, elders quorum president, bishop, and stake president. He was serving as an Area Seventy at the time of his call to the First Quorum of the Seventy. ■



Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela

Of the Seventy

Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela grew up in the Mormon colonies in Chihuahua, Mexico, and graduated from the Church-owned Academia Juárez. His childhood there afforded precious opportunities to be mentored by faithful men and women who were devoted to the gospel and to serving the Lord.

The lessons learned in that storied corner of the Church in Latin America will serve him well as he assumes his duties as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

"I feel very blessed for this calling to serve the Lord on a full-time basis," he said.

Born in May 1959 to Gilberto and Rosa Valenzuela, young Arnulfo was drawn at a young age to Church service. At 19 he accepted a call to the Mexico Veracruz Mission. In that scenic region of Mexico he realized the satisfaction of daily gospel labor and the joy of inviting others to Christ.

Shortly after his mission, he visited a family he had baptized that subsequently moved to Mexico City. The family's next-door neighbor, Pilar Porras, was a faithful convert to the Church. Arnulfo and Pilar became friends and soon began dating. They married in the Mesa Arizona Temple on April 6, 1982, at a time when there were no temples in their native land.

They have raised three children, continuing to serve in the Church as they have watched Mexico become a nation of temples. "We could never have imagined having 12 temples in Mexico, with one under construction," he said.

During his tenure as a bishop, a counselor in both a stake and mission presidency, and an Area Seventy, Elder Valenzuela has witnessed the remarkable devotion of countless Mexican members who are willing to give all they have to the Lord's cause.

A graduate of Mexico City's University of Accounting and Administration Studies, Elder Valenzuela has worked in a variety of management positions for international corporations. ■



Elder Timothy J. Dyches

Of the Seventy

One of Elder Timothy John Dyches's favorite roles in life is to “be a witness” and testify to others, helping them come unto Christ. Whether he is serving as a missionary, interacting in his own family, or working in his profession, he happily accepts that role and responsibility and tries to help others do the same.

Born in January 1951 in Murray, Utah, USA, to Milo Fredrick and Mary Katherine Dyches, he was the second of seven children. When he was a young deacon, his family moved to Elko, Nevada, where he spent time after school working at his father's pharmacy. As they worked side by side, his father taught him the importance of hard work—something that would serve him well as a young missionary in the Germany South Mission from 1970 to 1972.

“It was a tough mission, but it was a great mission for me,” he said. “I learned the value of hard work and obedience and not giving up.”

That work ethic continued after his mission in his schooling, profession, and Church assignments. Elder Dyches met his future wife, Jill Dudley, while attending Brigham Young University. They were married on April 26, 1974, in the Manti Utah Temple. They have three children.

Elder Dyches earned a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University in university studies and went on to earn a medical degree from Washington University Medical School. He spent his professional career as an ear, nose, and throat surgeon in a private practice in Reno, Nevada.

At the time of his call to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Dyches was serving in the Young Men organization as a deacons quorum adviser. He has served in many other callings, including Area Seventy, president of the Oregon Portland Mission, stake president, counselor in a stake presidency, high councilor, temple ordinance worker, Sunday School president, and ward clerk. ■



Elder Randy D. Funk

Of the Seventy

Elder Randy Dennis Funk of the Second Quorum of the Seventy has lived his life with this overriding principle: “Trust in the Lord and His goodness.”

During his third year of law school, his wife was pregnant with their second child and he was an associate editor of the law review when the call came to serve as elders quorum president. “At this challenging time I accepted the call and prayed to Heavenly Father to make up the difference,” he said. “I needed help to fulfill my calling, successfully complete my education, find employment, and care for my young family. The blessings we received were far beyond what we deserved. That experience gave me great faith in the goodness of the Lord and His blessings upon those who earnestly strive to serve Him.”

Born in August 1952 to C. Dennis and Rebecca Funk, he grew up in Manti, Utah; Madison, Wisconsin; and Smithfield, Utah, USA. He watched his father serve faithfully in the Church and was taught the importance of fulfilling priesthood duties.

After serving a mission in Indonesia, he married Andrea Clyde on May 29, 1976, in the Logan Utah Temple. They are the parents of six children. Elder Funk earned a degree in history from Utah State University and a juris doctorate from the University of Utah. He was a partner in a large law firm in Denver, Colorado, prior to his full-time Church service, which began with his call as president of the India Bangalore Mission in 2010.

“When we went to India, we had faith in the Savior's words: ‘And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, shall have power to open the door of my kingdom unto any nation whithersoever ye shall send them’ (D&C 112:21).” Elder Funk has served as elders quorum president, Young Men president, bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■



Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

Of the Seventy

Elder Kevin Scott Hamilton describes himself as “the product of a conversion and a rescue.”

His birth in March 1955 in Wenatchee, Washington, USA, prompted questions in his mother, Kay, about the meaning of life. She talked to an LDS friend, Richard Pratt, who connected her with missionaries.

Her husband, Norman Russell Hamilton, explained that he was already a member of the Church, although less active since his early teenage years. He became active in the Church as his wife joined it.

“My parents were fabulous members who built the faith that we have today,” Elder Hamilton said.

But he attests it was his mission to France and Switzerland that really changed his life. “It created in me a burning desire that never left,” he said.

He married a kindred spirit, Claudia Keysor, on July 27, 1978, in the Los Angeles Temple. While rearing their six children in California, they have made of their home something of a visitors’ center.

“They say you can have a silent sermon in your home, and we have had these little quotes around the house,” Sister Hamilton said. An entryway to the home is kept stocked with copies of the Book of Mormon, *For the Strength of Youth* booklets, and other Church literature that is regularly replenished as visitors take them.

Elder Hamilton’s determination to serve has brought opportunities to serve as bishop, stake president, and president of the Belgium Brussels Netherlands Mission from 2003 to 2006. Prior to his call to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, he was director of the Southern California Public Affairs Council of the Church, comprising 64 stakes in the Greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area.

With a bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University and a master’s from the University of Washington, both in business, he has spent most of his career in the telecommunications industry, serving a number of times as a chief executive officer. ■



Elder Adrián Ochoa

Of the Seventy

While serving as an Area Seventy in Mexico, Elder Adrián Ochoa spent a couple of days in the city of Chihuahua in counsel with the stake president and others, then boarded a plane destined for home. But after taking his seat, he received a forceful spiritual prompting that his work in Chihuahua was not finished.

The flight crew was making final preparations for take-off. “But,” said Elder Ochoa, “I knew I had to get off that plane.” So he disembarked. A series of subsequent interviews yielded important information that resolved a difficult issue and permitted the spiritual progress of a family.

But Elder Ochoa’s work in Chihuahua was still not done. The Spirit also led him to the humble home of a cousin he had not seen in years. He found his estranged cousin—an inactive member—and her small family in desperate straits. “I knew the Church and Christ were their solution. I begged my cousin to return to church,” he said.

The cousin did return to activity, and a precious family relationship was restored. The Lord was able to rescue several lives in Chihuahua because one man heeded the promptings of the Spirit.

All are entitled to such life-changing spiritual promptings, testified Elder Ochoa, who has served in a variety of Church callings while working in the advertising field. He presided over the Honduras San Pedro Sula Mission from 2004 to 2007 and, from 2009 until his call to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, served as second counselor in the Young Men general presidency.

Born in March 1954 in San Francisco, California, USA, to Eduardo and Consuelo Ochoa, he grew up in both California and Mexico. As a young man, he was called to serve a special public affairs mission in Mexico. He and his wife, Nancy Villareal, were sealed in the Mexico City Temple. They are the parents of five children. ■



Elder Terence M. Vinson

Of the Seventy

Elder Terence M. Vinson, newly called to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, had never heard the term *Mormon* before meeting Kay Anne Carden in the early 1970s in Sydney, Australia. The pair talked about religion and ultimately came to an agreement. Each Sunday, they would attend both the church of Terence's youth and a small branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One group met in a large and beautiful building, the other in a small rented space that the few Latter-day Saints had been able to procure.

But after a while "the comparison was embarrassing," and Terence began taking the missionary discussions. He had many questions. Then, while attending stake conference, he felt a message as clearly as if it had been spoken. "I needed to join the Church in order to progress. All the questions I had would have answers," he said.

He was baptized the next week.

Terence Michael Vinson was born in Sydney, Australia, in March 1951 to John Laurence and May Therese A. Vinson. His father, who worked as a firefighter, sacrificed so his seven children could get an education.

Elder Vinson received a bachelor's degree in mathematics and statistics from Sydney University and a teaching diploma from Sydney Teachers College. He also received a financial planning diploma from Deakin University and a master's degree in applied finance from Macquarie University. During his career, he was a well-known math teacher, lecturer, and financial adviser and directed a financial planning and investment firm.

He married Kay Anne, the woman who introduced him to the gospel, on May 2, 1974, in Sydney, and the couple was sealed on August 23, 1975, in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple; they have six children. Less than three years after his baptism, Elder Vinson was called as a bishop. He has served in several stake presidencies and as a regional representative and Area Seventy. ■



Bonnie L. Oscarson

*Young Women
General President*

While serving as matron of the Stockholm Sweden Temple from 2009 to 2012, Bonnie Lee Green Oscarson saw Latter-day Saints from Sweden, Norway, and Latvia sacrifice to worship in the house of the Lord.

She didn't know then, however, that the lessons she was learning from these "very humble, extremely dedicated and committed" members would help direct her focus as the Church's Young Women general president.

"Since many young women are now choosing to serve missions and attend the temple at a younger age, I hope that my experience working in the temple will help me understand how to help them prepare," she said.

Bonnie Lee Green was born in October 1950 in Salt Lake City to Theo James and Jean S. Green. When her parents decided they wanted their children to experience the Church outside of Utah, nine-year-old Bonnie and her family moved to Oklahoma, USA. The family also spent time in Colorado and Tennessee before moving to Missouri, where Bonnie met Paul Kent Oscarson at the Far West, Missouri, temple site—a place of significance because they both have ancestors who lived in the Far West area.

After attending Brigham Young University, the couple married on December 19, 1969, in the Salt Lake Temple; seven children would eventually join the family.

Sister Oscarson was just 25 years old when her husband—who had served full-time in the Swedish Mission from 1965 to 1968—was called to preside over the Sweden Göteborg Mission.

When the Oscarsons returned to the United States, they lived in Missouri, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Texas, where Brother Oscarson worked as a department store regional vice president. Like her parents, Sister Oscarson found great joy in living in areas where Church membership was small.

Sister Oscarson has served as a Young Women president three times, as an early-morning seminary teacher for nine years, and as a Gospel Doctrine teacher. ■



Carol F. McConkie

First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Since she was young, Carol Foley McConkie has had a “longing for the temple.” That focus has directed her actions throughout her life.

Born in April 1952 in Spokane, Washington, USA, to Williams and Joanne W. Foley, Sister McConkie was just a toddler when missionaries knocked on her parents’ door in Wilmington, Delaware, and introduced her family to the gospel. Her parents quickly embraced the teachings despite opposition and having to make changes to their lifestyle.

As a child she traveled with her family by train across the country to be sealed in the Manti Utah Temple.

“That was a very sweet experience,” she said. “I remember dressing in white and what that meant to my family. It was a magnificent experience, and even though I was really young, I remember the feelings I had, glimpses of white, and the beauty of that day. That experience gave me my first desire to keep the temple in my life always.”

The temple became a beacon of hope during times of trial and as she had her own family.

She met her husband, Oscar Walter McConkie III, while they were attending Arizona State University. Sister McConkie earned her bachelor’s degree in English education. They were married on December 22, 1973, in the Mesa Arizona Temple and are the parents of seven children.

At the time of her call as first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, Sister McConkie was serving on the Young Women general board. She has spent most of her Church service in callings that involve teaching and as ward Young Women president and a counselor in ward Relief Society and Primary presidencies. She served with her husband as he presided over the California San Jose Mission from 2005 to 2008. ■



Neill F. Marriott

Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

Even before she joined the Church, Neill Foote Marriott learned as a young girl that there was a God and that He loved her.

“My father was a pattern of our Heavenly Father,” said the new second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. “His love and acceptance for others was unbounded. It was a simple and natural transfer of the love and trust I had for my earthly father to trust and love my Heavenly Father.”

Born to George and Antonia Foote in October 1947 in Alexandria, Louisiana, USA, she was the only sister to six younger brothers. After graduating from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, with a degree in English literature and secondary education, she moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she worked as a secretary at Harvard University. There she met David Cannon Marriott, who told her, “I have some friends I want you to meet.” He soon brought the missionaries to teach her and her roommates.

As she listened to the missionaries, she said, “the lessons filled in the missing pieces of my gospel understanding.” After her baptism in May 1970, she and David remained friends; after a year they began dating and were married in June 1971 in the Salt Lake Temple.

Working together with her husband, Sister Marriott stayed home with their 11 children while he pursued a career in business. They have served in many Church callings. She served with him as he presided over the São Paulo Interlagos Mission from 2002 to 2005, and she has served as an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple, a stake and a ward Relief Society president, a ward Young Women president, a Gospel Doctrine teacher, and a food storage specialist.

In her new assignment, Sister Marriott hopes to share the same testimony she received as a young woman. She wants young women to know that “they are loved by their Heavenly Father with the deepest, most glorious love.” ■



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"Whereas I Was Blind, Now I See," by Brady Fairbanks

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. . . .

"When [Jesus] had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. . . . He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. . . .

"He answered and said, . . . One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:1, 6–7, 25).



“We live at a time in the world’s history when there are many difficult challenges but also great opportunities and reasons for rejoicing,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the closing session of the 183rd Annual General Conference of the Church. “There are, of course, those times when we experience disappointments, heart-aches, and even tragedies in our lives. However, if we will put our trust in the Lord, He will help us through our difficulties, whatever they may be.”