

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • MAY 2016

# Liahona



## General Conference Addresses

Four New Temples Announced  
New Seventies and Primary  
General Presidency Called



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And He Opened His Mouth and Taught Them, by Michael Malm

*Seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up onto a mountain with His disciples.*

*“And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:2–3).*

*This is the first of nine verses known as the Beatitudes. This event became known as the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5–7.*

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### Find Answers to Your Questions

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# The 186th Annual General Conference

## Saturday Evening, March 26, 2016, General Women's Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: Rosemary M. Wixom.

Invocation: Morgan Munford.

Benediction: Sokhanny Parco.

Music by a combined Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society choir from stakes in Salt Lake City, Utah; Lillian Severinsen, director; Linda Margetts, organist; Kerstin Tenney, violinist; Elizabeth Marsh, cellist; "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223; medley, arr. Mohlman, unpublished: "I Am a Child of God," *Hymns*, no. 301, and "Love One Another," *Hymns*, no. 308; "Sweet Is the Work," *Hymns*, no. 147; "Come, Follow Me," *Hymns*, no. 116, arr. Mohlman, unpublished; "More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*, no. 131, arr. Goates, unpublished.

## Saturday Morning, April 2, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.  
Invocation: Linda K. Burton.

Benediction: Elder Arnulfo Valenzuela.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth, organists: "How Wondrous and Great," *Hymns*, no. 267; "Come, Ye Children of the Lord," *Hymns*, no. 58; "I Feel My Savior's Love," *Children's Songbook*, 74, arr. Cardon, pub. by Jackman; "Secret Prayer," *Hymns*, no. 144; "The Lord My Pasture Will Prepare," *Hymns*, no. 109, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford; "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford.

## Saturday Afternoon, April 2, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.  
Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

### Conference Talks Available

To access general conference talks on the Internet in many languages, visit [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org) and select a language. Talks are also available on the Gospel Library mobile app.

Invocation: Elder Hugo E. Martinez.

Benediction: Tad R. Callister.

Music by a combined choir from Brigham Young University–Idaho; Eda Ashby and Rebecca Lord, directors; Bonnie Goodliffe, organist: "Sing Praise to Him," *Hymns*, no. 70, arr. Kempton, unpublished; "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," *Hymns*, no. 7, arr. Ashby, unpublished; "Now Let Us Rejoice," *Hymns*, no. 3; "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," *Hymns*, no. 270, arr. Kempton, unpublished.

## Saturday Evening, April 2, 2016, General Priesthood Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder Stanley G. Ellis.

Benediction: Elder Craig A. Cardon.

Music by a priesthood choir from the Logan Utah Institute of Religion; Allen M. Matthews and Eric Stauffer, directors; Clay Christiansen, organist: "In Hymns of Praise," *Hymns*, no. 75, arr. Christiansen; "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns*, no. 193, arr. Zabriskie, pub. by LDS Music Source; "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59; "Redeemer of Israel," *Hymns*, no. 6, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Hinshaw.

## Sunday Morning, April 3, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Henry B. Eyring.

Invocation: Elder Anthony D. Perkins.

Benediction: Carol F. McConkie.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg, director; Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen, organists: "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise," *Hymns*, no. 41; "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "I Will Follow God's Plan," *Children's Songbook*, 164, arr. Hofheins/Christiansen, unpublished; "You Can Make the Pathway Bright," *Hymns*, no. 228, arr. Wilberg, unpublished; "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" *Hymns*, no. 66; "Press Forward, Saints," *Hymns*, no. 81, arr. Wilberg; "O Thou Rock of Our Salvation," *Hymns*, no. 258, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## Sunday Afternoon, April 3, 2016, General Session

Presiding: President Thomas S. Monson.

Conducting: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf.

Invocation: Elder C. Scott Grow.

Benediction: Elder Shayne M. Bowen.

Music by the Tabernacle Choir; Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, directors; Linda Margetts, organist: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," *Hymns*, no. 72, arr. Wilberg, pub. by Oxford; "For I Am Called by Thy Name," Gates, pub. by Sonos; "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83; "The Day Dawn Is Breaking," *Hymns*, no. 52; arr. Murphy, unpublished; "Sing We Now at Parting," *Hymns*, no. 156, arr. Wilberg, unpublished.

## Home and Visiting Teaching Messages

For home and visiting teaching messages, please select an address that best meets the needs of those you visit.

## On the Cover

Front: Photograph by Cody Bell.  
Back: Photograph by Ale Borges.

## Conference Photography

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## Highlights from the 186th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Saturday morning session of April general conference began with an invitation from President Henry B. Eyring encouraging listeners to pray for the speakers and the choirs, both before and during their delivery. And in concluding the conference on Sunday afternoon, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland noted: “If in the days ahead you . . . find elements in your own life that don’t yet measure up to the messages you have heard this weekend, don’t be cast down. . . . The great thing about the gospel is we get credit for *trying*, even if we don’t always succeed” (page 125, 126).

Their calls to action forecast and reinforced President Thomas S.

Monson’s call that “as we contemplate the decisions we make in our lives each day, . . . if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice” (page 86).

Other highlights from conference include:

- President Monson’s announcement of four new temples: in Belém, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador; Lima, Peru (the second temple there); and Harare, Zimbabwe (see the story on page 142).
- The sustaining of 11 new General Authorities (their biographies begin on page 131).
- The sustaining of a new Primary general presidency (their

biographies begin on page 136).

- The announcement of a new initiative for individuals and families to reach out locally to help refugees (see pages 13, 111, and 141).
- A focus on family relationships, especially men’s roles as husbands, fathers, and priesthood holders.
- Doctrinal insights from the speakers, such as this from Elder Dale G. Renlund: “As we draw closer to God, the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ will come into our lives. And, as with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we will find that the Savior has been nearby all along” (page 42).





By Cheryl A. Esplin  
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

# He Asks Us to Be His Hands

*True Christlike service is selfless and focuses on others.*

“Love one another; as I have loved you.”<sup>1</sup> These words, sung by this remarkable choir, were spoken by Jesus just hours before His great atoning sacrifice—a sacrifice Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described as “the most majestic manifestation of pure love ever to be demonstrated in the history of this world.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus not only taught us to love, but He also lived what He taught. Throughout His ministry, Jesus “went about doing good”<sup>3</sup> and “entreated all to follow His example.”<sup>4</sup> He taught, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”<sup>5</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson, who has understood and lived the admonition to love, said: “I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and . . . lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.”<sup>6</sup>

True Christlike service is selfless and focuses on others. One woman who took care of her invalid husband

explained, “Don’t think of your task as a burden; think of it as an opportunity to learn what love really is.”<sup>7</sup>

Speaking at a BYU devotional, Sister Sondra D. Heaston asked: “What if we could really see into each other’s hearts? Would we understand each other better? By feeling what others feel, seeing what others see, and hearing what others hear, would we make, and take, the time to serve others, and would we treat them differently? Would we treat them with more patience, more kindness, and more tolerance?”

Sister Heaston shared an experience from when she served at a Young Women camp. She said:

“One of our . . . devotional speakers . . . taught us about ‘becoming.’ One of her statements . . . was, ‘Be someone who reaches out to know and serve others—throw away the mirrors and look through the window.’

“To demonstrate this, she called up one of the young women and asked that young woman to stand facing her. [She] then pulled out a mirror and put it between the young woman and herself so that she, [the speaker], was looking into the mirror while she tried

to talk with the young woman. Not surprisingly, it didn’t even begin to be an effective or heartfelt conversation. This was a powerful object lesson that illustrated how difficult it is to communicate with and serve others if we are too worried about ourselves and see only ourselves and our needs. [She] then put away the mirror, pulled out a window frame, and put it between her face and the young woman’s face. . . . We were able to see that the young woman had become [her] focal point and that true service requires that we focus on the needs and emotions of others. Ofttimes we are so worried about ourselves and our own busy lives—as we look in mirrors while trying to look for opportunities to



*It is difficult to communicate with and serve others if we see only ourselves and our needs.*



*True service requires that we focus on the needs and emotions of others.*



serve—that we do not see clearly through the windows of service.”<sup>8</sup>

President Monson has often reminded us that we are “surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers.” He said, “We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”<sup>9</sup>

Last year in January, the *Friend* and *Liahona* magazines invited children all around the world to follow the counsel of President Monson—to be the Lord’s hands. Children were invited to perform acts of service—large and small. They were then encouraged to trace their hand on a piece of paper, cut it out, write on it the service they did, and send it to the magazines. Many of you listening tonight might be some of the thousands of children who did a loving service and sent it in.<sup>10</sup>



*Thousands of children followed the counsel of President Thomas S. Monson to be the Lord’s hands by performing acts of service.*

When children learn how to love and serve others when they are young, they set a pattern of service for the rest of their lives. Often children teach the rest of us that showing love

and service doesn’t have to be big and grandiose to be meaningful and make a difference.

A Primary teacher shared the following example. “Today,” she said, “our

five- and six-year-old class made love necklaces. Each child drew pictures on strips of paper: one of themselves, one of Jesus, and some of members of their family and loved ones. We glued the strips into circles that looped

through each other to make a chain that we turned into love necklaces. As they were drawing, the children talked about their families.

“Heather said, ‘I don’t think my sister loves me. We are always fighting. . . . I

even hate myself. I have a bad life.’ And she put her head in her hands.

“I thought about her family circumstances and felt that maybe she did indeed have a hard life. But after Heather had said this, Anna, down at the other end of the table, responded, ‘Heather, I am putting you in my necklace between me and Jesus because He loves you and I love you.’

“When Anna said that, Heather crawled under the table to get to Anna and threw her arms around her.

“At the end of class, when her grandmother came to pick her up, Heather said, ‘Guess what, Grandma? Jesus loves me.’”

When we reach out in love and service even in the smallest ways, hearts are changed and softened as others feel the love of the Lord.

Sometimes, however, because of the countless people all about us who need help and relief from burdens, it can be difficult to meet the many pressing needs.

Sisters, some of you listening may feel stretched to capacity ministering to the needs of family members. Remember, in those routine and often mundane tasks, you are “in the service of your God.”<sup>11</sup>

Others of you might be feeling an emptiness that could be filled as you look into your neighborhood or community for opportunities to help ease another’s burdens.

All of us can incorporate some service into our daily living. We live in a contentious world. We give service when we don’t criticize, when we refuse to gossip, when we don’t judge, when we smile, when we say thank you, and when we are patient and kind.

Other kinds of service take time, intentional planning, and extra energy. But they are worth our every effort.



Perhaps we could start by asking ourselves these questions:

- Who in my circle of influence could I help today?
- What time and resources do I have?
- In what ways can I use my talents and skills to bless others?
- What might we do as a family?

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught: “You must do . . . what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.

“I give you a promise,” he said. “If you will follow this pattern, you will receive specific guidance as to the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of providing in the Lord’s way.”<sup>12</sup>

Whenever I wonder what it will be like when the Savior comes again, I think of His visit to the Nephites when He asked:



“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. . . .

“ . . . [The Savior] did heal them every one.”<sup>13</sup>

For now, He asks us to be His hands.

I have come to know that it is the love of God and neighbor that gives meaning to life. May we follow our

Savior’s example and His admonition to reach out to others with love.

I testify to the reality of President Henry B. Eyring’s promise “that if [we’ll] use [our] gifts to serve someone else, [we’ll] feel the Lord’s love for that person. [We’ll] also feel his love for [us].”<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Note: On April 2, 2016, Sister Esplin was released as first counselor in the Primary general presidency.*

#### NOTES

1. John 13:34.
2. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 106.
3. Acts 10:38.
4. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2.
5. Luke 9:24.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 85.
7. Lola B. Walters, “Sunshine in My Soul,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, 19.
8. Sondra D. Heaston, “Keeping Your Fingers on the PULSE of Service” (Brigham Young University devotional, June 23, 2015), 1, 5, [speeches.byu.edu](http://speeches.byu.edu). The Young Women camp speaker who shared these insights is Sister Virginia H. Pearce.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “What Have I Done for Someone Today?” 86.
10. See “Give Us a Hand!” *Friend*, Jan. 2015, 4–5; *Liahona*, Jan. 2015, 64–65.
11. Mosiah 2:17.
12. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 55.
13. 3 Nephi 17:7, 9.
14. Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God* (1997), 88.





**By Neill F. Marriott**  
Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

# What Shall We Do?

*We build the kingdom when we nurture others. We also build the kingdom when we speak up and testify of truth.*

Soon after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, the Apostle Peter taught, “Let all . . . know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The listeners were stricken in their hearts and asked Peter and the others, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”<sup>1</sup> And they subsequently obeyed Peter’s teachings with gladness.

Tomorrow is Easter Sunday, and I hope that we also are stricken in our hearts to acknowledge the Savior, repent, and obey with gladness.

In this general conference, we will hear inspired direction given by Church leaders, both male and female. Knowing that our hearts will be touched by their words, I ask you tonight, “Women and sisters, what shall we do?”

The Relief Society general president Eliza R. Snow declared to sisters almost 150 years ago, “The Lord has laid high responsibilities upon us.”<sup>2</sup> I testify that her declaration is still true today.

The Lord’s Church needs Spirit-directed women who use their unique gifts to nurture, to speak up, and to defend gospel truth. Our inspiration and intuition are necessary parts of

building the kingdom of God, which really means doing our part to bring salvation to God’s children.

### **Building the Kingdom through Nurturing**

We build the kingdom when we nurture others. However, the first child of God we must build up in the restored gospel is ourselves. Emma Smith said, “I desire the Spirit of God to know and understand myself, that I might be able to overcome whatever of tradition or nature that would not tend



to my exaltation.”<sup>3</sup> We must develop bedrock faith in the Savior’s gospel and move forward, empowered by temple covenants, toward exaltation.

What if some of our traditions don’t have a place in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ? Letting go of them may require the emotional support and nurture of another, as it did for me.

When I was born, my parents planted a magnolia tree in the backyard so there would be magnolias at my wedding ceremony, held in the Protestant church of my forefathers. But on the day of my marriage, there were no parents at my side and no magnolias, for as a one-year convert to the Church, I had traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah, to receive my temple endowment and be sealed to David, my fiancé.

When I left Louisiana and neared Utah, a feeling of homelessness swept over me. Before the wedding, I would be staying with David’s step-grandmother, who was lovingly known as Aunt Carol.

Here I was, a stranger to Utah, going to stay in a stranger’s house before being sealed—for eternity—to a family I barely knew. (Good thing I loved and trusted my future husband and the Lord!)

As I stood at the front door of Aunt Carol’s house, I wanted to shrink away. The door opened—I stood there like a scared rabbit—and Aunt Carol, without a word, reached out and took me into her arms. She, who had no children of her own, knew—her nurturing heart knew—that I needed a place to belong. Oh, the comfort and sweetness of that moment! My fear melted, and there came to me a sense of being anchored to a spiritually safe place.

Love is making space in your life for someone else, as Aunt Carol did for me.



Mothers literally make room in their bodies to nurture an unborn baby—and hopefully a place in their hearts as they raise them—but nurturing is not limited to bearing children. Eve was called a “mother” before she had children.<sup>4</sup> I believe that “to mother” means “to give life.” Think of the many ways you give life. It could mean giving emotional life to the hopeless or spiritual life to the doubter. With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can create an emotionally healing place for the discriminated against, the rejected, and the stranger. In these tender yet powerful ways, we build the kingdom of God. Sisters, all of us came to earth with these life-giving, nurturing, maternal gifts because that is God’s plan.

Following His plan and becoming a builder of the kingdom require selfless sacrifice. Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: “All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, . . . purifies our hearts . . . and makes us more tender and charitable,

. . . and it is through . . . toil and tribulation, that we gain the education . . . which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”<sup>5</sup> These purifying trials bring us to Christ, who can heal us and make us useful in the work of salvation.

#### **Building the Kingdom through Speaking and Testifying**

We also build the kingdom when we speak up and testify of truth. We follow the Lord’s pattern. He speaks and teaches with power and authority of God. Sisters, we can too. Women generally love to talk and gather! As we work by delegated priesthood authority given to us, our talking and gathering grow into gospel teaching and leading.

Sister Julie B. Beck, former Relief Society general president, taught: “The ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life. . . . It requires a conscious effort.”<sup>6</sup>

Personal revelation from the Holy Ghost will prompt us to learn, speak, and act on eternal truth—the Savior’s truth. The more we follow Christ, the more we will feel His love and direction; the more we feel His love and direction, the more we will want to speak and teach truth as He did, even when we face opposition.

Some years ago, I prayed for the words to defend motherhood when I received an anonymous phone call.

The caller asked, “Are you Neill Marriott, the mother of a big family?”

I answered happily, “Yes!” expecting to hear her say something like, “Well, that’s good!”

But no! I’ll never forget her reply as her voice crackled over the phone: “I am highly offended that you would bring children onto this overcrowded planet!”

“Oh,” I sputtered, “I see how you feel.”

She snapped, “No—you don’t!”

I then whimpered, “Well, maybe I don’t.”

She started on a rant about my foolish choice to be a mother. As she went on, I began to pray for help, and a gentle thought came to mind: “What would the Lord say to her?” I then felt I was standing on solid ground and gained courage at the thought of Jesus Christ.

I replied, “I am glad to be a mother, and I promise you I will do everything in my power to nurture my children

in such a way that they will make the world a better place.”

She replied, “Well, I hope you do!” and hung up.

It wasn’t a big thing—after all, I was standing safely in my own kitchen! But in my own small way, I was able to speak in defense of family, mothers, and nurturers because of two things: (1) I understood and believed God’s

doctrine of the family, and (2) I prayed for words to convey these truths.

Being distinct and different from the world will draw some criticism, but we must anchor ourselves to eternal principles and testify of them, no matter the world’s response.

When we ask ourselves, “What shall we do?” let’s ponder this question: “What does the Savior do continually?” He nurtures. He creates. He encourages growth and goodness. Women and sisters, we can do these things! Primary girls, is there someone in your family who needs your love and kindness? You build the kingdom by nurturing others too.

The Savior’s creation of the earth, under the direction of His Father, was a mighty act of nurturing. He provided a place for us to grow and develop faith in His atoning power. Faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement is the ultimate place of healing and hope, growth and purpose. All of us need a spiritual and physical place of belonging. We, sisters of all ages, can create this; it is even a holy place.

Our high responsibility is to become women who follow the Savior, nurture with inspiration, and live truth fearlessly. As we ask Father in Heaven to make us builders of His kingdom, His power will flow into us and we will know how to nurture, ultimately becoming like our heavenly parents. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Acts 2:36–37.
2. Eliza R. Snow, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 42.
3. Emma Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 12.
4. See Genesis 3:20.
5. Orson F. Whitney, in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 98.
6. Julie B. Beck, “And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 11.





By Linda K. Burton  
Relief Society General President

## “I Was a Stranger”

*Prayerfully determine what you can do—according to your own time and circumstance—to serve the refugees living in your neighborhoods and communities.*

On the day Relief Society was organized, Emma Smith declared: “We are going to do something extraordinary. . . . We expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls.”<sup>1</sup> Those pressing calls and extraordinary occasions presented themselves frequently then—as they do now.

One came in the October 1856 general conference as President Brigham Young announced to the congregation that handcart pioneers were still on the trail and late in the season. He declared: “Your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains, and attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, . . . otherwise your faith will be in vain.”<sup>2</sup>

We remember with grateful admiration the men who headed off to rescue those suffering Saints. But what did the sisters do?

“Sister [Lucy Meserve] Smith recorded . . . that after President Young’s exhortation, those in attendance took action. . . . Women [removed] their petticoats [large underskirts that were part

of the fashion of the day and that also provided warmth], stockings, and every thing they could spare, right there in the [old] Tabernacle, and piled [them] into the wagons to send to the Saints in the mountains.”<sup>3</sup>

Several weeks later, President Brigham Young gathered the Saints again in the old Tabernacle as the rescuers and the handcart companies got closer to Salt Lake City. With great urgency, he pleaded with the Saints—especially the sisters—to nurse the sufferers and feed them and receive

them, saying: “Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. . . . We want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them.”<sup>4</sup>

Lucy Meserve Smith also recorded: “We did all we could, with the aid of the good brethren and sisters, to comfort the needy. . . . They got their hands and feet badly frosted. . . . We did not cease our exertions [un]til all were made comfortable. . . .

“I never took more satisfaction and, I might say, pleasure in any labor I ever performed in my life, such a unanimity of feeling prevailed. . . .

“What comes next for willing hands to do?”<sup>5</sup>

My beloved sisters, this account might be likened to our day and those who are suffering throughout the world. Another “extraordinary occasion” touches our hearts.

There are more than 60 million refugees, including forcibly displaced people, worldwide. Half of those are children.<sup>6</sup> “These individuals have undergone tremendous difficulties



and are starting over in . . . new countr[ies] and culture[s]. While there are [sometimes] organizations that help them with a place to live and basic necessities, what they need is a friend and ally who can help them [adjust] to their new home, a person who can help them learn the language, understand the systems, and feel connected.”<sup>7</sup>



After living for years as refugees, Yvette Bugingo (above) and other members of her family met a caring couple who helped them adjust to a new home.

Last summer I met Sister Yvette Bugingo, who at age 11 fled from place to place after her father was killed and three of her brothers went missing in a war-torn part of the world. Yvette and the remaining family members eventually lived for six and a half years as refugees in a neighboring country until they were able to move to a permanent home, where they were blessed by a caring couple who helped with transportation, schools, and other things. She said they “were basically an answer to our prayers.”<sup>8</sup> Her beautiful mother and adorable little sister are with us tonight, singing in the choir. I have wondered many times since meeting these wonderful women, “What if *their* story were *my* story?”

As sisters we make up more than half of the Lord’s storehouse to help

Heavenly Father’s children. His storehouse is not composed just of goods but also of time, talents, skills, and our divine nature. Sister Rosemary M. Wixom has taught, “The divine nature within us ignites our desire to reach out to others and prompts us to act.”<sup>9</sup>

Recognizing our divine nature, President Russell M. Nelson urged:

“We need women who know how to make important things happen by their faith and who are courageous defenders of morality and families in a sin-sick world . . . ; women who know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen children and families. . . .

“ . . . Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God. We brethren cannot duplicate your unique influence.”<sup>10</sup>

A First Presidency letter sent to the Church on October 27, 2015, expressed great concern and compassion for the millions of people who have fled their homes seeking relief from civil conflict and other hardships. The First Presidency invited individuals, families, and Church units to participate in Christlike service in local refugee relief projects and to contribute to the Church humanitarian fund, where practical.

The general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary have considered how to respond to the First Presidency’s invitation. We know that you, our beloved sisters of all ages, come from all walks of life and live in varied circumstances. Each member of this worldwide sisterhood has covenanted at baptism to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”<sup>11</sup> Yet we must remember that none of us should run faster than we have strength.<sup>12</sup>

With these truths in mind, we have organized a relief effort called “I Was

a Stranger.” It is our hope that you will prayerfully determine what you can do—according to your own time and circumstance—to serve the refugees living in your neighborhoods and communities. This is an opportunity to serve one on one, in families, and by organization to offer friendship, mentoring, and other Christlike service and is one of many ways sisters can serve.

In all our prayerful efforts, we should apply the wise counsel of King Benjamin, given to his people after he exhorted them to care for those in need: “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order.”<sup>13</sup>

Sisters, we know that reaching out to others with love matters to the Lord. Consider these scriptural admonitions:

“The stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.”<sup>14</sup>

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”<sup>15</sup>

And the Savior said:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me.”<sup>16</sup>

The Savior lovingly acknowledged the widow whose contribution was only two mites because she did what she could.<sup>17</sup> He also told the parable of the good Samaritan, which He concluded saying, “Go, and do thou likewise.”<sup>18</sup> Sometimes reaching out is inconvenient. But when we work together in love and unity, we can expect heaven’s help.

At the funeral services for a remarkable daughter of God, someone shared that this sister, as stake

Relief Society president, worked with others in her stake to contribute quilts to give warmth to suffering people in Kosovo during the 1990s. And like the good Samaritan, she went out of her way to do more as she and her daughter drove a truck filled with those quilts from London to Kosovo. On her journey home she received an unmistakable spiritual impression that sank deep into her heart. The impression was this: “What you have done is a very good thing. Now go home, walk across the street, and serve your neighbor!”<sup>19</sup>

The funeral was filled with additional inspiring accounts of how this faithful woman recognized and responded to the extraordinary and pressing calls—and also the ordinary occasions—of those within her sphere of influence. For example, she opened her home and her heart to help struggling young people at any hour—day or night.

My beloved sisters, we can be assured of Heavenly Father’s help as we get down on our knees and ask for divine guidance to bless His children. Heavenly Father; our Savior, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost are ready to help.

President Henry B. Eyring bore this powerful testimony to the women of the Church:

“Heavenly Father hears and answers your prayers of faith for guidance and for help to endure in your service for Him.

“The Holy Ghost is sent to you and to those you care for. You will be strengthened and yet inspired to know the limits and extent of your ability to serve. The Spirit will comfort you when you may wonder, ‘Did I do enough?’”<sup>20</sup>

As we consider the “pressing calls” of those who need our help, let’s ask



ourselves, “What if *their* story were *my* story?” May we then seek inspiration, act on impressions we receive, and reach out in unity to help those in need as we are able and inspired to do so. Perhaps then it might be said of us, as the Savior said of a loving sister who ministered to Him: “She hath wrought a good work. . . . She hath done what she could.”<sup>21</sup> I call that extraordinary! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Emma Smith, in *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 14.
2. Brigham Young, in *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 36.
3. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 36–37.
4. Brigham Young, in James E. Faust, “Go Bring Them in from the Plains,” *Ensign*, July 1997, 7; *Liahona*, Nov. 1997, 7; see also LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration 1856–1860* (1960), 139.
5. Lucy Meserve Smith, in Jill Mulvay Derr and others, eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women’s History* (2016), 217, 218, spelling and punctuation

standardized; see also *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 37.

6. See “Facts and Figures about Refugees,” [unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html](http://unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html).
7. “40 Ways to Help Refugees in Your Community,” Sept. 9, 2015, [mormonchannel.org](http://mormonchannel.org).
8. Email from Yvette Bugingo, Mar. 12, 2016.
9. Rosemary M. Wixom, “Discovering the Divinity Within,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 8. Emily Woodmansee, one of those rescued in 1856 in the Willie handcart company, described divine nature this way (with a slight alteration on my part): *The errand of angels is given to women; And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim: To do whatsoever is gentle and [Christlike], To cheer and to bless in [the Savior’s] name.* (“As Sisters in Zion,” *Hymns*, no. 309)
10. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96, 97.
11. Mosiah 18:9.
12. See Mosiah 4:27.
13. Mosiah 4:27.
14. Leviticus 19:34.
15. Hebrews 13:2.
16. Matthew 25:35–36.
17. See Luke 21:1–4.
18. Luke 10:37.
19. Funeral service for Rosemary Curtis Neider, Jan. 2015.
20. Henry B. Eyring, “The Caregiver,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 124.
21. Mark 14:6, 8.



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

# Trust in That Spirit Which Leadeth to Do Good

*We grow closer to the Savior as we, out of pure love, serve others for Him.*

I am grateful to be with you in this evening of worship, reflection, and dedication. We have prayed together. Our loving Heavenly Father has heard us. We have remembered our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have been touched by hymns of praise to Him. We have been inspired to do more to help our Master in His work to lift up and to succor the children of our Heavenly Father.

Our desire to serve others is magnified by our gratitude for what the Savior has done for us. That is why our hearts swell when we hear the words sung “Because I have been given much, I too must give.”<sup>1</sup> King Benjamin, in his great sermon recorded in the Book of Mormon, promised that feeling of gratitude would come (see Mosiah 2:17–19).

When our faith in Jesus Christ leads us to qualify for the joy of His forgiveness, we feel a desire to serve others for Him. King Benjamin taught that forgiveness is not accomplished in a single moment.

He said it this way: “And now, for the sake of these things which I have

spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the

sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26).

Alma’s great companion Amulek also taught the truth that we must continue in our service to Him to retain forgiveness: “And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith” (Alma 34:28).

I have thought tonight of the women in my life. There are 31 women and girls in our family, beginning with my wife and progressing to include our three newest great-granddaughters. Some are here with us this evening. Five are under the age of 12. This may be their first meeting



in the Conference Center with their sisters in the Savior's Church. Each will take a different set of memories and make her own commitments from this experience tonight.

There are three memories and three commitments that I pray will stay with them over a lifetime and even beyond. The memories are of feelings. And the commitments are of things to do.

The feeling of greatest importance is love. You have felt the love of the great sister leaders who have spoken. And you have felt by the Spirit that they loved you without even knowing you because they felt Heavenly Father's and the Savior's love for you. That is why they want so much to serve you and to have you receive the blessings God wants for you.

You have felt love for others tonight—for friends, schoolmates, neighbors, and even someone who just came into your life, a stranger. That feeling of love is a gift from God. The scriptures call it "charity" and "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47). You have felt that love tonight, and you can receive it often if you seek it.

A second feeling you have had tonight was the influence of the Holy Ghost. Sisters have promised you this day that the Holy Ghost will guide you to find the service the Lord would have you give to others for Him. You have felt by the Spirit that their promise was from the Lord and that it is true.

The Lord said, "And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit" (D&C 11:12).

You may have received that blessing tonight. For instance, a name or a face of someone in need may have come to your mind during this meeting. It could



have been only a fleeting thought, but because of what you heard tonight, you will pray about it, trusting that God will lead you to do the good He wants for them. As such prayers become a pattern in your life, you and others will be changed for the better.

The third feeling you have had tonight is that you want to be closer to the Savior. Even the youngest girl here will have felt the reality of the invitation in the song: "'Come, follow me,' the Savior said. Then let us in his footsteps tread."<sup>2</sup>

So, with those feelings, the first thing you must commit to do is to go and serve, knowing that you do not go alone. When you go to comfort and serve anyone for the Savior, He prepares the way before you. Now, as the returned missionaries here tonight will tell you, that doesn't mean that every person behind every door is prepared to welcome you or that every person you try to serve will thank you. But the Lord will go before your face to prepare the way.

Time and again President Thomas S. Monson has said he knows the reality

of the Lord's promise: "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" (D&C 84:88).

One of the ways He goes before your face is to prepare the heart of a person He has asked you to serve. He will prepare your heart as well.

You will also find that the Lord puts helpers by your side—on your right, on your left, and all around you. You do not go alone to serve others for Him.

He did that for me tonight. The Lord arranged "a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), both in words and music, to combine and multiply the power of what He wanted me to say. I just had to be sure that I could fit my part into His composition. I hope and pray that you will feel gratitude and joy as the Lord puts you together with others to serve for Him.

As you have that experience often, and you will, you will smile with recognition, just as I do, whenever we sing, "Sweet is the work."<sup>3</sup>



You will also smile as you remember this verse: “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

The second thing you must do is remember the Lord as you go in service for Him. The Lord not only goes before our faces and sends angels to serve with us, but He also feels the comfort we give others as if we had given it to Him.

Every daughter of God who hears and believes the messages of this meeting will ask, “What will the Lord have me do to help Him give succor to those in need?” Each sister’s situation is unique. That is true for my little band of daughters, daughters-in-law, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters. To them, and to all of Heavenly Father’s daughters, I repeat the wise counsel of Sister Linda K. Burton.

She has asked you to pray in faith to know what the Lord would have you do in your circumstances. And then she spoke of the promise of the sweet comfort the Lord Himself gave to the woman who was criticized for having anointed His head with expensive oil when it might have been sold to help the poor.

“And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

“For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

“She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

“Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Mark 14:6–9).

That short scripture is sweet and wise counsel for the faithful sisters in the Lord’s kingdom in tumultuous times. You will pray to know whom the Father would have you serve out of love for Him and for our Savior. And you will not expect a public memorial, following the example of the woman in Mark’s scriptural account, whose holy deed to honor the Savior of the world is remembered but not her name.

My hope is that the sisters in our family will do the best they can out of love for God to serve those in need. And the third thing I hope they will do is to be personally modest about their good works. Yet I will pray that they will accept the counsel of the Lord,

when He said—which I am confident we all need to hear:

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”

And then He said:

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

“That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:1, 3–4).

My prayer for the sisters in the kingdom, wherever they may be or in whatever circumstances, is that their faith in the Savior and gratitude for His Atonement will lead them to do all they can for those God asks them to serve. As they do, I promise that they will move up the path to become holy women whom the Savior and our Heavenly Father will welcome warmly and reward openly.

I testify that this is the Church of the resurrected Jesus Christ. He is risen. He paid the price for all of our sins. I know that because of Him we will be resurrected and can have eternal life. President Thomas S. Monson is His living prophet. Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers. I witness that we grow closer to the Savior as we, out of pure love, serve others for Him. I so leave you that sure witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “Because I Have Been Given Much,” *Hymns*, no. 219.
2. “Come, Follow Me,” *Hymns*, no. 116.
3. “Sweet Is the Work,” *Hymns*, no. 147.



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

# Where Two or Three Are Gathered

*If you listen with the Spirit, you will find your heart softened, your faith strengthened, and your capacity to love the Lord increased.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, I welcome you to the 186th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I rejoice to be with you, and I welcome you warmly.

I am grateful that you have come to the conference to feel inspiration from heaven and to feel closer to our Heavenly Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gathered in this meeting, which stretches across the world, are millions of disciples of Jesus Christ who are under covenant to always remember Him and serve Him. By the miracle of modern technology, the separation of time and of vast distances vanishes. We meet as if we are all together in one great hall.

But even more important than our gathering together is in whose name we do so. The Lord promised that even with the great number of His disciples on the earth today, He would be close to each of us. He said to His little band of disciples in 1829, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, . . . where two or three are gathered together in my name, . . . behold, there will I be in the midst of

them—even so am I in the midst of you” (D&C 6:32).

Now numbering more than one or two, a multitude of His disciples are gathered in this conference, and as promised, the Lord is in our midst. Because He is a resurrected and glorified being, He is not physically everywhere where Saints gather. But, by the power of the Spirit, we can feel that He is here with us today.

Where and when we feel the closeness of the Savior depend on each of us. He gave this instruction:

“And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:62–63).

I know of at least two people listening today who want that blessing with all their hearts. They will try earnestly to draw nearer to the Lord during this conference. They each wrote to me—their letters arriving at my office in the same week—pleading for the same kind of help.

Both of them are converts to the Church and have previously received clear testimonies of the love of God the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. They knew that the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the





Church by direct revelation from God and that the keys of the holy priesthood were restored. Each felt a witness that keys are in place in the Church today. They bore to me their solemn testimony in writing.

Yet both lamented that feelings of love for the Lord and His love for them were lessening. They both wanted, with full heart, for me to help them regain the joy and the feeling of being loved that was theirs as they came into the kingdom of God. Both expressed a fear that if they could not regain in full those feelings of love for the Savior and His Church, the trials and tests they faced would finally overcome their faith.

They are not alone in their concern, nor is their test a new one. During His mortal ministry, the Savior gave us the parable of the seed and the sower. The seed was the word of God. The sower was the Lord. The survival of the seed and its growth depended on the condition of the soil. You remember His words:

“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

“And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:4–9).

Again, the seed is the word of God. The soil is the heart of the person who receives the seed.

All of us have much in common with the wonderful people who wrote to me for help and reassurance. We all have had seeds, or the word of God, planted in our hearts at one time. For some, it was in childhood when our

parents invited us to be baptized and confirmed by those in authority. Others of us were taught by called servants of God. Each felt that the seed was good, even felt the swelling in our hearts, and experienced joy as our hearts and minds seemed to expand.

All of us have had our faith tested by precious blessings delayed, vicious attacks of those who wanted to destroy our faith, temptations to sin, and selfish interests that reduced our efforts to cultivate and soften the spiritual depths of our hearts.

Those who are saddened by the loss of the joy they once had are the blessed ones. Some do not see the withering of faith within themselves. *Satan is clever.* He tells those he wishes to be miserable that the joy they once felt was childish self-delusion.

Today my message to us all is that there will be a precious opportunity in the next few days to choose to have our hearts softened and to receive and nourish the seed. The seed is the word of God, and it will be poured out on

all of us who listen, watch, and read the proceedings of this conference. The music, the talks, and the testimonies have been prepared by servants of God who have sought diligently for the Holy Ghost to guide them in their preparation. They have prayed longer and more humbly as the days of the conference have approached.

They have prayed to have the power to encourage you to make the choices that will create in your heart a more fertile ground for the good word of God to grow and be fruitful. If you listen with the Spirit, you will find your heart softened, your faith strengthened, and your capacity to love the Lord increased.

Your choice to pray with full purpose of heart will transform your experience in the conference sessions and in the days and months that follow.

Many of you have already begun. At the start of this session, you more than listened to the prayer; you added your faith to the petition that we will enjoy the blessing of having the Holy Ghost poured out upon us. As you added your silent pleading in the name of Jesus Christ, you drew closer to Him. This is His conference. Only the Holy Ghost can bring the blessings the Lord desires for us. In His love for us, He has promised we can feel that:

“Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.

“Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants.

“Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall

bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come” (D&C 68:4–6).

You can pray and add your faith each time a servant of God approaches the pulpit that the promise of the Lord in Doctrine and Covenants section 50 will be fulfilled:

“Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

“And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

“And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

“If it be some other way it is not of God.

“Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

“Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:17–22).

You can pray as the choir is about to sing. The choir director, the organists, and the choir members have prayed and practiced with a prayer in their hearts and with faith that the music and the words will soften hearts and magnify their power to build others’ faith. They will perform for the Lord as if they were before Him, and they will know that our Heavenly Father hears them as surely as He hears their personal prayers. Together they have labored with love to make the promise of the Savior to Emma Smith come true: “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” (D&C 25:12).

If you not only listen but also pray as they sing, your prayer and their prayers will be answered with a





surprised when I cannot remember saying the words. I spoke the words of testimony, but the Lord was there, giving them to me in the moment. The promise that the Lord will give us words in the very moment applies especially to testimony (see D&C 24:6). Listen carefully to the testimonies borne in this conference—you will feel closer to the Lord.

You can sense that I am coming to the moment when I will cap the message I have tried to convey with a testimony of truth. Your prayers will help me to be given words of testimony that may help someone longing for an answer to his or her questions.

I leave you my sure witness that our Heavenly Father, the great Elohim, loves and knows us, every one. Under His direction, His Son, Jehovah, was the Creator. I testify that Jesus of Nazareth was born the Son of God. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. He paid the price of all the sins of each of Heavenly Father's children born into mortality. He broke the bands of death for all as He rose from the tomb that first Easter Sunday. He lives today, a God—resurrected and glorious.

This is the only true Church, and He is its chief cornerstone. Thomas S. Monson is His prophet to all the world. The prophets and apostles you will hear in this conference speak for the Lord. They are His servants, authorized to act for Him. He goes before His servants in the world. This I know. And I so witness in His name, even the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

blessing upon your head as well as theirs. You will feel the blessing of the Savior's love and approval. All who join in that praise will feel their love for Him grow.

You might choose to pray as a speaker seems to be coming to an end of his or her message. He or she will be praying inwardly to the Father that the Holy Ghost will give him or her the words of testimony that will lift the listeners' hearts, hopes, and determination to always remember the Savior and keep the commandments that He has given us.

The testimony will not be a recital of the message. It will be an affirmation of

some truth that the Spirit can carry into the hearts of those who will be praying for help, for divine direction, and to receive the pure love of Christ.

True testimony will be given to the speakers. Their words may be few, but they will be carried into the heart of the humble listener who has come to the conference hungry for the good word of God.

I know from experience what the faith of good people can do to bring words from the Spirit at the close of a sermon. More than once, someone has said to me after my testimony, "How did you know what I so needed to hear?" I have learned not to be



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**By Mary R. Durham**  
Recently Released Second Counselor  
in the Primary General Presidency

## A Child's Guiding Gift

*How do we teach our children to kick off worldly influences and trust the Spirit?*

A young father was literally sinking. He, his two children, and his father-in-law had gone for a walk around a lake. They were surrounded by majestic pine-covered mountains, and the sky was blue, filled with soft white clouds, emanating beauty and serenity. When the children grew hot and tired, the two men decided to put the children on their backs and swim the short distance across the lake.

It seemed easy—until the moment when the father began to feel pulled down, everything becoming so heavy. Water pushed him to the bottom of the lake, and a frantic feeling came over him. How was he going to keep afloat—and do so with his precious young daughter on his back?

His voice disappeared in the distance as he called out; his father-in-law was too far away to answer a desperate plea for help. He felt alone and helpless.

Can you imagine feeling as alone as he felt, unable to reach anything to hold on to and struggling in a desperate situation for your life and your child? Unfortunately, all of us experience some degree of this feeling when we are in situations where we desperately need to find help in order to survive and to save those we love.

Near panic, he realized that his water-saturated shoes were weighing him down. While working to stay afloat, he began to attempt to get his heavy shoes off his feet. But it was as if they were held on with suction. The laces were swollen with water, cinching the grip even tighter.

In what may have been his last moment of desperation, he managed to pry the shoes from his feet, and at last the shoes released their hold, quickly falling to the bottom of the lake. Free from the heavy weight that had been dragging him down, he immediately propelled himself and his daughter upward. He could now swim forward, moving toward safety on the other side of the lake.

At times we may all feel as if we are drowning. Life can be heavy. We live in “a noisy and busy world. . . . If we are not careful, the things of this world can [drown] out the things of the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

How do we follow the example of this father and kick off some of the weight of the world we carry, so we can keep our children's heads and our own worried minds above the water?



How can we, as Paul counseled, “lay aside every weight”?<sup>2</sup> How can we prepare our children for the day when they can no longer cling to us and our testimonies—when they are the ones swimming?

An answer comes when we recognize this divine source of strength. It is a source often underestimated, yet it can be used daily to lighten our

load and guide our precious children. That source is the guiding gift of the Holy Ghost.

At age eight, children can experience baptism. They learn about and make a covenant with God. Those they love surround them as they are immersed and come out of the font with a feeling of great joy. Then they receive the unspeakable gift of the

Holy Ghost, a gift that may guide them constantly as they live for that blessing.

Elder David A. Bednar said: “The simplicity of [confirmation] may cause us to overlook its significance. These four words—‘Receive the Holy Ghost’—are not a passive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon.”<sup>3</sup>

Children have a natural desire to do good and to be good. We can feel their innocence, their purity. They also have a great sensitivity to the still, small voice.

In 3 Nephi 26, the Savior showed us the spiritual capacity of children:

“He did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people. . . .

“ . . . They both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things.”<sup>4</sup>

How do we as parents increase the spiritual capacity of our little ones? How do we teach them to kick off worldly influences and trust the Spirit when we are not with them and they are alone in the deep waters of their lives?

Let me share with you some ideas.

**First, we can bring to our children’s attention when they are hearing and feeling the Spirit.** Let’s go back in time to the Old Testament to see how Eli did just this for Samuel.

Young Samuel twice heard a voice and ran to Eli, saying, “Here am I.”

“I called not,” responded Eli.

But “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.”

By the third time, Eli perceived that the Lord had called Samuel and told





Samuel to say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”<sup>5</sup>

Samuel was beginning to feel, recognize, and hearken to the Lord’s voice. But this young boy didn’t start to understand until Eli facilitated this recognition. And having been taught, Samuel could become more familiar with the still, small voice.

**Second, we can prepare our homes and our children to feel the still, small voice.** “Many teachers of foreign languages believe that children learn a language best in ‘immersion programs,’ in which they are surrounded by other speakers of the language and called upon to speak it themselves. They learn not just to say words, but to speak fluently and even to think in the new language. The [best] ‘immersion’ setting for a spiritual education is in the home, where spiritual principles can form the basis for daily living.”<sup>6</sup>

“Thou shalt teach [the Lord’s words] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>7</sup> Immersing our families in the Spirit will keep our children’s hearts open to His influence.

**Third, we can help our children understand how the Spirit speaks to them.** Joseph Smith taught, “If He comes to a little child, He will adapt himself to the language and capacity of a little child.”<sup>8</sup> One mother discovered that since children learn differently—some learn visually, auditorily, tactilely, or kinesthetically—the more she observed her children, the more she realized that the Holy Ghost teaches her children in ways they each learn best.<sup>9</sup>

Another mother shared an experience of helping her children learn to recognize the Spirit. “Sometimes,” she wrote, “[children] don’t realize that a recurring thought, a feeling of comfort after they cry, or remembering something at just the right time are all ways that the Holy Ghost communicates [with them].” She continues, “I’m teaching my [children] to focus on what they feel [and act on it].”<sup>10</sup>

Feeling and recognizing the Spirit will bring spiritual capacity into our children’s lives, and the voice they come to know will become clearer and clearer to them. It will be as Elder Richard G. Scott said: “As you gain experience and success in being

guided by the Spirit, your confidence in the impressions you feel can become more certain than your dependence on what you see or hear.”<sup>11</sup>

We need not fear as we see our children enter the waters of life, for we have helped them rid themselves of worldly weight. We have taught them to live for the guiding gift of the Spirit. This gift will continue to lighten the weight they carry and lead them back to their heavenly home if they live for it and follow its promptings. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Unspeakable Gift,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 27.
2. Hebrews 12:1.
3. David A. Bednar, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 95.
4. 3 Nephi 26:14, 16.
5. See 1 Samuel 3:4–10.
6. C. Terry and Susan L. Warner, “Helping Children Hear the Still, Small Voice,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1994, 19; *Tambuli*, Aug. 1994, 27.
7. Deuteronomy 6:7.
8. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:392.
9. See Merrilee Browne Boyack, “Helping Children Recognize the Holy Ghost,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Dec. 2013, 10–12.
10. Irinna Danielson, “How to Answer the Toughest ‘Whys’ of Life,” Oct. 30, 2015, [lds.org/blog](https://lds.org/blog).
11. Richard G. Scott, “To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 7.



By Elder Donald L. Hallstrom  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# I Am a Child of God

*A correct understanding of our heavenly heritage is essential to exaltation.*

Our most fundamental doctrine includes the knowledge that we are children of a living God. That is why one of His most sacred names is Father—Heavenly Father. This doctrine has been clearly taught by prophets through the ages:

- When tempted by Satan, Moses rebuffed him, saying: “Who art thou? For behold, I am a *son of God*.”<sup>1</sup>
- Addressing Israel, the Psalmist proclaimed, “All of you are *children of the most High*.”<sup>2</sup>
- Paul taught the Athenians on Mars Hill that they were “*offspring of God*.”<sup>3</sup>
- Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received a vision in which they saw the Father and the Son, and a heavenly voice declared that the inhabitants of the worlds “are *begotten sons and daughters unto God*.”<sup>4</sup>
- In 1995, the 15 living apostles and prophets affirmed: “All human beings . . . are created in the image of God. Each is a *beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents*.”<sup>5</sup>
- President Thomas S. Monson testified: “We are *sons and daughters of a living God*. . . . We cannot sincerely hold this conviction without experiencing a profound new sense of strength and power.”<sup>6</sup>

This doctrine is so basic, so oft stated, and so instinctively simple that it can seem to be ordinary, when in reality it is among the most extraordinary knowledge we can obtain. A correct understanding of our heavenly heritage is essential to exaltation. It is foundational to comprehending the glorious plan of salvation and to nurturing faith in the Firstborn of the Father, Jesus the Christ, and in His merciful Atonement.<sup>7</sup> Further, it provides continual motivation for us to make and keep our indispensable eternal covenants.

With few exceptions, everyone participating in this meeting could right now, without written lyrics or music, sing “I Am a Child of God.”<sup>8</sup> This beloved hymn is one of the most often sung in this Church. But the critical question is, do we *really* know it? Do we know it in our mind and in our heart and in our soul? Is our heavenly parentage our first and most profound identity?

Here on earth, we identify ourselves in many different ways, including our place of birth, our nationality, and our language. Some even identify themselves by their occupation or their hobby. These earthly identities are not wrong *unless* they supersede or interfere with our eternal identity—that of being a son or a daughter of God.

When our youngest child was six years old and in the first grade at school, her teacher gave the children an in-class writing assignment. It was October, the month of Halloween, a holiday observed in some parts of the world. While it is not my favorite holiday, I suppose there may be some



innocent and redeeming aspects of Halloween.

The teacher passed out a piece of paper to the young students. At the top was a roughly drawn picture of a mythical witch (I told you this was not my favorite holiday) standing over a boiling cauldron. The question posed on the page, to encourage the imaginations of the children and to test their rudimentary writing skills, was “You have just drunk a cup of the witch’s brew. What happened to you?” Please know that this story is not being shared as a recommendation to teachers.

“You have just drunk a cup of the witch’s brew. What happened to you?” With her best beginner’s writing, our little one wrote, “I will die and I will be in heaven. I will like it there. I would love it because it is the best place to be because you are with your Heavenly Father.” This answer likely surprised her teacher; however, when our daughter brought the completed assignment home, we noted that she was given a star, the highest grade.

In real life, we face actual, not imagined, hardships. There is pain—physical, emotional, and spiritual. There are heartbreaks when circumstances are very different from what we had anticipated. There is injustice when we do not seem to deserve our situation. There are disappointments when someone we trusted failed us. There are health and financial setbacks that can be disorienting. There may be times of question when a matter of doctrine or history is beyond our current understanding.

When difficult things occur in our lives, what is our immediate response? Is it confusion or doubt or spiritual withdrawal? Is it a blow to our faith? Do we blame God or others for our circumstances? Or is our first response



to remember who we are—that we are children of a loving God? Is that coupled with an absolute trust that He allows some earthly suffering *because* He knows it will bless us, like a refiner’s fire, to become like Him and to gain our eternal inheritance?<sup>9</sup>

Recently, I was in a meeting with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. In teaching the principle that mortal life can be agonizing but our hardships have eternal purpose—even if we do not understand it at the time—Elder Holland said, “You can have what you want, or you can have something better.”

Five months ago, my wife, Diane, and I went to Africa with Elder and Sister David A. Bednar. The sixth and

last country we visited was Liberia. Liberia is a great country with a noble people and a rich history, but things have not been easy there. Decades of political instability and civil wars have worsened the plague of poverty. On top of that, the dreaded Ebola disease killed nearly 5,000 people there during the latest outbreak. We were the first group of Church leaders from outside the area to visit Monrovia, the capital city, since the World Health Organization declared it safe to do so after the Ebola crisis.

On a very hot and humid Sunday morning, we traveled to a rented meeting facility in the center of the city. Every available chair was set up,



totaling 3,500 seats. The final count of attendees was 4,100. Almost all who came had to travel by foot or some form of inconvenient public transportation; it was not easy for the Saints to gather. But they came. Most arrived several hours before the appointed meeting time. As we entered the hall, the spiritual atmosphere was electric! The Saints were prepared to be taught.

When a speaker quoted a scripture, the members would say the verse aloud. It did not matter—short scripture or long; the entire congregation responded in unison. Now, we do not necessarily recommend this, but it was certainly impressive that they could do it. And the choir—they were powerful. With an enthusiastic choir director and a 14-year-old young man at the keyboard, the members sang with vigor and strength.

Then Elder Bednar spoke. This, of course, was the anticipated highlight of the gathering—to hear an Apostle

teach and testify. Clearly with spiritual direction, partway through his remarks, Elder Bednar stopped and said, “Do you know ‘How Firm a Foundation?’”

It seemed that 4,100 voices roared in response, “YES!”

He then asked, “Do you know verse 7?”

Again the entire group answered, “YES!”

The arrangement of the mighty hymn “How Firm a Foundation” sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir for the last 10 years has included verse 7, which was not sung much previously. Elder Bednar instructed, “Let’s sing verses 1, 2, 3, and 7.”

Without hesitation, the choir director jumped up and the Aaronic Priesthood-bearing accompanist immediately began to energetically play the introductory chords. With a level of conviction I have never felt before in a congregational hymn, we sang verses 1, 2, and 3. Then the volume and spiritual

power was elevated when 4,100 voices sang the seventh verse and declared:

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned  
for repose  
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should  
endeavor to shake,  
I’ll never, no never, I’ll never, no never,  
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!*<sup>10</sup>

In one of the most remarkable spiritual events of my life, I was taught a profound lesson that day. We live in a world that can cause us to forget who we really are. The more distractions that surround us, the easier it is to treat casually, then ignore, and then forget our connection with God. The Saints in Liberia have little materially, and yet they seem to have everything spiritually. What we witnessed that day in Monrovia was a group of sons and daughters of God who knew it!

In today’s world, no matter where we live and no matter what our circumstances are, it is essential that our preeminent identity is as a child of God. *Knowing* that will allow our faith to flourish, will motivate our continual repentance, and will provide the strength to “be steadfast and immovable” throughout our mortal journey.<sup>11</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Moses 1:13; emphasis added.
2. Psalm 82:6; emphasis added.
3. Acts 17:29; emphasis added.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; emphasis added.
5. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129; emphasis added.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Canaries with Gray on Their Wings,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, June 2010, 4; emphasis added.
7. See Colossians 1:13–15.
8. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. See Malachi 3:2.
10. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
11. Mosiah 5:15.



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

# Where Are the Keys and Authority of the Priesthood?

*Priesthood authority and keys start the engine, open the gates of heaven, facilitate heavenly power, and pave the covenant pathway back to our Heavenly Father.*

As the winter afternoon sun slid behind the expansive snow-covered ski hill, the freezing mountain air sharply bit our cheeks and noses, acting almost like a stern usher instructing us to find our cars and trucks in the ski resort parking lot. There in our comfortable cars, heaters would soon warm cold fingers and toes. The sound of the frozen snow crunching with each step we took confirmed that this was extreme cold.

Our family had enjoyed a fun-filled day on the ski slopes, which was now coming to a frosty close. Arriving at the car, I reached in my coat pocket for the keys and then another pocket and another. “Where are the keys?” Everyone was anxiously waiting on the keys! The car battery was charged, and all the systems—including the heater—were ready to go, but without the keys, locked doors would deny entrance; without the keys, the engine would not provide power to the vehicle.

At the time, our primary focus was on how we were going to get into the car and get warm, but I couldn’t help but think—even then—there just might be a lesson here. Without keys, this wonderful miracle of engineering was little more than plastic and metal. Even though the car had great potential,

without keys, it could not perform its intended function.

The more I reflect on this experience, the more profound this analogy has become to me. I marvel at Heavenly Father’s love for His children. I stand in wonder at the heavenly visitation and the grand visions of eternity God bestowed upon Joseph Smith. And in particular, my heart is filled with overwhelming gratitude for the restoration of priesthood authority and priesthood keys. Without this restoration, we would be locked out from the vehicle necessary to transport us on our journey home to loving heavenly parents. The performance of every ordinance of salvation comprising our covenant pathway back to the presence of our Father in Heaven requires appropriate governance through priesthood keys.

In May of 1829, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood, and bestowed upon them the keys attendant to that priesthood. Soon thereafter, Peter, James, and John conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood keys.<sup>1</sup>





Nearly seven years later on a Sunday in the Kirtland Temple, just one week following its dedication, “the Lord Jehovah appears in glory” to Joseph and Oliver, an event followed by the appearance of Moses, Elias, and Elijah, who committed “their keys and dispensations.”<sup>2</sup> The restored priesthood authority and these keys had been lost for centuries. In the same way that our family was locked out of the car, resulting from lost car keys, so too had all of Heavenly Father’s children been locked out from the saving ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ—until a divine restoration was effected by these heavenly messengers. Never, ever again do we have to question, “Where are the keys?”

On a beautiful fall day last year, I visited the peaceful forest located in northeastern Pennsylvania known in scripture as Harmony, where John

the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and restored the Aaronic Priesthood. I also stood on the banks of the Susquehanna River where Joseph and Oliver, endowed with authority and keys, were baptized. Near this same river, Peter, James, and John appeared and restored the Melchizedek Priesthood and its attendant keys.<sup>3</sup>

These sites, as well as the reconstructed first home of Joseph and Emma, where most of the Book of Mormon was translated; the nearby home of Emma’s parents; and a visitors’ center incorporated into a new meetinghouse, comprise the new Priesthood Restoration Site, dedicated by President Russell M. Nelson in September of last year. There, I felt the power and reality of the heavenly events which took place on that sacred ground. That experience led me to ponder, study, and pray about priesthood authority

and priesthood keys, which impressed me with a desire to share with the young men and young women of the Church how priesthood authority and restored keys can bless them.

First, an understanding of these terms may be helpful. The priesthood, or priesthood authority, has been defined as “the power and authority of God”<sup>4</sup> and “the consummate power on this earth.”<sup>5</sup> Priesthood keys are defined for our understanding as well: “Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood leaders to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth.”<sup>6</sup> Priesthood keys control the exercise of priesthood authority. Ordinances that create a record in the Church require keys and cannot be done without authorization. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught that “ultimately, all keys of the priesthood are held by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose priesthood it is. He is the one who determines what keys are delegated to mortals and how those keys will be used.”<sup>7</sup>

Now, for you young men and young women, I have considered three ways that you can “find the keys,” or use priesthood keys and authority to bless your life and the lives of others.

#### **The First Is to Prepare for Missionary Service**

My young brothers and sisters, you may not realize it, but the keys of the gathering of Israel, restored by Moses, enable missionary work in our dispensation. Consider the full-time missionary force of approximately 75,000 laboring in the field under the direction of these keys. With this in mind, remember it is never too early for you to prepare for missionary service. In *For the Strength of Youth*, we read, “Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, . . . work diligently to prepare yourself

to represent the Lord as a missionary.”<sup>8</sup> Young women can prepare also, but you “are not under the same mandate to serve.”<sup>9</sup> All of your preparation, however, whether you serve as a full-time missionary or not, will accrue lifelong benefits to you as a member missionary.

### The Second Way to “Find the Keys” Is to Attend the Temple

Sealing keys, restored by the Old Testament prophet Elijah, enable ordinances to take place in holy temples. Ordinances performed in these temples enable individuals and families to return to the presence of our heavenly parents.

We encourage you young men and young women to research and find the names of your ancestors and perform proxy baptisms for them in the temple. We note that this is already taking place in significant and unprecedented numbers throughout the world! Baptistries in many temples are filled with young men and young women early in the morning and into the night. Keys are turned that allow families to be bound together as sacred ordinances are performed in these temples.

Can you see the relationship between priesthood keys and blessings? As you engage in this work, I think you will find that the Lord is in its details. An experience demonstrates this. I recently learned of a mother who regularly escorted her children to the temple to perform proxy baptisms. On this particular day, as this family completed their baptisms and were leaving the temple, a man entered the baptism area with a large batch of his own family names. Realizing there was no one remaining in the baptism area to assist with these family names, a temple worker caught the departing family

and asked the children if they would consider reentering and changing once again to assist with these baptisms. They willingly agreed and went back in. As the children were baptized, their mother, listening, began to recognize the names and soon, to the amazement of all, realized the man’s batch of family names were deceased ancestors of her family as well. A sweet, tender mercy for them.

Two weeks ago the Provo City Center Temple was dedicated as the 150th operating temple of the Church worldwide. We note that when President Thomas S. Monson was sustained as an Apostle in 1963, there were 12 operating temples in the Church. Temples are getting closer and closer to you. However, for those of

you who live where distance or circumstances do not allow regular temple attendance, you should always keep yourself worthy to attend. You can do important work outside of temples as you research and submit your family names.

### Finally, Number Three: Go Forward with Faith

The Old Testament prophet Abraham received a great blessing from the Lord in his dispensation, sometimes referred to as the Abrahamic covenant. Thousands of years later, the blessings of the dispensation of the gospel to Abraham were restored. This occurred when the prophet Elias appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple.





Through this restoration, each of you has access to the great blessings promised to Abraham. These blessings can be yours if you remain faithful and live worthy. In the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*, you are given some very practical instruction about how to “go forward with faith.” I summarize some of that counsel: “To help you become all that the Lord wants you to become, kneel each morning and night in prayer to your Father in Heaven. . . . Study the scriptures each day and apply what you read to your life. . . . Strive each day to be obedient. . . . In all circumstances, follow the teachings of the prophets. . . . Be humble and willing to listen to the Holy Ghost.”

This counsel is followed by a promise leading to promises that come through the blessings of Abraham: “As you do these things, the Lord will make much more out of your life than you can by yourself. He will increase your opportunities, expand your vision, and strengthen you. He will give you the help you need to meet your trials and challenges. You will gain a stronger testimony and find true joy as you come to know your Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, and feel Their love for you.”<sup>10</sup>

To summarize: prepare for missionary service, attend the temple, and go forward with faith.

#### Conclusion

Let’s now end where we began, stranded in the frigid parking lot asking, “Where are the keys?” By the way, later that evening I did miraculously find the keys that had fallen out of my pocket on the mountain. The Lord has shown us that He will not leave us standing in the bitter cold without keys or authority to lead us safely home to Him.

If you are like me, you may often find yourself in daily life asking, “Where are the keys” to the car, the office, the house or apartment? When this happens to me, I can’t help but smile inside, for as I am looking for the keys, I find myself reflecting on restored priesthood keys and on President Thomas S. Monson, whom we sustain “as prophet, seer, and revelator”<sup>11</sup> and as the only person on earth who possesses and is authorized to exercise all priesthood keys. Yes, the keys are safely in the possession of prophets, seers, and revelators. They are conferred, delegated, and assigned to others in accordance with the

Lord’s will, under the direction of the President of the Church.

I testify that priesthood authority and priesthood keys start the engine, open the gates of heaven, facilitate heavenly power, and pave the covenant pathway back to our loving Heavenly Father.

I pray that you, the rising generation of young men and young women, will “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ,”<sup>12</sup> that you may understand that it is your sacred privilege to act under the direction of those who hold the priesthood keys that will unlock blessings, gifts, and powers of heaven for you.

I testify of God the Father; of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ; of the Holy Ghost; and of the Restoration of the gospel in these the latter days, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 110, section summary.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:20.
4. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), page 8.
5. Boyd K. Packer, “Priesthood Power in the Home” (worldwide leadership training meeting, Feb. 2012), [lds.org/broadcasts](https://www.lds.org/broadcasts); see also James E. Faust, “Power of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 41–43.
6. *Handbook 2*, 2.1.1.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Keys and Authority of the Priesthood,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2014, 50.
8. *For the Strength of Youth* (booklet, 2011), 43.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 5.
10. *For the Strength of Youth*, 42–43.
11. See Officers Sustained forms read at annual ward and stake conferences.
12. 2 Nephi 31:20.



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By Elder Kevin R. Duncan  
Of the Seventy

# The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness

*Forgiveness is a glorious, healing principle. We do not need to be a victim twice. We can forgive.*

All that is of God encompasses love, light, and truth. Yet as human beings we live in a fallen world, sometimes full of darkness and confusion. It comes as no surprise that mistakes will be made, injustices will occur, and sins will be committed. As a result, there is not a soul alive who will not, at one time or another, be the victim to someone else's careless actions, hurtful conduct, or even sinful behavior. That is one thing we all have in common.

Gratefully, God, in His love and mercy for His children, has prepared a way to help us navigate these sometimes turbulent experiences of life. He has provided an escape for all who fall victim to the misdeeds of others. He has taught us that we can forgive! Even though we may be a victim once, we need not be a victim twice by carrying the burden of hate, bitterness, pain, resentment, or even revenge. We can forgive, and we can be free!

Many years ago, while I was mending a fence, a small sliver of wood entered into my finger. I made a meager attempt to remove the sliver and thought I had done so, but apparently

I had not. As time went on, skin grew over the sliver, creating a lump on my finger. It was annoying and sometimes painful.

Years later I decided to finally take action. All I did was simply apply ointment to the lump and cover it with a bandage. I repeated this process frequently. You cannot imagine my surprise when one day, as I removed

the bandage, the sliver had emerged from my finger.

The ointment had softened the skin and created an escape for the very thing that had caused pain for so many years. Once the sliver was removed, the finger quickly healed, and to this day, there remains no evidence of any injury.

In a similar way, an unforgiving heart harbors so much needless pain. When we apply the healing ointment of the Savior's Atonement, He will soften our heart and help us to change. He can *heal* the wounded soul (see Jacob 2:8).

I am convinced that most of us want to forgive, but we find it very hard to do. When we have experienced an injustice, we may be quick to say, "That person did wrong. They deserve punishment. Where is the justice?" We mistakenly think that *if* we forgive, somehow justice will not be served and punishments will be avoided.

This simply is not the case. God will mete out a punishment that is fair, for



mercy cannot rob justice (see Alma 42:25). God lovingly assures you and me: “Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. [But let] peace be with you” (D&C 82:23). The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob also promised that God “will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction” (Jacob 3:1).

As victims, if we are *faithful*, we can take great comfort in knowing that God will compensate us for every injustice we experience. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin stated: “The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. . . . Every tear today will eventually be returned a

hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude.”<sup>1</sup>

As we strive to forgive others, let us also try to remember that we are all growing spiritually, but we are all at different levels. While it is easy to observe the changes and growth in the physical body, it is difficult to see the growth in our spirits.

One key to forgiving others is to try to see them as God sees them. At times, God may part the curtain and bless us with the gift to see into the heart, soul, and spirit of another person who has offended us. This insight may even lead to an overwhelming love for that person.

The scriptures teach us that God’s love for His children is perfect. He knows their potential for good, regardless of their past. By all accounts, there could not have been a more aggressive or harsh enemy of the followers of Jesus Christ than Saul of Tarsus. Yet once God showed Saul light and truth, there was never a more devoted, enthusiastic, or fearless disciple of the Savior. Saul became the Apostle Paul. His life offers a wonderful example of how God sees people not only as they currently are but also as they may become. We all have, in our own lives, Saul-like individuals with Paul-like potential. Can you imagine how



our families, our communities, and the world at large might change if we all tried to see each other as God sees us?

Too often we look at the offender the way we would look at an iceberg—we see only the tip and not beneath the surface. We do not know all that is going on in a person's life. We do not know their past; we do not know their struggles; we do not know the pains they carry. Brothers and sisters, please do not misunderstand. To forgive is not to condone. We do not rationalize bad behavior or allow others to mistreat us *because* of their struggles, pains, or weaknesses. But we *can* gain greater understanding and peace when we see with a broader perspective.

Certainly those who are less spiritually mature may indeed make serious mistakes—yet none of us should be *defined* only by the worst thing we have ever done. God is the perfect judge. He sees beneath the surface. He knows all and sees all (see 2 Nephi 2:24). He has said, “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

Christ Himself, when He was unjustly accused, then savagely assaulted, beaten, and left suffering upon the cross, in that very moment said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

In our shortsightedness, we may sometimes find it easy to develop resentments toward others who do not act or think the way we do. We may form intolerant attitudes based on such things as rooting for opposing sports teams, holding different political views, or having different religious beliefs.

President Russell M. Nelson gave wise counsel when he said, “Opportunities to listen to those of diverse religious or political persuasion can promote tolerance and learning.”<sup>2</sup>



The Book of Mormon speaks of a time when “the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and . . . began to be scornful, one towards another, and . . . began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure” (Alma 4:8). Let us all remember that God looketh not upon the color of the jersey or the political party. Instead, as Ammon declared, “[God] looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Alma 18:32). Brothers and sisters, in the competitions of life, if we win, let us win with grace. If we lose, let us lose with grace. For if we live with grace toward one another, grace shall be our reward at the last day.

Just as we are all victims to the misdeeds of others at one time or another, we are also sometimes the offender. We all fall short and have need of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. We must remember that forgiveness of our own sins and offenses is conditioned upon our forgiving others. The Savior said:

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

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father

forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15).

Of all the things the Savior could have said in the Lord's Prayer, which is remarkably short, it is interesting that He chose to include “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12; 3 Nephi 13:11).

Forgiveness is the very reason God sent His Son, so let us rejoice in His offering to heal us all. The Savior's Atonement is not just for those who need to repent; it is also for those who need to forgive. If you are having trouble forgiving another person or even yourself, ask God to help you. Forgiveness is a glorious, healing principle. We do not need to be a victim twice. We can forgive.

I witness of God's enduring love and patience for all of His children and of His desire that we love one another as He loves us (see John 15:9, 12). As we do so, we will break through the darkness of this world into the glory and majesty of His kingdom in heaven. We will be free. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 28.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Listen to Learn,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 23.



By Elder Steven E. Snow  
Of the Seventy

# Be Thou Humble

*Humility enables us to be better parents, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, neighbors and friends.*

We are blessed in the Church to have a collection of hymns which help us worship through song. In our Church meetings, “the hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord. Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns.”<sup>1</sup>

Just a few months after the Church was organized, a revelation was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith for his wife Emma. The Lord directed her “to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church.”<sup>2</sup>

Emma Smith assembled a collection of hymns which first appeared in



*The first edition of the Latter-day Saint hymnal, completed in 1836.*

this Kirtland hymnal in 1836.<sup>3</sup> There were only 90 songs included in this thin little booklet. Many of them were hymns from Protestant faiths. At least 26 of them were written by William W. Phelps, who later prepared and assisted in the printing of the hymnal. Only the lyrics were written; no musical notes accompanied the texts. This humble little hymnal proved to be a great blessing to early members of the Church.

The latest edition of our English-language hymnal was published in 1985. Many of the selections which Emma chose so many years earlier are still included in our hymnbook, such as “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” and “How Firm a Foundation.”<sup>4</sup>

One song that was new to the 1985 hymnal is “Be Thou Humble.”<sup>5</sup> This tranquil hymn was written by Grietje Terburg Rowley, who passed away last year. She joined the Church in 1950 in Hawaii, where she was teaching school. Sister Rowley served on the General Music Committee and helped to adapt the hymns into multiple languages. She based her text for “Be Thou Humble” on two verses of scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 112:10 and Ether 12:27. The verse in Ether reads: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give

unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”

Like all of the Church’s hymns, “Be Thou Humble” teaches pure and simple truths. It teaches us that if we humble ourselves, our prayers are answered; we enjoy peace of mind; we serve more effectively in our callings; and, if we continue to be faithful, we will ultimately return to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The Savior taught His followers that they must humble themselves as a little child in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>6</sup> As we raise our own children, we need to help them remain humble as they mature into adulthood. We do not do this by breaking their spirit through unkindness or by being too harsh in our discipline. While nurturing their self-confidence and self-esteem, we need to teach them the qualities of selflessness, kindness, obedience, lack of pride, civility, and unpretentiousness. We need them to learn to take joy in the successes of siblings and friends. President Howard W. Hunter taught that “our genuine concern should be for the success of others.”<sup>7</sup> If not, our children can become obsessed with self-promotion and outdoing others, jealousy, and resentment for the triumphs of peers. I’m grateful for a mother who, when seeing I was becoming too full of myself as a boy, would say, “Son, a little bit of humility right now would go a long way.”

But humility is not something reserved to be taught only to children. We must all strive to become more humble. Humility is essential to gain the blessings of the gospel. Humility enables us to have broken hearts when we sin or make mistakes and makes



it possible for us to repent. Humility enables us to be better parents, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, neighbors and friends.

On the other hand, unnecessary pride can dissolve family relationships, break up marriages, and destroy friendships. It is especially important to remember humility when you feel contention rising in your home. Think of all the heartache you can avoid by humbling yourself to say, “I’m sorry”; “That was inconsiderate of me”; “What would you like to do?”; “I just wasn’t thinking”; or “I’m very proud of you.” If these little phrases were humbly used, there would be less contention and more peace in our homes.

Simply living life can be and often is a humbling experience. Accident and illness, the death of loved ones, problems in relationships, even financial reversals can bring us to our knees. Whether these difficult experiences come through no

fault of our own or through bad decisions and poor judgment, these trials are all humbling. If we choose to be spiritually attuned and remain humble and teachable, our prayers become more earnest and faith and testimony will grow as we overcome the tribulations of mortal existence. All of us look forward to exaltation, but before this can occur, we must persevere through what has been referred to as the “valley of humility.”<sup>8</sup>

Many years ago, our 15-year-old son Eric suffered a serious head injury. Seeing him in a coma for over a week broke our hearts. The doctors told us they were uncertain about what would happen next. Obviously, we were thrilled when he began to regain consciousness. We thought now everything was going to be fine, but we were mistaken.

When he awoke, he could not walk or talk or feed himself. Worst of all, he

had no short-term memory. He could remember most everything before the accident, but he had no ability to remember events after, even things which had happened only minutes earlier.

For a time, we worried we would have a son locked in the mind of a 15-year-old. Things had come very easily to our son before the accident. He was athletic, popular, and did very well in school. Before, his future seemed bright; now we worried he may not have much of a future, at least one he could remember. He now struggled to relearn very, very basic skills. This was a very humbling time for him. It was also a very humbling time for his parents.

Honestly, we wondered how such a thing could happen. We had always strived to do the right things. Living the gospel had been a high priority for our family. We couldn’t understand how

something so painful could happen to us. We were driven to our knees as it soon became apparent his rehabilitation would take months, even years. More difficult still was the gradual realization he would not be as he was before.

During this time, many tears were shed and our prayers became even more heartfelt and sincere. Through the eyes of humility, we gradually began to see the small miracles which our son experienced during this painful time. He began making gradual improvement. His attitude and outlook were very positive.

Today, our son Eric is married to a wonderful companion, and they have five beautiful children. He is a passionate educator and contributor to his community, as well as the Church. Most important, he continues to live in

the same spirit of humility he gained long ago.

But what if we could be humble before we walk through that “valley of humility”? Alma taught:

“Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.”

“Yea, [they are] much more blessed than they who are compelled to be humble.”<sup>9</sup>

I am grateful for prophets, like Alma, who have taught us the worth of this great attribute. Spencer W. Kimball, the 12th President of the Church, said: “How does one get humble? To me, one must constantly be reminded of his dependence. On whom dependent? On the Lord. How remind one’s self? By real, constant, worshipful, grateful prayer.”<sup>10</sup>

It should come as no surprise that President Kimball’s favorite hymn was

“I Need Thee Every Hour.”<sup>11</sup> Elder Dallin H. Oaks reported that this was the most oft-sung opening hymn by the Brethren in the temple during his early years in the Quorum of the Twelve. He said, “Picture the spiritual impact of a handful of the Lord’s servants singing that song before praying for his guidance in fulfilling their mighty responsibilities.”<sup>12</sup>

I testify of the importance of humility in our lives. I am grateful for the individuals like Sister Grietje Rowley who have penned inspiring words and music which help us learn the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes humility. I am grateful we have a legacy of hymns, which helps us to worship through song, and I am grateful for humility. It is my prayer we will all strive for humility in our lives so we might become better parents, sons and daughters, and followers of the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “First Presidency Preface,” *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1985), ix.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 25:11.
3. The title page of the first edition of the Latter-day Saint hymnal is dated 1835, but it was not completed and made available until early 1836.
4. Twenty-six of the hymns that appeared in the 1835 hymnal are included in our current hymnal (see Kathleen Lubeck, “The New Hymnbook: The Saints Are Singing!” *Ensign*, Sept. 1985, 7).
5. “Be Thou Humble,” *Hymns*, no. 130.
6. See Matthew 18:1–4.
7. Howard W. Hunter, “The Pharisee and the Publican,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 66.
8. Anthony H. Lund, in Conference Report, Apr. 1901, 22.
9. Alma 32:16, 15.
10. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 233.
11. “I Need Thee Every Hour,” *Hymns*, no. 98; see also Brent H. Nielson, “I Need Thee Every Hour,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2011, 16.
12. Dallin H. Oaks, “Worship through Music,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 10.





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

## “That I Might Draw All Men unto Me”

*As we draw closer to God, the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ will come into our lives.*

**M**y dear brothers and sisters, while living in Africa, I sought advice from Elder Wilford W. Andersen of the Seventy about helping Saints who live in poverty. Among the remarkable insights he shared with me was this: “The greater the distance between the giver and the receiver, the more the receiver develops a sense of entitlement.”

This principle underlies the Church’s welfare system. When members are not able to meet their own needs, they turn first to their families. Thereafter, if necessary, they can also turn to their local Church leaders for assistance with their temporal needs.<sup>1</sup> Family members and local Church leaders are closest to those in need, frequently have faced similar circumstances, and understand best how to help. Because of their proximity to the givers, recipients who receive help according to this pattern are grateful and less likely to feel entitled.

The concept—“the greater the distance between the giver and the receiver, the more the receiver develops a sense of entitlement”—also has profound spiritual applications.

Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are the ultimate Givers. The more we distance ourselves from Them, the more entitled we feel. We begin to think that we deserve grace and are owed blessings. We are more prone to look around, identify inequities, and feel aggrieved—even offended—by the unfairness we perceive. While the unfairness can range

from trivial to gut-wrenching, when we are distant from God, even small inequities loom large. We feel that God has an obligation to fix things—and fix them right now!

The difference made by our proximity to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is illustrated in the Book of Mormon in the stark contrast between Nephi and his older brothers Laman and Lemuel:

- Nephi had “great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, [he] did cry unto the Lord,” and his heart was softened.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Laman and Lemuel were distant from God—they did not know Him.
- Nephi accepted challenging assignments without complaint, but Laman and Lemuel “did murmur in many things.” Murmuring is the scriptural equivalent of childish whining. The scripture records that “they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.”<sup>3</sup>





- Nephi's closeness to God enabled him to recognize and appreciate God's "tender mercies."<sup>4</sup> In contrast, when Laman and Lemuel saw Nephi receiving blessings, they "were wroth with him because they understood not the dealings of the Lord."<sup>5</sup> Laman and Lemuel saw the blessings that they received as their due and petulantly assumed that they should have more. They seemed to view Nephi's blessings as "wrongs" committed against them. This is the scriptural equivalent of disgruntled entitlement.
- Nephi exercised faith in God to accomplish what he was asked to do.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Laman and Lemuel,

"being hard in their hearts, . . . did not look unto the Lord as they ought."<sup>7</sup> They seemed to feel that the Lord was obligated to provide answers to questions that they had not posed. "The Lord maketh no such thing known unto us," they said, but they did not even make the effort to ask.<sup>8</sup> This is the scriptural equivalent of derisive skepticism.

Because they were distant from the Savior, Laman and Lemuel murmured, became contentious, and were faithless. They felt that life was unfair and that they were entitled to God's grace. In contrast, because he had drawn close to God, Nephi must have recognized

that life would be the most unfair for Jesus Christ. Though absolutely innocent, the Savior would suffer the most.

The closer we are to Jesus Christ in the thoughts and intents of our hearts, the more we appreciate His innocent suffering, the more grateful we are for grace and forgiveness, and the more we want to repent and become like Him. Our absolute distance from Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is important, but the direction we are heading is even more crucial. God is more pleased with repentant sinners who are trying to draw closer to Him than with self-righteous, faultfinding individuals who, like the Pharisees and scribes of old, do not realize how badly they need to repent.<sup>9</sup>

As a child, I sang a Swedish Christmas carol that teaches a simple but powerful lesson—drawing near to the Savior *causes* us to change. The lyrics go something like this:

*When Christmas morning gleams  
I want to go to the stable,  
Where God in the nighttime hours  
Already rests upon the straw.*

*How good Thou wast to desire  
To come down to the earth!  
Now, I do not wish to waste  
My childhood days in sin anymore!*

*Jesus, we need Thee,  
Thou dear children's friend.  
I no longer wish to grieve Thee  
With my sins again.<sup>10</sup>*

When we figuratively transport ourselves to the Bethlehem stable, "where God in the nighttime hours already rests upon the straw," we can recognize better the Savior as a gift from a kind, loving Heavenly Father. Rather than feeling entitled to His blessings

and grace, we develop an intense desire to stop causing God further grief.

Whatever our current direction or distance to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, we can choose to turn toward Them and draw closer to Them. They will help us. As the Savior told the Nephites following His Resurrection:

“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, . . .

“And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me.”<sup>11</sup>

To draw closer to the Savior, we must increase our faith in Him, make and keep covenants, and have the Holy Ghost with us. We must also act in faith, responding to the spiritual direction we receive. All of these elements come together in the sacrament. Indeed, the best way I know of to draw closer to God is to prepare conscientiously and partake worthily of the sacrament each week.

A friend of ours in South Africa shared how she came to this realization. When Diane was a new convert, she attended a branch outside of Johannesburg. One Sunday, as she sat in the congregation, the layout of the chapel made it so that the deacon did not see her as the sacrament was passed. Diane was disappointed but said nothing. Another member noted the omission and mentioned it to the branch president after the meeting. As Sunday School began, Diane was invited to an empty classroom.

A priesthood holder came in. He knelt down, blessed some bread, and handed her a piece. She ate it. He knelt down again and blessed some water and handed her a small cup. She drank it. Thereafter, Diane had two thoughts



in rapid succession: First, “Oh, he [the priesthood holder] did this just for me.” And then, “Oh, He [the Savior] did this just for me.” Diane felt Heavenly Father’s love.

Her realization that the Savior’s sacrifice was just for her helped her feel close to Him and fueled an overwhelming desire to keep that feeling in her heart, not just on Sunday but every day. She realized that although she sat in a congregation to partake of the sacrament, the covenants she made anew each Sunday were individually hers. The sacrament helped—and continues to help—Diane feel the power of godly love, recognize the Lord’s hand in her life, and draw closer to the Savior.

The Savior identified the sacrament as indispensable to a spiritual foundation. He said:

“And I give unto you a commandment that ye shall do these things [partake of the sacrament]. And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.

“But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall.”<sup>12</sup>

Jesus did not say “*if* rain descends, *if* floods come, and *if* winds blow” but “*when*.” No one is immune from life’s challenges; we all need the safety that comes from partaking of the sacrament.

On the day of the Savior’s Resurrection, two disciples traveled to a village called Emmaus. Unrecognized, the risen Lord joined them on the journey. As they traveled, He taught them from the scriptures. When they reached their destination, they invited Him to dine with them.

“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.



“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

“And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven [Apostles] gathered together.”

And then they testified to the Apostles that “the Lord is risen indeed. . . .”

“And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.”<sup>13</sup>

The sacrament truly helps us know our Savior. It also reminds us of His innocent suffering. If life were truly fair, you and I would never be resurrected; you and I would never be able to stand clean before God. In this respect, I am grateful that life is not fair.

At the same time, I can emphatically state that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, ultimately, in the eternal scheme of things, there will be no unfairness. “All that is unfair about life can be made right.”<sup>14</sup> Our present circumstances may not change, but through God’s compassion, kindness, and love, we will all receive more than we deserve, more than we can ever earn, and more than we can ever hope for. We are promised that “God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there

be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”<sup>15</sup>

No matter where you stand in your relationship to God, I invite you to draw nearer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, the Ultimate Benefactors and Givers of all that is good. I invite you to attend sacrament meeting each week and partake of the holy emblems of the Savior’s body and blood. I invite you to feel God’s nearness as He is made known to you, as He was to the disciples of old, in the “breaking of [the] bread.”

As you do, I promise that you will feel nearer to God. Natural tendencies to childish whining, disgruntled entitlement, and derisive skepticism will dissipate. Those sentiments will be replaced by feelings of greater love and gratitude for Heavenly Father’s gift of His Son. As we draw closer to God, the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ will come into our lives. And, as with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, we will find that the Savior has been nearby all along. I so witness and testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 6.2. From page 1 of *Providing in the Lord’s Way: Summary of a Leader’s Guide to Welfare* (pamphlet, 2009), we read: “When Church members are doing all they can to provide for themselves but still cannot meet their basic needs, they should first turn to their families for help. When this is not sufficient, the Church stands ready to assist.”

2. 1 Nephi 2:16.
3. 1 Nephi 2:11, 12.
4. 1 Nephi 1:20.
5. Mosiah 10:14.
6. See 1 Nephi 17:23–50.
7. 1 Nephi 15:3.
8. 1 Nephi 15:9; see also verse 8.
9. See Luke 15:2; see also Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:260–62.
10. The Christmas carol was penned in German by Abel Burckhardt (1805–82), who served as an archdeacon in Basel, Switzerland. The Swedish translation was made in 1851 by Betty Ehrenborg-Posse. The Swedish title is “När juldagsmorgon glimmar.” Many English translations have been given that enable the carol to be sung to the German folk tune that is typically used. The English translation given here is my sister’s (Anita M. Renlund) and mine.

*When Christmas morning gleams  
I want to go to the stable,  
|: Where God in the nighttime hours  
Already rests upon the straw. :|*

*How good Thou wast to desire  
To come down to the earth!  
|: Now, I do not wish to waste  
My childhood days in sin anymore! :|*

*Jesus, we need Thee,  
Thou dear children’s friend.  
|: I no longer wish to grieve Thee  
With my sins again. :|*

*När juldagsmorgon glimmar,  
jag vill till stallet gå,  
|: där Gud i nattens timmar  
re’n vilar uppå strå. :|*

*Hur god du var som ville  
till jorden komma ner!  
|: Nu ej i synd jag spille  
min barndoms dagar mer! :|*

*Dig, Jesu, vi behöva,  
du käre barnavän.  
|: Jag vill ej mer bedröva  
med synder dig igen. :|*

11. 3 Nephi 27:14–15.
12. 3 Nephi 18:12–13.
13. Luke 24:30–35; see also verses 13–29.
14. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.
15. Revelation 21:4.



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

# The Sustaining of Church Officers

Brothers and sisters, President Monson has invited me to present the names of the General Officers and Area Seventies for your sustaining vote.

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.

The vote has been noted.  
It is proposed that we sustain Russell M. Nelson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, Neil L. Andersen,

Ronald A. Rasband, Gary E. Stevenson, and Dale G. Renlund.

Those in favor, please manifest it.  
Any opposed may so indicate.  
The vote has been noted.

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

All in favor, please manifest it.

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

The vote has been noted.

It is proposed that we release the following Area Seventies, effective on May 1, 2016: Manuel M. Agustin, Kent J. Allen, Stephen B. Allen, W. Mark Bassett, Patrick M. Boutoille, Mark A. Bragg, Marcelo F. Chappe, Eleazer S. Collado, Valeri V. Córdón, Joaquin E. Costa, Jeffrey D. Cummings, Massimo De Feo, Donald D. Deshler, Nicolas L. Di Giovanni, Jorge S. Dominguez, Gary B. Doxey, David G. Fernandes, Hernán D. Ferreira, Moroni Gaona, Jack N. Gerard, Ricardo P. Giménez,



Douglas F. Higham, Brent J. Hillier, Robert W. Hymas, Lester F. Johnson, Matti T. Jouttenus, Chang Ho Kim, Alfred Kyungu, Dane O. Leavitt, Remegio E. Meim Jr., Ismael Mendoza, Cesar A. Morales, Rulon D. Munns, Ramon C. Nobleza, S. Mark Palmer, Fouchard Pierre-nau, Gary B. Porter, José L. Reina, Esteban G. Resek, George F. Rhodes Jr., Gary B. Sabin, Evan A. Schmutz, D. Zackary Smith, Lynn L. Summerhays, Wenceslao H. Svec, Craig B. Terry, Ernesto R. Toris, Fabian I. Vallejo, Emer Villalobos, J. Romeo Villarreal, and Terry L. Wade.

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

It is proposed that we release with heartfelt gratitude Sisters Rosemary M. Wixom, Cheryl A. Esplin, and Mary R. Durham as the Primary general presidency. We likewise extend releases to members of the Primary 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 General Authority Seventies W. Mark Bassett, Mark A. Bragg, Weatherford T. Clayton, Valeri V. Cordón, Joaquin E. Costa, Massimo De Feo, Peter F. Meurs, K. Brett Nattress, S. Mark Palmer, Gary B. Sabin, and Evan A. Schmutz.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, by the same sign.

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

P. David Agazzani, Quilmer A. Agüero, René R. Alba, Victorino A. Babida, Steven R. Bangerter, Richard Baquiran, Dong Chol Beh, Michael V. Beheshti, Matthieu Bennasar, Hubermann Bien-Aimé, Kevin E. Calderwood, Luis J. Camey, Matthew L. Carpenter, Douglas B. Carter, Aroldo B. Cavalcante, Luis C. Chaverri, Ulises Chávez, Brent J. Christensen, Douglas L. Dance, Marc C.

Davis, Alessandro Dini Ciacci, J. Scott Dorius, M. Dirk Driscoll, Antonio F. Faúndez, Jose A. Fernández, Matias D. Fernandez, Candido Fortuna, Bruce E. Ghent, Michael A. Gillenwater, Daniel G. Hamilton, Mathias Held, Tom-Atle Herland, Raymond S. Heyman, Christophe Kawayaya, Todd S. Larkin, Pedro X. Larreal, Juan J. Levrino, Felix A. Martinez, Kevin K. Miskin, Mark L. Pace, Ryan V. Pagaduan, A. Moroni Pérez, Carlos E. Perrotti, Mark P. Peteru, Alan T. Phillips, Thomas T. Priday, Brian L. Rawson, Rene Romay, Blake M. Roney, Luis G. Ruiz, Maximo A. Saavedra Jr., Pedro A. Sanhueza, Eric J. Schmutz, Benjamin Ming Tze Tai, Heber D. Teixeira, Maxsimo C. Torres, Jesús Velez, Carlos Villarreal, Paul H. Watkins, C. Dale Willis Jr., William B. Woahn, and Luis G. Zapata.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Joy D. Jones to serve as Primary general president, with Jean B. Bingham as first counselor and Bonnie H. Cordon 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.

All in favor, please manifest it.

Those opposed, if any.

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

We are grateful for all of you who sustain the leaders of the Church in their sacred callings, and we now invite those newly called General Authorities and the Primary general presidency to come forward and take their seats on the stand. ■



# Church Auditing Department Report, 2015

**Presented by Kevin R. Jergensen**  
Managing Director, Church Auditing Department

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

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

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

expenditures made, and safeguarding of Church assets.

Based upon audits performed, 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 2015 have been recorded and administered in accordance with approved Church budgets, policies, and accounting practices. The Church follows the practices taught to its members of living within a budget, avoiding debt, and saving against a time of need.

Respectfully submitted,  
Church Auditing Department  
Kevin R. Jergensen  
Managing Director ■



# Statistical Report, 2015

**Presented by Brook P. Hales**  
Secretary to the First Presidency

**T**he First Presidency has issued the following statistical report of the Church as of December 31, 2015.

## Church Units

Stakes .....	3,174
Missions .....	418
Districts .....	558
Wards and Branches .....	30,016

## Church Membership

Total Membership .....	15,634,199
New Children of Record .....	114,550
Converts Baptized .....	257,402

## Missionaries

Full-Time Missionaries .....	74,079
Church-Service Missionaries .....	31,779

## Temples

Temples Dedicated in 2015 (Córdoba Argentina, Payson Utah, Trujillo Peru, Indianapolis Indiana, and Tijuana Mexico) .....	5
Temples Rededicated (Mexico City Mexico and Montreal Quebec) .....	2
Temples in Operation at Year End ...	149



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

# Standing with the Leaders of the Church

*Are you standing with the leaders of the Church in a darkening world so that you might spread the Light of Christ?*

**W**e extend a warm welcome to the newly called General Authorities, Area Seventies, and the wonderful new Primary general presidency. And with deepest appreciation, we thank those who have been released. We love you, each one.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have just participated in a most blessed experience as we have raised our hands to sustain prophets, seers, and revelators and other leaders and general officers called of God in these very days. I have never taken lightly or casually the opportunity of sustaining and being guided by the Lord's servants. And being just months into my own new calling as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I am humbled by your sustaining vote and confidence. I treasure your willingness to stand with me and with all of these great leaders.

Soon after I was sustained last October, I traveled to Pakistan on an assignment and, while there, met the magnificent and dedicated Saints in that country. They are few in number but large in spirit. Shortly after returning home, I received the following note

from Brother Shakeel Arshad, a dear member I had met on my visit: "Thank you, Elder Rasband, for coming to Pakistan. I want to tell you that we . . . Church members . . . sustain you and love you. [We are] so lucky that you



were here and we heard from you. It was just a golden day in my family's life that we met an Apostle."<sup>1</sup>

Meeting Saints like Brother Arshad was an overwhelming and humbling experience and, using his words, "a golden day" for me as well.

In January, Church leaders participated in a Face to Face broadcast with youth and their leaders and parents from around the world. The broadcast was streamed live over the Internet to many locations in 146 countries; some locations had large audiences in chapels, and others were a single home with one youth tuning in. In total, many hundreds of thousands joined in.

In connecting with our vast audience, Sister Bonnie Oscarson, Young Women general president; Brother Stephen W. Owen, Young Men general president; and I—supported by our youth hosts, musicians, and others—answered questions from our youth.

Our purpose was to introduce the Mutual theme for 2016, "Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ," from 2 Nephi, which reads: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."<sup>2</sup>

By reading many hundreds of our youth's questions, what did we learn? We learned that our youth love the Lord, sustain their leaders, and desire to have their questions answered! Questions are an indication of a further desire to learn, to add to those truths already in place in our testimonies, and to be better prepared to "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ."

The Restoration of the gospel began with a youth, Joseph Smith,



asking a question. Many of the Savior's teachings in His ministry began with a question. Remember His question to Peter: "Whom say ye that I am?"<sup>3</sup> And Peter's response: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>4</sup> We need to help each other find Heavenly Father's answers through the guidance of the Spirit.

At that broadcast, I said to the youth:

"The leaders of this Church are no strangers to your issues, to your concerns, and to your challenges.

"We have children. We have grandchildren. We are often meeting with youth all over the world. And we're praying for you, we're talking about you in the most sacred places, and we love you."<sup>5</sup>

I would like to share one of the many, many responses we received from that event.

Lisa, from Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, wrote: "This Face to Face event was wonderful. What a strength to my testimony and convictions of the gospel. We are so blessed to have inspired leaders who have been called to serve in so many different capacities."<sup>6</sup>

Liz, from Pleasant Grove, Utah, wrote on an earlier post: "I am grateful for my personal faith and the opportunity to

sustain a prophet of God and the men and women who serve with him."<sup>7</sup>

We have sustained leaders today who, by divine inspiration, have been called to teach and guide us and who are calling out to us to beware of the dangers we face each day—from casual Sabbath-day observance, to threats to the family, to assaults on religious freedom, and even to disputing latter-day revelation. Brothers and sisters, are we listening to their counsel?

Many times in conferences, sacrament meetings, and Primary we have sung the tender words, "Lead me, guide me, walk beside me."<sup>8</sup> What do those words mean to you? Who comes to mind when you think of them? Have you felt the influence of righteous leaders, those disciples of Jesus Christ who have in the past and continue today to touch your life, who walk the Lord's path with you? They may be close at home. They may be in your local congregations or speaking from the pulpit at general conference. These disciples share with us the blessing of having a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, the leader of this Church, the leader of our very souls, who has promised, "Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you."<sup>9</sup>

I remember President Thomas S. Monson sharing the story of being invited to his stake president Paul C. Child's home to prepare for advancement to the Melchizedek Priesthood. What a special blessing for President Child, who did not know at the time that he was teaching a young Aaronic Priesthood boy who would one day become the prophet of God.<sup>10</sup>

I have had my own learning moments from our dear prophet, President Monson. There is no question in my mind or in my heart that he is the Lord's prophet on the earth; I have been a humbled recipient as he has received revelation and acted upon it. He has been teaching us to reach out, to protect each other, to rescue one another. So it was taught at the Waters of Mormon. Those "desirous . . . to be called his people" were willing "to bear one another's burdens," "to mourn with those that mourn," and "to stand as witnesses of God."<sup>11</sup>

I stand today as a witness of God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I know our Savior lives and loves us and directs His servants, you and me, to fulfill His mighty purposes on this earth.<sup>12</sup>

As we press forward, choosing to follow the counsel and the warnings of our leaders, we choose to follow the



Lord while the world is going in another direction. We choose to hold fast to the iron rod, to be Latter-day Saints, to be on the Lord's errand, and to be filled "with exceedingly great joy."<sup>13</sup>

The growing question of today is clear: are you standing with the leaders of the Church in a darkening world so that you might spread the Light of Christ?

Relationships with leaders are so important and significant. No matter what age leaders may be, how close or far away, or when they may have touched our lives, their influence reflects the words of the American poet Edwin Markham, who said this:

*There is a destiny that makes us brothers:  
[No one] goes his way alone:  
All that we send into the lives of others  
Comes back into our own.*<sup>14</sup>

Shakeel Arshad, my friend in Pakistan, sent his support to me, his brother and friend. So have many of

you. When we reach out to lift one another, we prove those powerful words: "[No one] goes his way alone."

Most of all, we need our Savior, our Lord, Jesus Christ. One of the accounts from scripture that has always spiritually moved me is when Jesus Christ walked out on the water to meet His disciples who were traveling in a ship on the Sea of Galilee. These were leaders newly called, like many of us on the stand today. The account is recorded in Matthew:

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with [the] waves: for the wind was contrary.

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

"And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, . . . and they cried out for fear.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."<sup>15</sup>

Peter heard that wonderful call of encouragement from the Lord.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

"And [Jesus] said, Come."<sup>16</sup>

Pretty bold. Peter was a fisherman, and he knew about the hazards of the sea. However, he was committed to following Jesus—night or day, on a ship or on dry land.

I can imagine that Peter leaped over the side of the boat, not waiting for a second invitation, and began to walk on the water. Indeed, the scripture says, "He walked on the water, to go to Jesus."<sup>17</sup> As the wind increased in strength and force and as the waves swirled about his feet, Peter became "afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried [out], saying, Lord, save me.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him."<sup>18</sup>

Such a powerful lesson. The Lord was there for him, just as He is there for you and for me. He reached out His hand and drew Peter to Him and to safety.

I have needed the Savior and the rescue of His hand so many times. I need Him now as never before, as does each of you. I have felt confident at times leaping over the side of the boat, figuratively speaking, into unfamiliar places, only to realize that I could not do it alone.

As we discussed during Face to Face, the Lord often reaches out to us through our families and leaders, inviting us to come unto Him—just like He reached out to save Peter.

You too will have your many moments to respond to frequent invitations to "come unto Christ."<sup>19</sup> Isn't that what this mortal life is all about? The call may be to come rescue a family member; come serve a mission; come

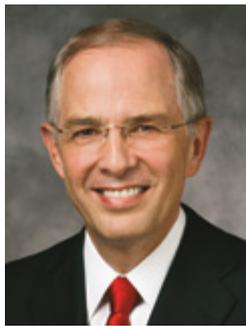
back to church; come to the holy temple; and, as we have recently heard from our wonderful youth in the Face to Face event, come, please help me answer my question. In due time, each one of us will hear the call “Come home.”

I pray that we will reach out—reach out and take the Savior’s hand that He is extending to us, often through His divinely called leaders and our family members—and listen for His call to come.

I know that Jesus Christ lives; I love Him, and I know with all my heart that He loves each of us. He is our great Exemplar and the divine leader of all of our Father’s children. Of this I bear my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

**NOTES**

1. Facebook comment from Shakeel Arshad to Ronald A. Rasband, Dec. 2, 2015.
2. 2 Nephi 31:20.
3. Matthew 16:15.
4. Matthew 16:16.
5. Ronald A. Rasband, in Face to Face, Jan. 20, 2016, [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library).
6. Face to Face response from Lisa Jarvis, from Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada.
7. Tweet from Liz Darger, Pleasant Grove, Utah, Apr. 4, 2015.
8. “I Am a Child of God,” *Hymns*, no. 301.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 68:6.
10. See Thomas S. Monson, “Our Sacred Priesthood Trust,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 55–56.
11. Mosiah 18:8–9.
12. See Mosiah 18:8–9.
13. 1 Nephi 8:12.
14. Edwin Markham, “A Creed,” *Lincoln and Other Poems* (1901), 25.
15. Matthew 14:24–27.
16. Matthew 14:28–29.
17. Matthew 14:29.
18. Matthew 14:30–31.
19. Moroni 10:32.



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

# “Whoso Receiveth Them, Receiveth Me”

*Children today find themselves in many different and complex family configurations. We need to reach out to those who feel alone, left behind, or outside the fence.*

God loves children. He loves all children. The Savior said, “Suffer [the] little children . . . to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

Children today find themselves in many different and complex family configurations.

For example, today, twice as many children in the United States are living with only one parent than were 50 years ago.<sup>2</sup> And there are many families that are less unified in their love of God and willingness to keep His commandments.

In this increasing spiritual commotion, the restored gospel will continue to carry the standard, the ideal, the pattern of the Lord.

“Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. . . .

“Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to

provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another [and] observe the commandments of God.”<sup>3</sup>

We recognize the many good parents across the world, of all faiths, who lovingly care for their children. And we gratefully acknowledge the families in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who are wrapped in the care of a father and mother converted to the Savior, who are sealed by the authority of the priesthood, and who are learning in their family to love and trust their Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Plea for the Youth**

But my plea today is for the hundreds of thousands of children, youth, and young adults who do not come from these, for lack of a better term, “picture-perfect” families. I speak not only of the youth who have experienced the death, divorce, or diminishing faith of their parents but also of the tens of thousands of young men and young women from all around the world who embrace the gospel without



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a mother or father to come into the Church with them.<sup>4</sup>

These young Latter-day Saints enter the Church with great faith. They hope to create the family ideal in their own lives at a future day.<sup>5</sup> In time, they become an important part of our missionary force, our righteous young adults, and those who kneel at an altar to begin their own families.

#### Sensitivity

We will continue to teach the Lord's pattern for families, but now with millions of members and the diversity we have in the children of the Church, we need to be even more thoughtful and sensitive. Our Church culture and vernacular are at times quite unique. The Primary children are not going to stop singing "Families Can Be Together Forever,"<sup>6</sup> but when they sing, "I'm so glad when daddy comes home"<sup>7</sup> or "with father and mother leading the way,"<sup>8</sup> not all children will be singing about their own family.

Our friend Bette shared an experience she had at church when she was 10 years old. She said: "Our teacher was sharing a lesson about temple marriage. She specifically asked me, 'Bette, your parents weren't married in the temple, were they?' [My teacher and the rest of the class] knew the answer." The teacher's lesson followed, and Bette

imagined the worst. Bette said, "I had many tearful nights. When I had heart problems two years later and thought I was going to die, I panicked, thinking I would be alone forever."

My friend Leif attended church by himself. Once, while in Primary, he was asked to give a short talk. He had no mom or dad at church to stand beside him and help him if he forgot what to say. Leif was terrified. Rather than embarrass himself, he just stayed away from church for several months.

"Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them . . .

"And [said] whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."<sup>9</sup>

#### Believing Hearts and Spiritual Gifts

These children and youth are blessed with believing hearts and spiritual gifts. Leif told me, "I knew deep in the recesses of my mind that God was my Father and that He knew me and loved me."

Our friend Veronique said, "As I learned the principles of the gospel and studied the Book of Mormon, it was as though I was remembering things that I had already known but had forgotten."

Our friend Zuleika comes from Alegrete, Brazil. Although her family was not religious, at age 12, Zuleika

began to read the Bible and visit local churches, searching to know more about God. With her parents' reluctant permission, she studied with the missionaries, gained a testimony, and was baptized. Zuleika told me: "During the discussions, I was shown a picture of the Salt Lake Temple and told about the sealing ordinances. From that moment, I had the desire of one day entering into the house of the Lord and having an eternal family."

While a child's earthly situation may not be ideal, a child's spiritual DNA is perfect because one's true identity is as a son or daughter of God.

President Thomas S. Monson has said: "Help God's children understand what is genuine and important in this life. Help them develop the strength to choose paths that will keep them safely on the way to eternal life."<sup>10</sup> Let's open our arms and our hearts a little wider. These youth need our time and our testimonies.

Brandon, who joined the Church in Colorado in high school, spoke to me of those who reached out to him both before and after his baptism. He said: "I was in the homes of families that lived



the gospel. It showed me a standard that I felt I could have in my own family.”

Veronique, born in the Netherlands, attended school with our daughter Kristen when we lived in Germany. Veronique noted: “Students who were Church members had a light about them. I came to realize that that light came from their faith in Jesus Christ and living His teachings.”

My friend Max was baptized when he was eight years old. His father was not a member of any church, and Max could go to church or not go.

As a teenager, after not attending for several months, Max had the feeling that he needed to go back to church and determined one Sunday morning that he would return. But his resolve weakened as he approached the front door of the church; his stomach tightened.

There, standing at the door, was the new bishop. Max didn’t know him, and he felt sure the bishop didn’t know Max. As Max approached, the bishop’s face lit up, and he put his hand out and said, “Max, it’s so good to see you!”

“As he spoke those words,” Max said, “a warm feeling came over me and I knew I had done the right thing.”<sup>11</sup>

Knowing someone’s name can make a difference.

“And [Jesus] commanded that their little children should be brought [to him]. . . .

“And . . . he took [them], one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept.”<sup>12</sup>

#### Youth Not Yet Baptized

At the request of parents, many youth who love the gospel wait years to be baptized.



Joseph Ssengooba as a young man (above), with his friend and missionary trainer Elder Joshua Walusimbi (top right), and with his mission president, Leif Erickson (bottom right).



Emily’s parents divorced while she was a child, and she did not receive permission to be baptized until she was 15. Our friend Emily speaks glowingly of a Young Women leader who “always reached out and helped strengthen [her] testimony.”<sup>13</sup>

Colten and Preston are teenagers who live in Utah. Their parents are divorced, and they have not received permission to be baptized. Even though they can’t pass the sacrament, they bring the bread each week. And even though they can’t enter the temple to do baptisms with the youth when their ward goes to the temple, the two brothers find family names next door at the family history center. The greatest influence on helping our youth feel included is other righteous youth.

#### Elder Joseph Ssengooba

I close with the example of a new friend, someone we met a few weeks ago while visiting the Zambia Lusaka Mission.

Elder Joseph Ssengooba is from Uganda. His father died when he was seven. At age nine, with his mother and relatives unable to care for him, he was on his own. At age 12, he met the missionaries and was baptized.

Joseph told me of his first day at church: “After sacrament meeting, I thought it was time to go home, but

the missionaries introduced me to Joshua Walusimbi. Joshua told me that he was going to be my friend, and he handed me a *Children’s Songbook* so I wouldn’t have to go into Primary empty-handed. In Primary, Joshua put an extra chair right next to his. The Primary president invited me to the front and asked the whole Primary to sing for me ‘I Am a Child of God.’ I felt very special.”

The branch president took Joseph to the Pierre Mungoza family, and that became his home for the next four years.

Eight years later when Elder Joseph Ssengooba began his mission, to his great surprise his trainer was Elder Joshua Walusimbi, the boy who had made him feel so welcome on his first day in Primary. And his mission president? He is President Leif Erickson, the little boy who stayed away from Primary because he was terrified about giving a talk. God loves His children.

#### The Children Came Running

When my wife, Kathy, and I were in Africa a few weeks ago, we visited Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Because the chapel was not large enough for the 2,000 members, we met out of doors under large plastic coverings supported by bamboo



During a meeting with 2,000 Latter-day Saints in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (top), dozens of curious children gathered outside the fence that surrounds the property where the meeting was held (above). When invited inside, the children came running.

poles. As the meeting began, we could see dozens of children watching us, clinging to the bars on the outside of the wrought-iron fence that surrounded the property. Kathy quietly whispered, “Neil, do you think that you might want to invite the children to come in?” I approached District President Kalonji at the podium and asked him if he would welcome the children outside the fence to come join us inside.

To my surprise, with President Kalonji’s invitation, the children not only came but came running—more than 50, perhaps 100—some with tattered clothes and bare feet but all with beautiful smiles and excited faces.

I was deeply moved by this experience and saw it as symbolic of our need to reach out to the youth who feel alone, left behind, or outside the fence. Let us think about them, welcome them, embrace them, and do everything we can to strengthen their love for the Savior. Jesus said, “Whoso shall receive one such . . . child in my name receiveth me.”<sup>14</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 19:14.
2. See “Family Structure,” Child Trends DataBank (Dec. 2015), appendix 1, page 9, [childtrends.org/databank](http://childtrends.org/databank).
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129, paragraphs 7 and 6.
4. I want to personally acknowledge the tens of thousands of righteous mothers, many of them single parents, who courageously take the primary responsibility of spiritually strengthening their children. Our friend

Shelley from Canada said of her mother:

“Missionaries knocked on my parents’ door five years before I was born. My parents took a few lessons, and then my father didn’t have any more interest. My mother continued to take the lessons and desired baptism. For five years my mother went to church as a nonmember, and then three months after I was born, she was able to be baptized.

“My mother has never been very vocal or in great leadership positions. She has a very simple, sweet, steady testimony, . . . and she lives every day true to what she believes.

That quiet, simple example has always kept me close to the Lord and to the Church.”

5. Our friend Randall told me: “I was taught and I knew that I was a son of heavenly parents, and knowing my real identity and nature gave me hope that I didn’t need to follow the same course as my parents, whom I adored but didn’t want to copy. I trusted what I had been taught by Primary, Sunday School, and Young Men and other teachers. I saw examples in the ward and my extended family of faithful, happy families, and I trusted Heavenly Father, knowing that if I remained faithful, He would help me have such a family.”
6. “Families Can Be Together Forever,” *Children’s Songbook*, 188.
7. “Daddy’s Homecoming,” *Children’s Songbook*, 210.
8. “Love Is Spoken Here,” *Children’s Songbook*, 190–91.
9. Matthew 18:2, 5.
10. Thomas S. Monson, “Learn of Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Mar. 2016, 6.
11. See Max H. Molgard, *Inviting the Spirit into Our Lives* (1993), 99.
12. 3 Nephi 17:11, 21–22.
13. Emily, although without active parents, spoke lovingly of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and others who “stood in” for her parents. Speaking of a Young Women leader in Michigan, she said: “Her children were grown, and she made it her point to make each of the young women feel as though they were her own daughter. . . . Her smile could warm your heart on the hardest of days. . . . I’ve made it my goal to follow her lead and be a Sister Molnar for those children who may feel ‘different,’ ‘left out,’ or ‘excluded.’”
14. Matthew 18:5.



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By Elder Mervyn B. Arnold  
Of the Seventy

# To the Rescue: We Can Do It

*The Lord has provided all of the tools necessary for us to go to the rescue of our less-active and nonmember friends.*

The Savior clearly understood His mission to rescue our Heavenly Father’s children, for He declared: “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost. . . .

*“[For] it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”<sup>1</sup>*

My angel mother, Jasmine Bennion Arnold, clearly understood her role to help in the rescue of our Heavenly Father’s wounded or lost sheep, including her own children and grandchildren. What a marvelous role grandparents can play in the lives of their grandchildren.

Mom was usually assigned to visit teach those struggling with their faith, the less-active and part-member families; however, her flock included several others that no one had assigned her to visit. Generally her visits were not just once a month, as she quietly listened, ministered to the sick, and gave loving encouragement. The last several months of Mom’s life, she was homebound, so she spent hours writing them letters, expressing her love, bearing her testimony, and lifting those who came to visit.

As we go to the rescue, God gives us power, encouragement, and blessings. When He commanded Moses to rescue the children of Israel, Moses was afraid, just as many of us are afraid. Moses excused himself, saying, “I am not eloquent, . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord reassured Moses: “Who hath made man’s mouth? . . . have not I the Lord?

“Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”<sup>3</sup>

In effect, the Lord told Moses, “You can do it!” *And you know what, so can we!*

Let me share four principles that will help in our rescue efforts.

## Principle 1: We Must Not Delay Going to the Rescue

Elder Alejandro Patanía, a former Area Seventy, relates the story of his younger brother Daniel, who sailed out to sea to go fishing with his crew. After a time, Daniel received an urgent warning that a major storm was rapidly approaching. Immediately, Daniel and his crew started for port.

As the storm intensified, the engine of a nearby fishing boat ceased to function. Daniel’s crew hooked a cable to the disabled boat and began towing it to safety. They radioed for help, knowing that, with the increasing storm, they needed immediate assistance.

As loved ones anxiously waited, representatives from the coast guard, the fishermen’s association, and the navy met to decide the best rescue strategy. Some wanted to leave right away but were told to wait for a plan. While those in the storm continued pleading for help, the representatives continued





*As loved ones anxiously waited, rescuers delayed their efforts until it was too late.*

meeting, trying to agree on the proper protocol and a plan.

When a rescue group was finally organized, one last desperate call came. The raging storm had broken the cable between the two boats, and Daniel's crew was going back to see if they could save their fellow fishermen. In the end, both ships sank, and their crews, including Elder Patanía's brother Daniel, were lost.

Elder Patanía compared this tragedy to the Lord's admonition when He said, "Ye [have] not strengthened, . . . [or] brought again that which was driven away, . . . [or] sought that which was lost; . . . and I will require my flock at [your] hand."<sup>4</sup>

Elder Patanía explained that, while we must be organized in our councils, quorums, auxiliaries, and even as individuals, we must not delay going to the rescue. Sometimes many weeks pass as we talk about how to help families or individuals who are in special need. We deliberate about who will visit them and the approach to take. Meanwhile, our lost brothers and sisters continue needing and sometimes even calling and pleading for help. We must not delay.

**Principle 2: We Must Never Give Up**

President Thomas S. Monson, who has sounded the clarion call to go to the rescue, noted, "Our members need to be reminded that it is never too late when it comes to our . . . less-active members . . . who could have been considered a hopeless cause."<sup>5</sup>

Like many of you, I have shared the gospel with some who are soon baptized or activated, and others—such as my nonmember friend Tim and his less-active wife, Charlene—take much more time.

For over 25 years I engaged Tim in gospel conversations and took Tim and Charlene to temple open houses.

Others joined the rescue; however, Tim declined each invitation made to meet with the missionaries.

One weekend I was assigned to preside at a stake conference. I had asked the stake president to fast and pray about whom we should visit. I was shocked when he handed me the name of my friend Tim. When Tim's bishop, the stake president, and I knocked on the door, Tim opened it, looked at me, looked at the bishop, and then said, "Bishop, I thought you told me you were going to bring somebody special!"

Then Tim laughed and said, "Come on in, Merv." A miracle occurred that day. Tim has now been baptized, and he and Charlene have been sealed in the temple. We must never give up.

**Principle 3: How Great Shall Be Your Joy If You Bring Save It Be One Soul unto Christ**

Many years ago in a general conference, I spoke of how José de Souza Marques understood the words of the Savior that "if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may . . . become strong also."<sup>6</sup>

Brother Marques knew the name of every sheep in his priests quorum and realized that Fernando was missing. He hunted for Fernando at his house, then looked for him at a friend's home, and even went to the beach.

He finally found Fernando surfing in the ocean. He did not hesitate until the boat sank, like in Daniel's story. He immediately entered the water to rescue his lost sheep, bringing him home rejoicing.<sup>7</sup>

He then ensured through continual ministering that Fernando never again would leave the fold.<sup>8</sup>

Allow me to update you on what has happened since Fernando was rescued

and to share the joy that came from rescuing just one lost sheep. Fernando married his sweetheart, Maria, in the temple. They now have 5 children and 13 grandchildren, all of whom are active in the Church. Many other relatives and their families have also joined the Church. Together they have submitted thousands of their ancestors' names to receive temple ordinances, and the blessings just keep coming.

Fernando is now serving as bishop for the third time, and he continues to rescue, just like he was rescued. He recently shared, "In our ward, we have 32 active young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, 21 of whom were rescued in the last 18 months." As individuals, families, quorums, auxiliaries, classes, and home and visiting teachers, *we can do that!*

**Principle 4: No Matter Our Age, We Are All Called to Go to the Rescue**

President Henry B. Eyring declared, "Whatever our age, capacity, Church

calling, or location, we are as one called to the work to help [the Savior] in His harvest of souls until He comes again."<sup>9</sup>

Each day more and more of our children, our youth, our young single adults, and our adult members of all ages are heeding the Savior's clarion call to go to the rescue. Thank you for your efforts! Allow me to share some examples:

Amy, age 7, invited her friend Arianna and her family to her annual Primary sacrament meeting program. A few months later, Arianna and her family were baptized.

Allan, a young single adult, felt inspired to share the Church videos, *Mormon Messages*, and verses of scripture with all his friends using social media.

Sister Reeves began sharing the gospel with each telemarketer who called.

James invited his nonmember friend Shane to his daughter's baptism.



Spencer sent his less-active sister a link to President Russell M. Nelson's conference address and reported, "She read the talk, and a window was opened."

The Lord has provided all of the tools necessary for us to go to the rescue of our less-active and nonmember friends. *We can all do it!*

I invite each of you to heed the Savior's call to go to the rescue. *We can do it!*

I solemnly testify that I know Jesus is the Good Shepherd, that He loves us, and that He will bless us as we go to the rescue. I know He lives; I know it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Rescued by a concerned leader when he was a young man, Fernando Araujo (above, center in both photos) rescues young men today (above) as a bishop and enjoys a posterity (top) that is active in the Church.

**NOTES**

1. Matthew 18:11, 14; emphasis added.
2. Exodus 4:10.
3. Exodus 4:11–12.
4. Ezekiel 34:4, 10.
5. Thomas S. Monson, October 2015 General Authority Leadership Meeting, used with permission.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:106.
7. See Luke 15:5.
8. See Mervyn B. Arnold, "Strengthen Thy Brethren," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 46–47.
9. Henry B. Eyring, "We Are One," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 62.



By Elder Jairo Mazzagardi  
Of the Seventy

# The Sacred Place of Restoration

*Palmyra was the stage of the Restoration, where the Father's voice would be heard after nearly two millennia.*

A good friend of mine who was a Church member tried for years to teach me the gospel of eternal families. It wasn't until I attended the São Paulo Temple open house in October 1978 and entered a sealing room that the doctrine of eternal families came into my heart, and for days I prayed to know if this was the true Church.

I was not religious, but I had been raised by parents who were, and I had seen what was good in other religions. At that point in my life, I thought all religions were acceptable to God.

After my visit to the temple open house, I sought an answer through prayer, having faith and a sure confidence that God would answer me, which was His Church on earth.

After a great spiritual struggle, I finally received a clear answer. I was invited to be baptized. My baptism happened on October 31, 1978, the night before a session of the São Paulo Temple dedication.

I realized that the Lord knew and cared about me as He answered my prayers.

The next morning my wife and I went to São Paulo to attend a dedicatory session of the temple.

We were there, but I did not really know how to appreciate that wonderful opportunity yet. The following day we attended an area conference.

We had begun our journey in the Church, and we found good friends who welcomed us during this life transition.

The new member classes we attended in our Sunday meetings each week were wonderful. They filled us with knowledge and made us wish for the week to pass quickly so on Sunday we could have more of that spiritual nourishment.

My wife and I eagerly looked forward to entering the temple to have our family sealed for eternity. That happened one year and seven days after my baptism, which was a wonderful moment. I felt as if the eternities had been divided at the altar between what came before and what came after the sealing.

Having lived legally on the East Coast of the United States for a few years, I was acquainted with some of the cities, and they were mostly small.

When I read or heard about the events leading up to the First Vision, crowds of people were mentioned, which did not make sense to me.

Questions began to arise in my mind. Why did the Church have to be restored in the United States and not in Brazil or Italy, the land of my ancestors?



Where were those crowds of people who were involved in the revivals and in the confusion of religions—all of which had happened in such a peaceful and calm place?

I asked a lot of people about it but got no answer. I read everything I could in Portuguese and then in English but found nothing that could calm my heart. I continued to search.

In October 1984, I attended general conference as a counselor in a stake presidency. After, I went to Palmyra, New York, eager to find the answer.

Arriving there, I tried to understand: Why did the Restoration have to be here, and why such a spiritual uproar? Where did all the people mentioned in Joseph's account come from? Why there?

At that time, the most reasonable answer to me was because the U.S. Constitution guaranteed freedom.

That morning I visited the Grandin Building, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed. I went to the Sacred Grove, where I prayed a lot.

There was hardly anyone on the streets in that small town of Palmyra. Where were the crowds of people that Joseph had mentioned?

That afternoon I decided to go to the Peter Whitmer farm, and when I got there, I found a man at the window of a cabin. He had an intense glow in his eyes. I greeted him and then began to ask those same questions.

He then asked me, "Do you have time?" I said yes.

He explained that Lakes Erie and Ontario and, farther east, the Hudson River are located in that region.

In the early 1800s they decided to build a canal for navigation which would pass through that region, stretching more than 300 miles (480 km)



to reach the Hudson River. It was a great enterprise for that time, and they could rely only on human labor and animal power.

Palmyra was a center for some of that construction. Builders needed skilled people, technicians, families, and their friends. Many people began to pour in from the neighboring towns and places farther away, such as Ireland, to work on the canal.

That was such a sacred and spiritual moment because I had finally found the crowd. They brought their customs and their beliefs. When the man mentioned their beliefs, my mind was enlightened and my spiritual eyes were opened by God.

At that moment, I understood how the hand of God our Father, in His immense wisdom, had prepared in His plan a place to bring the young Joseph Smith, putting him in the midst of that religious confusion, because there, in the Hill Cumorah, the precious plates of the Book of Mormon were hidden.

This was the stage of the Restoration, where the Father's voice would be heard after nearly two millennia in a wonderful vision, talking to the boy

Joseph Smith, when he went to the Sacred Grove to pray and heard: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"<sup>1</sup>

There he saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description. Yes, God revealed Himself to man again. The darkness that covered the earth began to dissipate.

The prophecies regarding the Restoration began to be fulfilled: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."<sup>2</sup>

In a few short years, Joseph was led to the records of prophecies, covenants, and ordinances left by ancient prophets, our beloved Book of Mormon.

The Church of Jesus Christ could not be restored without the eternal gospel revealed in the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ, even the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the world.

Christ said to His people in Jerusalem:

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."<sup>3</sup>

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”<sup>4</sup>

When leaving the Whitmer farm, I do not remember saying good-bye. I just remember tears running freely down my face. The sun was setting in a beautiful sky.

In my heart an immense joy and peace calmed my soul. I was filled with gratitude.

I now clearly understood why. Once again the Lord had given me knowledge and light.

During my trip home, scriptures continued to flow into my mind: the promises made to Father Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed.<sup>5</sup>

And for this, temples would be erected so that the divine power might

be conferred upon man once again on the earth so that families could be united, not until death do us part but together for all eternity.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”<sup>6</sup>

If you who hear me have any questions in your heart, do not give up!

I invite you to follow the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he read in James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.”

What happened at Cumorah was an important part of the Restoration, as Joseph Smith received the plates which

contained the Book of Mormon. This book helps us get closer to Christ than any other book on earth.<sup>7</sup>

I bear witness that the Lord raised up prophets, seers, and revelators to guide His kingdom in these latter days and that in His eternal plan families are meant to be together forever. He cares about His children. He answers our prayers.

Because of His great love, Jesus Christ atoned for our sins. He is the Savior of the world. Of this I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
2. Revelation 14:6.
3. John 10:16.
4. John 10:14.
5. See Genesis 12:3; 17:2–8; Galatians 3:29; 1 Nephi 15:14–18; Abraham 2:9–11.
6. Isaiah 2:2.
7. See introduction to the Book of Mormon.





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

# Always Retain a Remission of Your Sins

*By the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we can always retain a remission of our sins.*

A profound phrase used by King Benjamin in his teachings about the Savior and His Atonement has been a recurring topic of my study and pondering for many years.

In his spiritually stirring farewell sermon to the people he had served and loved, King Benjamin described the importance of knowing the glory of God and tasting of His love, of receiving a remission of sins, of always remembering the greatness of God, and of praying daily and standing steadfastly in the faith.<sup>1</sup> He also promised that by doing these things, “ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and *always retain a remission of your sins.*”<sup>2</sup>

My message focuses upon the principle of always retaining a remission of our sins. The truth expressed in this phrase can strengthen our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and deepen our discipleship. I pray the Holy Ghost will inspire and edify us as we consider together essential spiritual truths.

## Spiritual Rebirth

In mortality we experience physical birth and the opportunity for spiritual

rebirth.<sup>3</sup> We are admonished by prophets and apostles to awake unto God,<sup>4</sup> be “born again,”<sup>5</sup> and become new creatures in Christ<sup>6</sup> by receiving in our lives the blessings made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The “merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah”<sup>7</sup> can help us triumph over the self-centered and selfish tendencies of the natural man and become more selfless, benevolent, and saintly.

We are exhorted to so live that we can “stand spotless before [the Lord] at the last day.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Holy Ghost and Priesthood Ordinances

The Prophet Joseph Smith summarized succinctly the essential role of priesthood ordinances in the gospel of Jesus Christ: “Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances.”<sup>9</sup> This penetrating statement emphasizes the roles of both the Holy Ghost and sacred ordinances in the process of spiritual rebirth.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a personage of spirit and bears witness of all truth. In the scriptures, the Holy Ghost is referred to as the Comforter,<sup>10</sup> a teacher,<sup>11</sup> and a revelator.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the Holy Ghost is a sanctifier<sup>13</sup> who cleanses and burns dross and evil out of human souls as though by fire.

Holy ordinances are central in the Savior’s gospel and in the process of coming unto Him and seeking spiritual rebirth. Ordinances are sacred acts that



have spiritual purpose, eternal significance, and are related to God's laws and statutes.<sup>14</sup> All saving ordinances and the ordinance of the sacrament must be authorized by one who holds the requisite priesthood keys.

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation administered in the Lord's restored Church are far more than rituals or symbolic performances. Rather, they constitute authorized channels through which the blessings and powers of heaven can flow into our individual lives.

"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.

"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh."<sup>15</sup>

Ordinances received and honored with integrity are essential to obtaining the power of godliness and all of the blessings made available through the Savior's Atonement.

#### Obtaining and Retaining a Remission of Sins through Ordinances

To comprehend more fully the process whereby we may obtain and always retain a remission of our sins, we need first to understand the inseparable relationship among three sacred ordinances that provide access to the powers of heaven: baptism by immersion, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrament.

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins "is the introductory ordinance of the gospel"<sup>16</sup> of Jesus Christ and must be preceded by faith in the Savior and by sincere repentance. This ordinance "is a sign and a commandment which God has set for [His children] to enter into His kingdom."<sup>17</sup> Baptism is administered in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. In the process of coming unto the Savior and spiritual rebirth, baptism provides a necessary *initial cleansing* of our soul from sin.

The baptismal covenant includes three fundamental commitments: (1) to be willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, (2) to always remember Him, and (3) to keep

His commandments. The promised blessing for honoring this covenant is "that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us]."<sup>18</sup> Thus, baptism is the essential preparation to receive the authorized opportunity for the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead.

"Baptism [by] water . . . must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete."<sup>19</sup> As the Savior taught Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>20</sup>

Three statements by the Prophet Joseph Smith emphasize the vital linkage between the ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Statement 1: "Baptism is a holy ordinance preparatory to the reception of the Holy Ghost; it is the channel and key by which the Holy Ghost will be administered."<sup>21</sup>

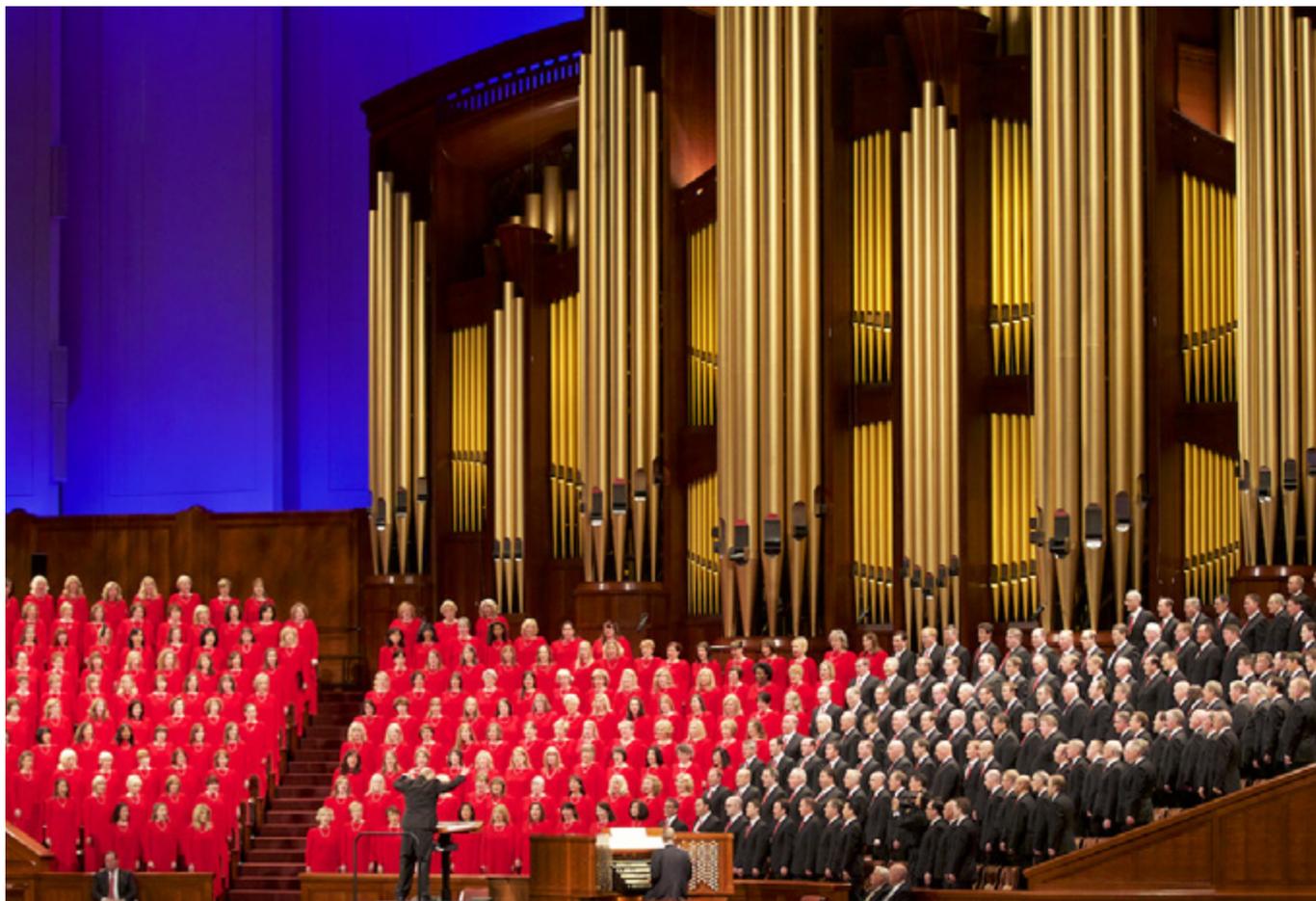
Statement 2: "You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost."<sup>22</sup>

Statement 3: "The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use. They are necessarily and inseparably connected."<sup>23</sup>

The consistent connectedness among the principle of repentance, the ordinances of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the glorious blessing of the remission of sins is emphasized repeatedly in the scriptures.

Nephi declared, "For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; *and then*





*cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>24</sup>*

The Savior Himself proclaimed, “Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, *that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost*, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.”<sup>25</sup>

Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost is an ordinance administered in the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In the process of coming unto the Savior and spiritual rebirth, receiving the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost in our lives creates the possibility of an *ongoing cleansing* of our soul from sin. This joyous blessing is vital because “no unclean thing can dwell with God.”<sup>26</sup>

As members of the Lord’s restored Church, we are blessed both by our *initial cleansing from sin* associated with baptism and by the potential for an *ongoing cleansing from sin* made

possible through the companionship and power of the Holy Ghost—even the third member of the Godhead.

Consider how a farmer depends upon the unchanging pattern of planting and harvesting. Understanding the connection between sowing and reaping is a constant source of purpose and influences all of the decisions and actions a farmer undertakes in all seasons of the year. In like manner, the inseparable connection between the ordinances of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost should impact every aspect of our discipleship in all seasons of our lives.

The sacrament is the third ordinance necessary to obtain access to the power of godliness. That we might more fully keep ourselves unspotted from the world, we are commanded to go to the house of prayer and offer up our sacraments upon the Lord’s holy day.<sup>27</sup>

Please consider that the emblems of the Lord’s body and blood, the bread and the water, are both blessed and sanctified. “O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread [or this water] to the souls of all those who partake [or drink] of it.”<sup>28</sup> To sanctify is to make pure and holy. The sacramental emblems are sanctified in remembrance of Christ’s purity, of our total dependence upon His Atonement, and of our responsibility to so honor our ordinances and covenants that we can “stand spotless before [Him] at the last day.”<sup>29</sup>

The ordinance of the sacrament is a holy and repeated invitation to repent sincerely and to be renewed spiritually. The act of partaking of the sacrament, in and of itself, does not remit sins. But as we prepare conscientiously and participate in this holy ordinance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then the promise is that we may *always*



have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us. And by the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, we can *always* retain a remission of our sins.

We truly are blessed each week by the opportunity to evaluate our lives through the ordinance of the sacrament, to renew our covenants, and to receive this covenant promise.<sup>30</sup>

#### Baptized Again

Sometimes Latter-day Saints express the wish that they could be baptized again—and thereby become as clean and worthy as the day on which they received their first saving gospel ordinance. May I respectfully suggest that our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son do not intend for us to experience such a feeling of spiritual renewal, refreshment, and restoration just once in our lives. The blessings of obtaining and always retaining a remission of our sins through gospel ordinances help us understand that baptism is a point of departure in our mortal spiritual journey; it is not a destination we should yearn to revisit over and over again.

The ordinances of baptism by immersion, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrament are not isolated and discrete events; rather, they are elements in an interrelated and additive pattern of redemptive progress. Each successive

ordinance elevates and enlarges our spiritual purpose, desire, and performance. The Father’s plan, the Savior’s Atonement, and the ordinances of the gospel provide the grace we need to press forward and progress line upon line and precept upon precept toward our eternal destiny.

#### Promise and Testimony

We are imperfect human beings striving to live in mortality according to Heavenly Father’s perfect plan of eternal progression. The requirements of His plan are glorious, merciful, and rigorous. We may at times be filled with determination and at other times feel totally inadequate. We may wonder if we spiritually can ever fulfill the commandment to stand spotless before Him at the last day.

With the help of the Lord and through the power of His Spirit to “teach [us] all things,”<sup>31</sup> indeed we can be blessed to realize our spiritual possibilities. Ordinances invite spiritual purpose and power into our lives as we strive to be born again and become men and women of Christ.<sup>32</sup> Our weaknesses can be strengthened, and our limitations can be overcome.

Although none of us can achieve perfection in this life, we can become increasingly worthy and spotless as we are “cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>33</sup> I promise and testify we will

be blessed with increased faith in the Savior and greater spiritual assurance as we seek to always retain a remission of our sins and, ultimately, to stand spotless before the Lord at the last day. I so witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Mosiah 4:11.
2. Mosiah 4:12; emphasis added.
3. See D. Todd Christofferson, “Why Marriage, Why Family,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 50–53.
4. See Alma 5:7.
5. John 3:3; Mosiah 27:25.
6. See 2 Corinthians 5:17.
7. 2 Nephi 2:8.
8. 3 Nephi 27:20.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 95.
10. See John 14:16–27; Moroni 8:26.
11. See John 14:26; Doctrine and Covenants 50:14.
12. See 2 Nephi 32:5.
13. See 3 Nephi 27:19–21.
14. See Guide to the Scriptures, “Ordinances,” [scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org).
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.
16. Bible Dictionary, “Baptism.”
17. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 91.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
19. Bible Dictionary, “Baptism.”
20. John 3:5.
21. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 95–96.
22. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 95.
23. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 90.
24. 2 Nephi 31:17; emphasis added.
25. 3 Nephi 27:20; emphasis added.
26. 1 Nephi 10:21.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–12.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; see also verse 79.
29. 3 Nephi 27:20.
30. See *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 561; *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 220; N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 98.
31. John 14:26.
32. See Helaman 3:28–30.
33. Mormon 9:6.



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

# Family Councils

*When parents are prepared and children listen and participate in the discussion, the family council is truly working!*

My brothers and sisters, the irony of being parents is that we tend to get good at it after our children are grown. I will share with you this afternoon something I wish I had understood better when Barbara and I began to raise our precious children.

During my apostolic ministry, I have frequently emphasized the power and importance of Church councils, including mission, stake, ward, and auxiliary councils.

I believe councils are the most effective way to get real results. Additionally, I know councils are the Lord's way and that He created all things in the universe through a heavenly council, as mentioned in the holy scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Until now, however, I have never talked in general conference about the most basic and fundamental—and perhaps the most important—of all councils: the family council.

Family councils have always been needed. They are, in fact, eternal. We belonged to a family council in the premortal existence, when we lived with our heavenly parents as their spirit children.

A family council, when conducted with love and with Christlike attributes, will counter the impact of modern technology that often distracts us from

spending quality time with each other and also tends to bring evil right into our homes.

Please remember that family councils are different from family home evening held on Mondays. Home evenings focus primarily on gospel instruction and family activities. Family councils, on the other hand, can be held on any day of the week, and they are primarily a meeting at which parents listen—to each other and to their children.

I believe there are at least four types of family councils:

First, a general family council consisting of the entire family.

Second, an executive family council consisting of a mother and father.

Third, a limited family council consisting of parents and one child.

Fourth, a one-on-one family council consisting of one parent and one child.

In all of these family council settings, electronic devices need to be turned off so everyone can look at and listen to each other. During family councils and at other appropriate times, you may want to have a basket for the electronic devices so when the family gathers, everyone—including Mom and Dad—can deposit his or her phones, tablets, and MP3 players in the basket. Thereafter, they can counsel together without being tempted to respond to a poke on Facebook, to a text, to Instagram, to Snapchat, or to email alerts.

Let me briefly share with you how each of these types of family councils can work.

**First, the full family council** includes all family members.

The Church pamphlet entitled *Our Family* states, “This council can meet to discuss family problems, work out finances, make plans, support and





strengthen [each other], and pray for one another and for the family unit.”<sup>2</sup>

This council should meet at a pre-designated time and is normally more formal than any other type of family council.

It should start with a prayer, or it may simply be a natural extension of conversations already started in other settings. Please note that a family council may not always have a formal beginning or ending.

When parents are prepared and children listen and participate in the discussion, the family council is truly working!

No matter what our particular family situation is, it is critical that we understand the unique circumstances of each family member. Though we may share DNA, there may be situations and circumstances among us that may make us vastly different from each other and which may require the compassionate collaboration of the family council.

For example, all the talking and sharing and loving in the world may not solve a medical problem or an emotional challenge that one or more family members may be facing. At such times, the family council becomes a place of unity, loyalty, and loving support as outside help is enlisted in the search for solutions.

Siblings, especially the older ones, can be powerful mentors to young children if parents will use the family council to enlist their help and support during times of difficulty and duress.

In this way, a family is much like a ward. When the bishop involves ward council members, he can solve problems and accomplish a lot of good in ways he never could do without their help. In a similar fashion, parents need to involve all family members in dealing with challenges and adversity. That way, the power of the family council is put to work. When council members feel they are part of a decision, they become supporters and specific positive results can be accomplished.

Not every family council consists of two parents and children. Your family council may look very different than our family council looked when we were raising our seven children. Today our family council consists only of Barbara and me, unless we hold an extended family council that includes our adult children, their spouses, and sometimes our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Those who are single and even students living away from home can follow the divine council pattern by gathering with friends and roommates to counsel together.

Consider how the atmosphere in an apartment would change if roommates gathered regularly to pray, listen, discuss, and plan things together.

Everyone can adapt a family council to take advantage of this divine pattern established by our loving Heavenly Father.

As noted previously, from time to time an expanded family council may be helpful. An expanded family council can be composed of grandparents and adult children who are not

living at home. Even if grandparents or adult children live far away, they can participate in family councils via the telephone, Skype, or FaceTime.

You may want to consider holding the general family council on Sunday, which is the first day of the week; families can review the past week and plan for the coming week. This may be exactly what your family needs to help make the Sabbath a delightful experience.

**The second type of family council** is an executive family council that involves only the parents. During this time together, parents can review each child’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and his or her progress.

The executive family council is also a good time for wives and husbands to talk about their personal relationships with each other. When Elder Harold B. Lee performed our sealing, he taught us a principle that I believe all couples will find helpful. He said, “Never retire without kneeling together, holding hands, and saying your prayers. Such prayers invite Heavenly Father to counsel us by the power of the Spirit.”

**The third type of family council** is a limited family council. Here, both



parents spend time with an individual child in a formal or an informal setting. This is an opportunity for a discussion on *making decisions in advance* about such things as what he or she will and will not do in the future. When such decisions are made, he or she may want to record them for future reference if needed. If your son or daughter sees you as a staunch supporter, this council meeting can establish goals and objectives for the future. This is also a time to carefully listen to serious concerns and challenges that a child may have faced with such things as lack of confidence, abuse, bullying, or fear.

**The fourth type of family council** is a one-on-one family council involving one parent and one child. This type of family council generally just happens. For example, the parent and child can take advantage of informal opportunities while traveling in the car or working around the house. An outing with one child with either father or mother can provide a special spiritual and emotional bonding time. Calendar these in advance so children can anticipate and look forward to a special time alone with Mom or Dad.

Now, brothers and sisters, there was a time when the walls of our homes provided all the defense we needed against outside intrusions and influences. We locked the doors, closed the windows; we shut the gates; and we felt safe, secure, and protected in our own little refuge from the outside world.

Those days are now gone. The physical walls, doors, fences, and gates of our homes cannot prevent unseen invasion from the Internet, the Wi-Fi, the mobile phones, the networks. They can penetrate our homes with just a few clicks and keystrokes.

Fortunately, the Lord has provided a way to counter the invasion of negative



technology that can distract us from spending quality time with each other. He has done this by providing the council system to strengthen, protect, safeguard, and nurture our most precious relationships.

Children desperately need parents willing to listen to them, and the family council can provide a time during which family members can learn to understand and love one another.

Alma taught, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good.”<sup>3</sup> Inviting the Lord to be part of our family council through prayer will improve our relationships with each other. We can, with Heavenly Father and our Savior’s help, become more patient, thoughtful, helpful, forgiving, and understanding as we pray for help. With Their help, we can make our homes a little bit of heaven here on earth.

A family council that is patterned after the councils in heaven, filled with Christlike love, and guided by the Lord’s Spirit will help us to protect our family from distractions that can steal our precious time together and protect us from the evils of the world.

Combined with prayer, a family council will invite the presence of the

Savior, as He promised: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”<sup>4</sup> Inviting the Spirit of the Lord to be part of your family council brings blessings beyond description.

Finally, please remember that a family council held regularly will help us spot family problems early and nip them in the bud; councils will give each family member a feeling of worth and importance; and most of all they will assist us to be more successful and happy in our precious relationships, within the walls of our homes. May our Heavenly Father bless all of our families as we counsel together is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

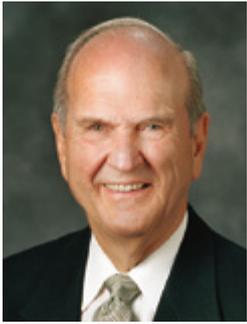
#### NOTES

1. See Abraham 4:26; 5:2–3.
2. *Our Family: A Practical Guide for Building a Gospel-Centered Home* (pamphlet, 1980), 6.
3. Alma 37:37.
4. Matthew 18:20.



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**By President Russell M. Nelson**  
President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# The Price of Priesthood Power

*Are we willing to pray, fast, study, seek, worship, and serve as men of God so we can have priesthood power?*

Six months ago in the October 2015 general conference, I spoke to the sisters of the Church about their divine role as women of God. Now I wish to speak to you brethren about your divine role as men of God. As I travel the world, I marvel at the strength and sheer goodness of the men and boys of this Church. There is simply no way to number the hearts you've healed and the lives you've lifted. Thank you!

In my last conference message, I related my devastating experience many years ago when, as a heart surgeon, I was not able to save the lives of two little sisters. With permission of their father, I would like to say more about that family.

Congenital heart disease afflicted three children born to Ruth and Jimmy Hatfield. Their first son, Jimmy Jr., died without a definitive diagnosis. I entered the picture when the parents sought help for their two daughters, Laural Ann and her younger sister, Gay Lynn. I was heartbroken when both girls died following their operations.<sup>1</sup> Understandably, Ruth and Jimmy were spiritually shattered.

Over time, I learned that they harbored lingering resentment toward me and the Church. For almost six decades, I have been haunted by this situation and have grieved for the Hatfields. I tried several times to establish contact with them, without success.

Then one night last May, I was awakened by those two little girls from

the other side of the veil. Though I did not see or hear them with my physical senses, I felt their presence. Spiritually, I heard their pleadings. Their message was brief and clear: "Brother Nelson, we are not sealed to anyone! *Can you help us?*" Soon thereafter, I learned that their mother had passed away, but their father and younger brother were still alive.

Emboldened by the pleadings of Laural Ann and Gay Lynn, I tried again to contact their father, who I learned was living with his son Shawn. This time they were willing to meet with me.

In June, I literally knelt in front of Jimmy, now 88 years old, and had a heart-to-heart talk with him. I spoke of his daughters' pleadings and told him I would be honored to perform sealing ordinances for his family. I also explained that it would take time and much effort on his and Shawn's part to be ready and worthy to enter the temple, as neither of them had ever been endowed.



President Russell M. Nelson and Sister Wendy Nelson at the Payson Utah Temple with members of the Jimmy Hatfield family.



The Spirit of the Lord was palpable throughout that meeting. And when Jimmy and Shawn each accepted my offer, I was overjoyed! They worked diligently with their stake president, bishop, home teachers, and ward mission leader, as well as with young missionaries and a senior missionary couple. And then, not long ago, in the Payson Utah Temple, I had the profound privilege of sealing Ruth to Jimmy and their four children to them. Wendy and I wept as we participated in that sublime experience. Many hearts were healed that day!

On reflection, I have marveled at Jimmy and Shawn and what they were willing to do. They have become heroes to me. If I could have the wish of my heart, it would be that each man and young man in this Church would demonstrate the courage, strength, and humility of this father and son. They were willing to forgive and let go of old hurts and habits. They were willing to submit to guidance from

their priesthood leaders so that the Atonement of Jesus Christ could purify and magnify them. Each was willing to become a man who worthily bears the priesthood “after the holiest order of God.”<sup>2</sup>

To *bear* means to support the weight of that which is held. It is a sacred trust to bear the priesthood, which is the mighty power and authority of God. Think of this: the priesthood conferred upon us is *the very same power and authority* through which God created this and numberless worlds, governs the heavens and the earth, and exalts His obedient children.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, Wendy and I were in a meeting where the organist was poised and ready to play the opening hymn. His eyes were on the music, and his fingers were on the keys. He began pressing the keys, but there was no sound. I whispered to Wendy, “He has no power.” I reasoned that something had stopped the flow of electrical power to that organ.

Well, brethren, in like manner, I fear that there are too many men who have been given the *authority* of the priesthood but who lack priesthood *power* because the flow of power has been blocked by sins such as laziness, dishonesty, pride, immorality, or preoccupation with things of the world.

I fear that there are too many priesthood bearers who have done little or nothing to develop their ability to access the powers of heaven. I worry about all who are impure in their thoughts, feelings, or actions or who demean their wives or children, thereby cutting off priesthood power.

I fear that too many have sadly surrendered their agency to the adversary and are saying by their conduct, “I care more about satisfying my own desires than I do about bearing the Savior’s power to bless others.”

I fear, brethren, that some among us may one day wake up and realize what power in the priesthood really is and face the deep regret that they spent far

more time seeking power over others or power at work than learning to exercise fully the power of God.<sup>4</sup> President George Albert Smith taught that “we are not here to while away the hours of this life and then pass to a sphere of exaltation; but we are here to qualify ourselves day by day for the positions that our Father expects us to fill hereafter.”<sup>5</sup>

Why would any man waste his days and settle for Esau’s mess of pottage<sup>6</sup> when he has been entrusted with the possibility of receiving all of the blessings of Abraham?<sup>7</sup>

I urgently plead with each one of us to live up to our privileges as bearers of the priesthood. In a coming day, *only* those men who have taken their priesthood seriously, by *diligently* seeking to be taught by the Lord Himself, will be able to bless, guide, protect, strengthen, and heal others. Only a man who has paid the price for priesthood power will be able to bring miracles to those

he loves and keep his marriage and family safe, now and throughout eternity.

What is the price to develop such priesthood power? The Savior’s senior Apostle, Peter—that same Peter who with James and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery<sup>8</sup>—declared qualities we should seek to “be partakers of the divine nature.”<sup>9</sup>

He named faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, and diligence.<sup>10</sup> And don’t forget humility!<sup>11</sup> So I ask, how would our family members, friends, and coworkers say you and I are doing in developing these and other spiritual gifts?<sup>12</sup> The more those attributes are developed, the greater will be our priesthood power.

How else can we increase our power in the priesthood? We need to pray from our hearts. Polite recitations

of past and upcoming activities, punctuated with some requests for blessings, cannot constitute the kind of communing with God that brings enduring power. Are you willing to pray *to know how to pray* for more power? The Lord will teach you.

Are you willing to search the scriptures and feast on the words of Christ<sup>13</sup>—to study *earnestly* in order to have more power? If you want to see your wife’s heart melt, let her find you on the Internet studying the doctrine of Christ<sup>14</sup> or reading your scriptures!

Are you willing to worship in the temple regularly? The Lord loves to do His own teaching in His holy house. Imagine how pleased He would be if you asked Him to teach you about priesthood keys, authority, and power as you experience the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood in the holy temple.<sup>15</sup> Imagine the increase in priesthood power that could be yours.



Are you willing to follow President Thomas S. Monson's example of serving others? For decades he has taken the long way home, following promptings of the Spirit to arrive on someone's doorstep and then hear words such as, "How did you know it was the anniversary of our daughter's death?" or "How did you know it was my birthday?" And if you truly want more priesthood power, you will cherish and care for your wife, embracing both her *and* her counsel.

Now, if all of this sounds excessive, please consider how different our relationships with our wife, children, and associates at work would be if we were *as* concerned about gaining priesthood power as we are in progressing at work or increasing the balance in our bank account. If we will humbly present ourselves before the Lord and ask Him to teach us, He will show us how to increase *our* access to *His* power.

In these latter days, we know there will be earthquakes in diverse places.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps one of those diverse places will be in our own homes, where emotional, financial, or spiritual "earthquakes" may occur. Priesthood power can calm the seas and heal fractures in the earth. Priesthood power can also calm the minds and heal fractures in the hearts of those we love.

Are we willing to pray, fast, study, seek, worship, and serve as men of God so we can have that kind of priesthood power? Because two little girls were so eager to be sealed to their family, their father and brother were willing to pay the price to bear the holy Melchizedek Priesthood.

My dear brethren, we have been given a sacred trust—the authority of God to bless others. May each one of us rise up as the man God foreordained



us to be—ready to bear the priesthood of God bravely, eager to pay whatever price is required to increase his power in the priesthood. With *that* power, we can help prepare the world for the Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. This is His Church, led today by His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, whom I dearly love and sustain. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "A Plea to My Sisters," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 84:18.
3. See *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Parts A and B* (2000); see also Alma 13:7–8; Doctrine and Covenants 84:17–20, 35–38; Moses 1:33, 35.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
5. George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1905, 62; see also *The Teachings of George Albert Smith*, ed. Robert and Susan McIntosh (1996), 17.

6. See Genesis 25:29–34.
7. See Genesis 12:3; 17:2–8; Galatians 3:29; 1 Nephi 15:14–18; Abraham 2:9–11.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:20. The Savior, Moses, and Elijah (sometimes referred to as Elias) initially gave the keys to Peter, James, and John on the mount when Jesus was transfigured before them (see Matthew 17:1–4; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–30; Doctrine and Covenants 63:21).
9. 2 Peter 1:4.
10. See 2 Peter 1:5–10.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:6 (note: here, in a revelation to Joseph Smith, the Lord added *humility* to Peter's list).
12. See 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Moroni 10:8–17; Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.
13. See 2 Nephi 32:3.
14. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–20.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:33.



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By Stephen W. Owen  
Young Men General President

# The Greatest Leaders Are the Greatest Followers

*There will be times when the path ahead seems dark, but keep following the Savior. He knows the way; in fact, He is the way.*

When I was 12 years old, my father took me hunting in the mountains. We woke up at 3:00 in the morning, saddled our horses, and set out up the forested mountainside in total darkness. As much as I loved hunting with my dad, at that moment I felt a little nervous. I had never been in these mountains before, and I couldn't see the trail—or much of anything else, for that matter! The only thing I could see was the small flashlight my dad was carrying as it cast a faint light on the pine trees ahead of us. What if my horse slipped and fell—could he even see where he was going? But this thought comforted me: “Dad knows where he’s going. If I follow him, everything will be OK.”

And everything was OK. Eventually the sun came out, and we had a wonderful day together. As we started toward home, my dad pointed to a majestic, sloping peak that stood out among the others. “That’s Windy Ridge,” he said. “That’s where the good hunting is.” Instantly, I knew that I

wanted to come back and climb to Windy Ridge someday.

In the years that followed, I would often hear my father talk about Windy Ridge, but we never went back—until one day, 20 years later, I called my dad and said, “Let’s go to Windy.” Once again we saddled our horses and started up the mountainside. I was now an

experienced rider in my 30s, yet I was surprised to feel the same nervousness I had felt as a 12-year-old boy. But my dad knew the way, and I followed him.

Finally we made it to the top of Windy. The view was exhilarating, and the overwhelming feeling I had was that I wanted to come back—not for me this time but for my wife and my children. I wanted them to experience what I had experienced.

Over the years, I’ve had many opportunities to lead my sons and other young men to mountaintops, just as my father led me. These experiences have prompted me to ponder what it means to lead—and what it means to follow.

## Jesus Christ, the Greatest Leader and the Greatest Follower

If I were to ask you, “Who is the greatest leader who ever lived?”—what would you say? The answer, of course, is Jesus Christ. He sets the perfect example of every imaginable leadership quality.

But what if I were to ask you, “Who is the greatest *follower* who ever



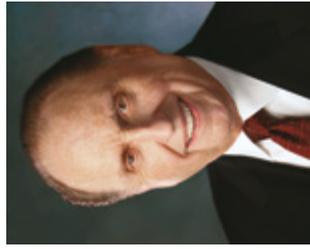


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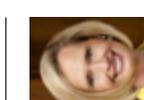
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lived?”—wouldn't the answer again be Jesus Christ? He is the greatest leader *because* He is the greatest follower—He follows His Father perfectly, in all things.

The world teaches that leaders must be mighty; the Lord teaches that they must be meek. Worldly leaders gain power and influence through their talent, skill, and wealth. Christlike leaders gain power and influence “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”<sup>1</sup>

In God's eyes, the greatest leaders have always been the greatest followers.

Allow me to share two experiences from my recent interactions with the young men of the Church that have taught me about leading and following.

#### We Are All Leaders

Recently my wife and I attended a sacrament meeting away from our home ward. Just before the meeting started, a young man approached me and asked if I would help pass the sacrament. I said, “I'd be happy to.”

I took my seat with the other deacons and asked one who was sitting next to me, “What is my assignment?” He told me I was to start passing at the back of the chapel in the middle section and that he would be on the other side of the same section, and together we would work our way to the front.

I said, “I haven't done this for a long time.”

He replied, “That's OK. You'll be fine. I felt the same way when I started.”

Later the youngest deacon in the quorum, ordained only weeks earlier, gave a talk in sacrament meeting. After the meeting, the other deacons rallied around him to tell him how proud they were of their fellow quorum member.



As I visited with them that day, I found out that each week, members of all the Aaronic Priesthood quorums in that ward reach out to other young men and invite them to be part of their quorums.

These young men were all great leaders. And they clearly had some wonderful behind-the-scenes Melchizedek Priesthood holders, parents, and others who mentored them in their duties. Caring adults like these see young men not just as they are but as they can become. When they talk to or about the young men, they do not dwell on their shortcomings. Instead, they emphasize the great leadership qualities they are demonstrating.

Young men, this is how the Lord sees you. I invite you to see yourself

this way. There will be times in your life when you are called upon to lead. At other times, you will be expected to follow. But my message to you today is that regardless of your calling, you are always a leader, and you are always a follower. Leadership is an expression of discipleship—it is simply a matter of helping others come unto Christ, which is what true disciples do. If you are striving to be a follower of Christ, then you can help others follow Him and you can be a leader.

Your ability to lead does not come from an outgoing personality, motivational skills, or even a talent for public speaking. It comes from your commitment to follow Jesus Christ. It comes from your desire to be, in Abraham's words, “a greater follower



of righteousness.”<sup>2</sup> If you can do that—even if you aren’t perfect at it, but you’re trying—then you *are* a leader.

#### Priesthood Service Is Leadership

On another occasion, I was in New Zealand visiting the home of a single mother with three teenage children. The oldest son was 18 and had received the Melchizedek Priesthood just the previous Sunday. I asked if he had been able to exercise this priesthood yet. He said, “I’m not sure what that means.”

I told him he now had the authority to give a priesthood blessing of comfort or healing. I looked at his mother, who had not had a Melchizedek Priesthood holder by her side for many years. “I think it would be wonderful,” I said, “if you would give your mom a blessing.”

He replied, “I don’t know how.”

I explained that he could put his hands on his mother’s head, state her name, state that he is giving her a blessing by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, say whatever the Spirit puts in his mind and heart, and close in the name of Jesus Christ.

The next day, I received an email from him. It read in part: “Tonight I blessed my mum. . . . I felt very, very nervous and inadequate, so I prayed

continually to ensure I had the Spirit with me, because I could not give a blessing without it. As I started, I completely forgot myself and my weaknesses. . . . I [did not expect] the immense spiritual and emotional power I felt. . . . Afterwards the spirit of love hit me so hard I could not contain my emotions, so I hugged my mum and wept like a baby. . . . Even now as I write this, [I feel] the Spirit [so much that] I never want to sin again. . . . I love this gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

Isn’t it inspiring to see how a seemingly ordinary young man can accomplish great things through priesthood service, even when he feels inadequate? I recently learned that this young elder has received a mission call and will enter the missionary training center next month. I believe he will lead many souls to Christ because he has learned how to follow Christ in his priesthood service—beginning in his own home, where his example is having a profound influence on his 14-year-old brother.

Brethren, whether we realize it or not, people are looking up to us—family members, friends, even strangers. It is not enough for us as priesthood holders just to come unto Christ;

our duty now is to “invite *all* to come unto Christ.”<sup>4</sup> We cannot be satisfied receiving spiritual blessings for ourselves; we must lead the people we love to those same blessings—and as disciples of Jesus Christ, we must love everyone. The Savior’s charge to Peter is also a charge to us: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Follow the Man of Galilee

There will be times when the path ahead seems dark, but keep following the Savior. He knows the way; in fact, He *is* the way.<sup>6</sup> The more earnestly you come unto Christ, the more deeply you will desire to help others experience what you have experienced. Another word for this feeling is charity, “which [the Father] hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Then you will find that in the very act of following Christ, you are also leading others to Him, for in the words of President Thomas S. Monson, “As we follow that Man of Galilee—even the Lord Jesus Christ—our personal influence will be felt for good wherever we are, whatever our callings.”<sup>8</sup>

I bear witness that this is Christ’s true Church. We are led by a prophet of God, President Monson—a great leader who is also a true follower of the Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.
2. Abraham 1:2.
3. Personal correspondence; spelling and punctuation standardized.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 20:59; emphasis added.
5. Luke 22:32.
6. See John 14:6.
7. Moroni 7:48.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Your Personal Influence,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 20.



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

# In Praise of Those Who Save

*As we emulate the Savior's love, He will surely bless and prosper our righteous efforts to save our marriages and strengthen our families.*

Many years ago, I was at the Frankfurt Germany Temple when I noticed an elderly couple holding hands. The caring tenderness and affection they showed to each other warmed my heart.

I'm not completely sure why this scene affected me so profoundly. Perhaps it was the sweetness of the love these two people shared for one another—a compelling symbol of perseverance and commitment. It was clear that this couple had been together for a long time and their affection for one another was still alive and strong.

## A Society of Disposables

I think another reason this tender scene has stayed with me for so long is the contrast to some of today's attitudes. In so many societies around the world, everything seems to be disposable. As soon as something starts to break down or wear out—or even when we simply grow tired of it—we throw it out and replace it with an upgrade, something newer or shinier.

We do this with cell phones, clothes, cars—and, tragically, even with relationships.

While there may be value in decluttering our lives of material things we no longer need, when it comes to things of eternal importance—our marriages, our families, and our values—a mind-set of replacing the original in favor of the modern can bring profound remorse.

I am grateful that I belong to a church that values marriage and family. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known throughout the world for having some of the finest marriages and families you can find. I believe this is, in part, due to the precious truth restored by Joseph Smith that marriages and families are meant to be eternal. Families are not just meant to make things run more smoothly here on earth and to be cast off when we get to heaven. Rather, they are the *order* of heaven. They are an echo of a celestial pattern and an emulation of God's eternal family.

But strong marriage and family relationships do not happen just because we are members of the Church. They require constant, intentional work. The doctrine of eternal families must inspire us to dedicate our best efforts to saving and enriching our marriages and families. I admire and applaud those who





have preserved and nourished these critical, eternal relationships.

Today I wish to speak in praise of those who save.

#### Saving Our Marriages

Over the years, I have performed the sealing ordinance for many hopeful and loving couples. I have never met anyone who, as they looked at each other across the altar, thought they would end up divorced or heartbroken.

Unfortunately, some do.

Somehow, as the days multiply and the color of romantic love changes, there are some who slowly stop thinking of each other's happiness and start noticing the little faults. In such an environment, some are enticed by the tragic conclusion that their spouse isn't smart enough, fun enough, or young enough. And somehow they get the idea that this gives them justification to start looking elsewhere.

Brethren, if this comes close to describing you at all, I warn you that you are on a road that leads to broken marriages, broken homes, and broken hearts. I plead with you to stop now, turn around, and come back to the safe path of integrity and loyalty to covenants. And, of course, the same

principles apply for our dear sisters.

Now, just one word to those of our single brethren who follow the deception that they first have to find the "perfect woman" before they can enter into serious courting or marriage.

My beloved brethren, may I remind you, if there were a perfect woman, do you really think she would be that interested in you?

In God's plan of happiness, we are not so much looking for someone perfect but for a person with whom, throughout a lifetime, we can join efforts to create a loving, lasting, and more perfect relationship. That is the goal.

Brethren, those who save their marriages understand that this pursuit takes time, patience, and, above all, the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It requires you to be kind, envy not, seek not your own, not be easily provoked, think no evil, and rejoice in the truth. In other words, it requires charity, the pure love of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

All this won't just happen in an instant. Great marriages are built brick by brick, day after day, over a lifetime.

And that is good news.

Because no matter how flat your relationship may be at the present, if you keep adding pebbles of kindness,

compassion, listening, sacrifice, understanding, and selflessness, eventually a mighty pyramid will begin to grow.

If it appears to take forever, remember: happy marriages are meant to *last* forever! So "be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great [marriage]. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."<sup>2</sup>

It may be a gradual work, but it doesn't have to be a cheerless one. In fact, at the risk of stating the obvious, divorce rarely happens when the husband and wife are happy.

So be happy!

And brethren, astonish your wife by doing things that make her happy.

Those who save their marriages choose happiness. While it's true that some types of chronic depression require specialized treatment, I am fond of this bit of wisdom by Abraham Lincoln: "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." It fits nicely with its scriptural companion: "Seek, and ye shall find."<sup>3</sup>

If we look for imperfections in our spouse or irritations in our marriage, we will certainly find them, because everyone has some. On the other hand, if we look for the good, we will surely find it, because everyone has many good qualities too.

Those who save marriages pull out the weeds and water the flowers. They celebrate the small acts of grace that spark tender feelings of charity. Those who save marriages save future generations.

Brethren, remember why you fell in love.

Work each day to make your marriage stronger and happier.

My dear friends, let us do our very best to be numbered among those hallowed and happy souls who save their marriages.

### Saving Our Families

Today I also wish to speak in praise of those who save their relationships with their families. Every family needs saving.

As wonderful as it is that this Church is known for its strong families, we may often feel this must apply to every Latter-day Saint family except ours. But the reality is that there are no perfect families.

Every family has moments of awkwardness.

Like when your parents ask you to take a “selfie” of them, or when your great-aunt insists that you are still single because you are just too picky, or when your opinionated brother-in-law thinks his political view is the gospel

view, or when your dad arranges a family portrait with everyone dressed like characters in his favorite movie.

And you get the Chewbacca costume.

Families are like that.

We may share the same gene pool, but we are not the same. We have unique spirits. We are influenced in different ways by our experiences. And each of us ends up different as a result.

Rather than attempting to force everyone into a mold of our own making, we can choose to celebrate these differences and appreciate them for adding richness and constant surprises to our lives.

Sometimes, however, members of our families make choices or do

things that are thoughtless, hurtful, or immoral. What should we do in these cases?

There is not one solution that covers every situation. Those who save their families are successful because they counsel with their spouse and family, seek the will of the Lord, and listen for the promptings of the Holy Ghost. They know that what is right for one family may not be right for another.

However, there is one thing that is right in every case.

In the Book of Mormon we learn of a people who had discovered the secret to happiness. For generations, “there was no contention. . . . And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had





been created by the hand of God.” How did they do it? “Because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”<sup>4</sup>

Whatever problems your family is facing, whatever you must do to solve them, the beginning and the end of the solution is charity, the pure love of Christ. Without this love, even seemingly perfect families struggle. With it, even families with great challenges succeed.

“Charity never faileth.”<sup>5</sup>

It is true for saving marriages! It is true for saving families!

#### Set Aside Pride

The great enemy of charity is pride. Pride is one of the biggest reasons marriages and families struggle. Pride is short-tempered, unkind, and envious. Pride exaggerates its own strength and ignores the virtues of others. Pride is selfish and easily provoked. Pride assumes evil intent where there is none and hides its own weaknesses behind clever excuses. Pride is cynical, pessimistic, angry, and impatient. Indeed, if charity is the pure love of Christ, then pride is the defining characteristic of Satan.

Pride may be a common human failing. But it is not part of our spiritual heritage, and it has no place among holders of the priesthood of God.

Life is short, brethren. Regrets can last a long time—some will have repercussions that echo through eternity.

The way you treat your wife or children or parents or siblings may influence generations to come. What legacy do you want to leave your posterity? One of harshness, vengeance, anger, fear, or isolation? Or one of love, humility, forgiveness, compassion, spiritual growth, and unity?

We all need to remember, “Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.”<sup>6</sup>

For the sake of your family relationships, for the sake of your soul, please be merciful, for “mercy triumphs over judgment.”<sup>7</sup>

Set aside pride.

Sincerely apologizing to your children, your wife, your family, or your friends is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Is being right more important than fostering an environment of nurturing, healing, and love?

Build bridges; don’t destroy them.

Even when you are not at fault—perhaps especially when you are not at fault—let love conquer pride.

If you do this, whatever adversity you are facing will pass, and because of the love of God in your hearts, contention will fade. These principles of saving relationships apply to all of us, regardless of whether we are married, divorced, widowed, or single. We all can be saviors of strong families.

#### The Greatest Love

Brethren, in our efforts to save our marriages and families, as in all things, let us follow the example of the One who saves us. The Savior won “our souls with love.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is our Master. His work is our work. It is a saving work, and it begins in our homes.

Love in the fabric of the plan of salvation is selfless and seeks the well-being of others. That is the love our Heavenly Father has for us.

As we emulate the Savior’s love, He will surely bless and prosper our righteous efforts to save our marriages and strengthen our families.

May the Lord bless you in your untiring and righteous efforts to be numbered among those who save. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; see also Moroni 7:47.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
3. Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; 3 Nephi 14:7.
4. See 4 Nephi 1:15–16.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:8; see also Moroni 7:46.
6. James 2:13, English Standard Version.
7. James 2:13, English Standard Version.
8. “O God, the Eternal Father,” *Hymns*, no. 175.



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

## Eternal Families

*Our priesthood obligation is to put our families and the families of those around us at the center of our concern.*

I am grateful to be with you this evening in the general priesthood session of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a grand moment in the history of the Church. One hundred eighty-two years ago, in 1834, in Kirtland, Ohio, all of the priesthood holders were called to meet together in a 14-by-14-foot (4.2 by 4.2 m) log schoolhouse. In that meeting the Prophet Joseph Smith is reported to have said: “You know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handful of Priesthood you

see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Millions of priesthood holders, in more than 110 countries, are gathered in this session. Perhaps the Prophet Joseph foresaw this time and the glorious future yet ahead of us.

My message tonight is an attempt to describe that future and what we must do to be a part of the plan of happiness our Heavenly Father has prepared for us. Before we were born, we lived in a family with our exalted and eternal Heavenly Father. He ordained a plan that enables us to advance and progress

to become like Him. He did it out of love for us. The purpose of the plan was to allow us the privilege of living forever as our Heavenly Father lives. This gospel plan offered us a life of mortality in which we would be tested. A promise was given that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, if we obeyed the laws and priesthood ordinances of the gospel, we would have eternal life, the greatest of all His gifts.

Eternal life is that kind of life which God our Eternal Father lives. God has said that His purpose is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). The great purpose of every priesthood holder, therefore, is to assist in the work of helping people rise to eternal life.

Every priesthood effort and every priesthood ordinance is intended to help Heavenly Father’s children be changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ to become members of perfected family units. It follows that “the great work of every man is to believe the gospel, to keep the commandments, and to create and perfect an eternal family unit,”<sup>2</sup> and to help others do the same.



Since that is true, everything we do should have celestial marriage as its focus and purpose. That means we must strive to be sealed to an eternal companion in the temple of God. We must also encourage others to make and keep the covenants that bind a husband and wife together, with their family, in this life and in the world to come.

Why should this matter so much to each of us—young or old, deacon or high priest, son or father? It is because our priesthood obligation is to put our families and the families of those around us at the center of our concern. Every major decision should be based on the effect it will have on a family to qualify for life with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. There is nothing in our priesthood service as important as this.

Let me tell you what this could mean to a deacon listening tonight as a member of a family unit and as a quorum member.

In his family, there may or may not be regular family prayer or frequent family home evening. If his father, sensing these obligations, calls the family together for prayer or scripture reading, the deacon can rush to take part with a smile. He can encourage his brothers and sisters to participate and praise them when they do. He can ask his father for a blessing when school begins or in another moment of need.

He may not have such a faithful father. But the very desire of his heart for those experiences will bring the powers of heaven to those around him because of his faith. They will seek for the family life that deacon wants with all his heart.

The teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood can see in his home teaching assignment an opportunity to help the Lord change the lives of a family.



The Lord suggested that in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“The teacher’s duty is to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

“And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking” (D&C 20:53–54).

Similarly, the priest in the Aaronic Priesthood is given this charge:

“The priest’s duty is to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament,

“And visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties” (D&C 20:46–47).

You may wonder, as I did when I was a young teacher and priest, how in the world I could rise to those challenges. I was never sure how I could exhort in a way that would move a family toward eternal life without offending or seeming to criticize. I have learned that the only exhortation that changes hearts comes from the Holy Ghost. That occurs most often as we bear testimony of the Savior, who was and is the perfect family member. As we focus on our love for Him, harmony and peace will grow in the homes we visit. The Holy Ghost will attend us in our service to families.

The young priesthood holder may, by the way he prays, by the way he speaks, and by the way he encourages

the members of the family, bring the influence and example of the Savior to their minds and hearts.

One wise priesthood leader showed me he understood that. He asked my young son to take the lead in a home teaching visit. He said that the family might resist his exhortations, but he thought the simple teaching and testimony of a boy might more likely penetrate their hardened hearts.

What can the young elder do to help in the creation of eternal families? He may be about to go into the mission field. He can pray with all his heart that he will be able to find, teach, and baptize families. I still remember a handsome young man with his lovely bride and their two beautiful little girls sitting with me and my missionary companion one day. The Holy Ghost came and testified to them that the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored. They believed enough that they even asked if we could give their two little girls a blessing, as they had seen done in one of our sacrament meetings. They already had a desire for their children to be blessed, but they did not yet understand that the higher blessings would be possible only in the temples of God after they had made covenants.

I still feel pain to think of that couple and those little girls, probably now grown old, without the promise of an eternal family. Their parents had at least an inkling of the blessings that could be made available to them. My hope is that they somehow, somewhere may yet have the opportunity to qualify to be an eternal family.

Other elders going into the field will have the happier experience my son Matthew had. He and his companion found a widow with 11 children living in humble circumstances. He wanted for them what you want—to have an eternal

family. To my son, it looked impossible or at least unlikely at that moment.

I visited that little city years after my son had baptized the widow, and she invited me to meet her family at church. I had to wait a while because most of her children, with her many grandchildren, came from several different chapels in the area. One son was faithfully serving in a bishopric, many of her children have been blessed by temple covenants, and she is sealed in an eternal family. As I parted from this dear sister, she put her arms around my waist (she was very short, so she could just barely get to my waist) and said, “Please, tell Mateo to come back to Chile before I die.” She had been given, because of those faithful elders, the happy anticipation of the greatest of all the gifts of God.

There are things an elder, as he returns from his mission, must do to

be true to his commitment to seek eternal life for himself and for those he loves. There is no more important commitment in time or in eternity than marriage. You have heard wise counsel to make marriage a priority in early post-mission plans. The faithful priesthood servant will do it wisely.

In considering marriage, he will see that he is choosing the parents of his children and the heritage they will have. He will make the choice with earnest searching and prayerful consideration. He will ensure that the person he marries shares his ideals for family and his convictions of the Lord’s purpose for marriage and that she is a person to whom he would be willing to trust his children’s happiness.

President N. Eldon Tanner gave wise counsel: “The parents that you should honor more than any others are the

parents of your children-to-be. Those children are entitled to the best parents that it is possible for you to give them—clean parents.”<sup>3</sup> Purity will be your protection and the protection of your children. You owe them that blessing.

Now, there are some husbands and fathers listening tonight. What can you do? My hope is that your desire has increased to make the changes necessary for you and your family to live in the celestial kingdom someday. As a priesthood father, with your wife at your side, you can touch the hearts of each family member to encourage them to look forward to that day. You will attend your sacrament meetings with your family, you will hold family meetings in which the Holy Ghost is invited, you will pray with your wife and family, and you will prepare yourself to take your family to the temple. You will move with them along the path to an eternal family home.

You will treat your wife and children the way Heavenly Father has treated you. You will follow the example and direction of the Savior to lead your family in His way.

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov’d, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy” (D&C 121:41–43).

The Lord has told priesthood fathers what kind of husbands they are to be. He says, “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her





and none else” (D&C 42:22). When the Lord speaks to both the husband and the wife, He commands, “Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery, . . . nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6).

For youth, the Lord has set the standard. “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:20), and “honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12).

When the Lord speaks to all in the family, His counsel is to love and support each other.

He asks us to “strive to perfect the lives of each [member of the family]; [to] strengthen the weak; reclaim [the] straying loved [one], and rejoice in their renewed spiritual strength.”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord also asks that we do all we can to help those of our kindred dead to be with us in our eternal home.

The high priests group leader who has worked diligently to help people find their ancestors and take names to the temple is rescuing those who have

gone before. There will be thanks in the world to come to those high priests, and to those who offer the ordinances, because they did not forget their family waiting in the spirit world.

Prophets have said: “The most important of the Lord’s work that you will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own home. Home Teaching, bishopric’s work, and other Church duties are all important, but the most important work is within the walls of your home.”<sup>5</sup>

In our home and in our priesthood service, the greatest value will be in the small acts that help us and those we love work toward eternal life. Those acts may seem small in this life, but they will bring everlasting blessings in eternity.

As we are faithful in our service to help Heavenly Father’s children to go home to Him, we will qualify for the greeting we all so much want to hear when we finish our earthly ministry. These are the words: “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” (Matthew 25:21).

Among those “many things” is the promise of an endless posterity. My prayer is that we may all qualify and help others to qualify for that supernal blessing in the home of our Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 137.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 26.
3. N. Eldon Tanner, *Church News*, Apr. 19, 1969, 2.
4. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 27.
5. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (1973), 248–49.



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By President Thomas S. Monson

# A Sacred Trust

*This precious gift of priesthood power brings with it not only solemn responsibilities but also special blessings for ourselves and for others.*

My beloved brethren, I pray for the Spirit to guide my remarks this evening. A common thread binds us together. We have been entrusted to bear the priesthood of God and to act in His name. We are the recipients of a sacred trust. Much is expected of us.

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121, verse 36, “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.” What a wonderful gift we have been given. Ours is the responsibility to guard and protect that priesthood and to be worthy of all the glorious blessings our Father in

Heaven has in store for us—and for others through us.

Wherever you go, your priesthood goes with you. Are you standing in holy places? Before you put yourself and your priesthood in jeopardy by venturing into places or participating in activities which are not worthy of you or of that priesthood, pause to consider the consequences. Remember who you are and what God expects you to become. You are a child of promise. You are a man of might. You are a son of God.

This precious gift of priesthood power brings with it not only solemn responsibilities but also special blessings for ourselves and for others. May we, in

whatever place we may find ourselves, always be worthy to call upon its power, for we never know when our need and our opportunity to do so may come.

During World War II, a friend of mine was serving in the South Pacific when his plane was shot down over the ocean. He and the other crew members successfully parachuted from the burning plane, inflated their life rafts, and clung to those rafts for three days.

On the third day they spotted what they knew to be a rescue vessel. It passed them by. The next morning it passed them by again. They began to despair as they realized that this was the last day the rescue vessel would be in the area.

Then the Holy Spirit spoke to my friend: “You have the priesthood. Command the rescuers to pick you up.”

He did as prompted: “In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the priesthood, turn about and pick us up.”

Within a few minutes the vessel was beside them, helping them on deck. A faithful and worthy bearer of the priesthood, in his extremity, had exercised that priesthood, blessing his life and the lives of others.

May we determine, here and now, ever to be prepared for our time of need, our time of service, our time of blessing.

As we now conclude this general priesthood session, I say to you that you “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). May we ever be worthy of these divine accolades, I pray with all my heart in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen. ■



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By President Thomas S. Monson

# Choices

*May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.*

Brothers and sisters, before I begin my formal message today, I would like to announce four new temples which, in coming months and years, will be built in the following locations: Quito, Ecuador; Harare, Zimbabwe; Belém, Brazil; and a second temple in Lima, Peru.

When I became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1963, there were 12 operating temples in the entire Church. With the dedication of the Provo City Center Temple two weeks ago, there are now 150 temples in operation throughout the world. How grateful we are for the blessings we receive in these holy houses.

Now, brothers and sisters, I wish to express my gratitude for the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you this morning.

I have been thinking recently about choices. It has been said that the door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people's lives. The choices we make determine our destiny.

When we left our premortal existence and entered mortality, we brought with us the gift of agency. Our goal is to obtain celestial glory, and the choices we make will, in large part, determine whether or not we reach our goal.

Most of you are familiar with Alice in Lewis Carroll's classic novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. You will remember that she comes to a crossroads with two paths before her, each stretching onward but in opposite directions. As she contemplates which way to turn, she is confronted by the Cheshire Cat, of whom Alice asks, "Which path shall I follow?"

The cat answers, "That depends where you want to go. If you do not know where you want to go, it doesn't matter which path you take."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Alice, we know where we want to go, and it *does* matter which way we go, for the path we follow in this life leads to our destination in the next life.

May we choose to build up within ourselves a great and powerful faith which will be our most effective defense against the designs of the adversary—a real faith, the kind of faith which will sustain us and will bolster our desire to choose the right. Without such faith, we go nowhere. With it, we can accomplish our goals.

Although it is imperative that we choose wisely, there are times when we will make foolish choices. The gift of repentance, provided by our Savior, enables us to correct our course settings, that we might return to the path which will lead us to that celestial glory we seek.

May we maintain the courage to defy the consensus. May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.

As we contemplate the decisions we make in our lives each day—whether to make this choice or that choice—if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice.

That this may ever be so is my heartfelt and humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen. ■

**NOTE**

1. Adapted from Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1898), 89.



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By **Bonnie L. Oscarson**  
Young Women General President

## Do I Believe?

*If these things are true, then we have the greatest message of hope and help that the world has ever known.*

**O**n March 30, just one year ago, little two-year-old Ethan Carnesecca, from American Fork, Utah, was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and fluid around his lungs. Two days later, his condition had become so serious that he needed to be flown by helicopter to Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City. His worried mother, Michele, was allowed to ride in the front seat and accompany her son. She was given a headset so she could communicate with the others in the helicopter. She could hear the medics working on her sick little boy, and being a pediatric nurse herself, Michele knew enough to understand that Ethan was in serious trouble.

In this critical moment, Michele noticed they were flying directly over the Draper Utah Temple. From the air, she looked out across the valley and could also see the Jordan River Temple, the Oquirrh Mountain Temple, and even the Salt Lake Temple in the distance. The thought came into her mind: "Do you believe it or not?"

She says of this experience:

"I had learned about the blessings of the temple and [that] 'families are forever' in Primary and in Young Women. I shared the message on families to the good people of Mexico on my mission.

I was sealed to my eternal companion for time and all eternity in the temple. I taught lessons about families as a Young Women leader, and I shared stories about forever families with my children in family home evening. I **KNEW** it, but did I **BELIEVE** it? My answer came as quickly as the question popped into my head: the Spirit confirmed to my heart and mind the answer I already knew—I **DID** believe it!

"At that moment I poured out my heart in prayer to my Heavenly Father, thanking Him for the knowledge and belief I had that families truly are

forever. I thanked Him for His Son, Jesus Christ, who made it all possible. I thanked Him for my son, and I let my Heavenly Father know if He needed to bring my little Ethan to His heavenly home, it was OK. I trusted in my Heavenly Father completely, and I knew I would see Ethan again. I was so grateful that in a crisis moment, I had the knowledge **AND** the belief that the gospel was true. I had peace."<sup>1</sup>

Ethan spent many weeks in the hospital, receiving expert medical care. The prayers, fasting, and faith of loved ones, combined with that care, allowed him to leave the hospital and return home to be with his family. He is healthy and well today.

This defining moment for Michele confirmed to her that what she had been taught all of her life was more than just words; it is true.

Do we sometimes become so accustomed to the blessings we have been given as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that we fail to fully comprehend the miracle and majesty of discipleship in the Lord's true Church? Are we ever





guilty of being complacent about the greatest gift we can be offered in this life? The Savior Himself taught, “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.”<sup>2</sup>

We believe that this Church is more than just a good place to go on Sundays and learn how to be a good person. It is more than just a lovely Christian social club where we can associate with people of good moral standing. It is not just a great set of ideas that parents can teach their children at home so they will be responsible, nice people. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is infinitely more than all of these things.

Think for just a minute about the profound claims we make as a religion. We believe that the same Church Jesus Christ established while on the earth has been restored once again by a prophet called of God in our time and that our leaders hold the same power and authority to act in God’s name that ancient Apostles held. It is called the priesthood of God. We claim that through this restored authority, we can receive saving ordinances, such as baptism, and enjoy the purifying and refining gift of the Holy Ghost to be with us at all times. We have apostles and prophets leading and directing this Church through priesthood keys, and we believe that God speaks to His children through these prophets.

We also believe that this priesthood power makes it possible to make covenants and receive ordinances in holy temples that will someday enable us to return to the presence of God and live with Him forever. We also claim that, through this power, families can be bound together for eternity when couples enter the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in sacred buildings that we believe are literally the houses of God. We believe that we can receive these saving ordinances not only for ourselves but also for our ancestors who lived on the earth without having the chance to participate in these essential saving ordinances. We believe we can perform ordinances for our ancestors by proxy in these same holy temples.

We believe that, through a prophet and the power of God, we have received additional scriptures, adding to the testimony of that in the Bible declaring that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world.

We claim that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God and the only true Church on the earth. It is called the Church of Jesus Christ because He stands at the head; it is His Church, and all these things are possible because of His atoning sacrifice.

We believe that these distinguishing features can be found in no other place or organization on this earth. As good and sincere as other religions and churches are, none of them have

the authority to provide the ordinances of salvation that are available in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We have a knowledge of these things, but *do we believe them?* If these things are true, then we have the greatest message of hope and help that the world has ever known. Believing them is a matter of eternal significance for us and for those we love.

To believe, we need to get the gospel from our heads into our hearts! It is possible for us to merely go through the motions of living the gospel because it is expected or because it is the culture in which we have grown up or because it is a habit. Perhaps some have not experienced what King Benjamin’s people felt following his compelling sermon: “They all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>3</sup>

We all need to seek to have our hearts and very natures changed so that we no longer have a desire to follow the ways of the world but to please God. True conversion is a process that takes place over a period of time and involves a willingness to exercise faith. It comes when we search the scriptures instead of the Internet. It comes when we are obedient to the commandments of God. Conversion comes when we serve those around us. It comes from earnest prayer, regular temple attendance, and faithful fulfillment of our God-given responsibilities. It takes consistency and daily effort.

I am often asked, “What is the greatest challenge our youth face today?”

I answer that I believe it is the ever-present influence of the “great and spacious building” in their lives.<sup>4</sup> If the Book of Mormon was written specifically for our day, then surely we cannot miss the relevance for all of us of the messages in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life and the effect of those pointing their fingers and taunting from the great and spacious building.

What is most heartrending to me is the description of those who have already fought their way through the mists of darkness on the strait and

narrow path, have clung to the rod of iron, have reached their goal, and have begun tasting of the pure and delicious fruit of the tree of life. Then the scripture says that those finely dressed people in the great and spacious building “were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

“And *after they had tasted of the fruit* they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>5</sup>

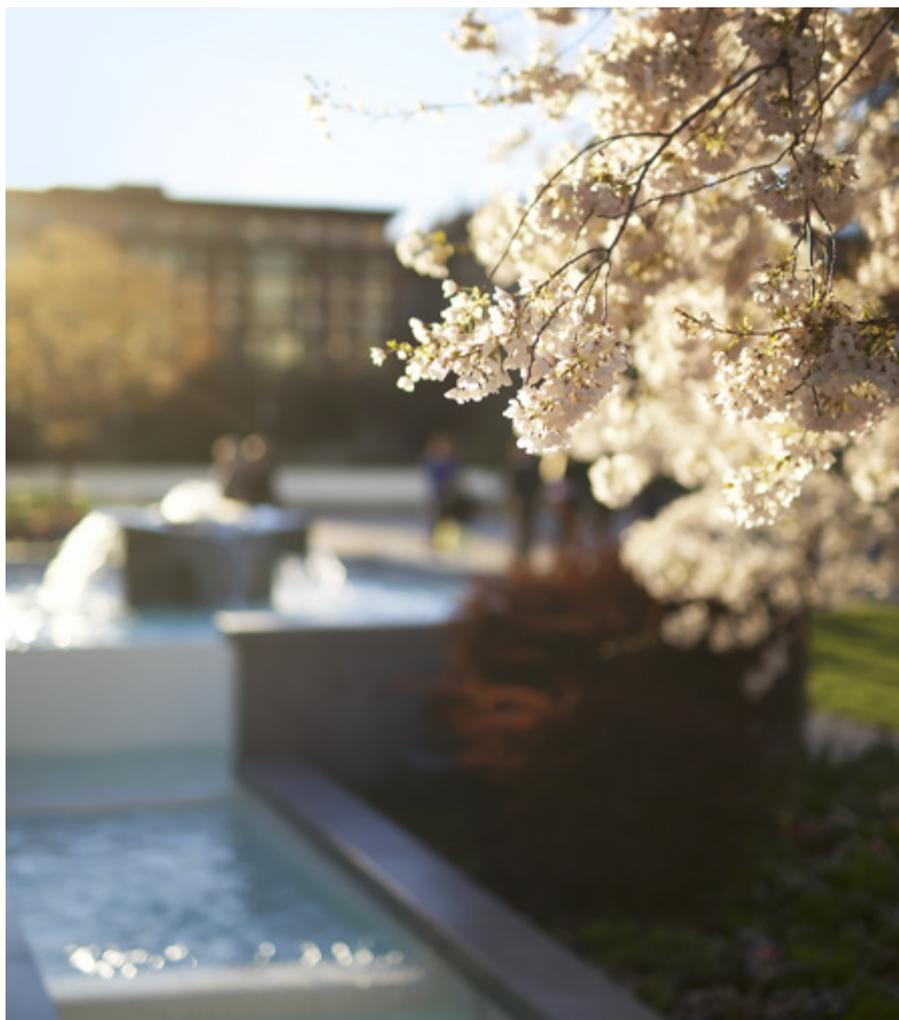
These verses describe those of us who already have the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. Whether we were born into it or had to fight our way through mists of darkness to find it, we have tasted of this fruit, which “is most precious and most desirable”<sup>6</sup> and has the potential to bring us eternal life, “the greatest of all the gifts of God.” We need only to keep feasting and not heed those who would make fun of our beliefs or those who delight to create doubts or those who find fault with Church leaders and doctrine. It is a choice we make daily—to choose faith over doubt. Elder M. Russell Ballard has urged us to “stay in the boat, use your life jackets, and hold on with both hands.”<sup>7</sup>

As members of the Lord’s true Church, we are already in the boat. We don’t have to go searching through the philosophies of the world for truth that will give us comfort, help, and direction to get us safely through the trials of life—we already have it! Just as Ethan’s mother could examine her long-held beliefs and declare confidently in a moment of crisis, “I do believe it,” so can we!

I bear witness that our membership in the Lord’s kingdom is a gift of immeasurable value. I testify that the blessings and peace the Lord has in store for those who are obedient and faithful exceed anything the human mind can comprehend. I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Personal journal entry shared with Bonnie L. Oscarson.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
3. Mosiah 5:2.
4. 1 Nephi 8:26.
5. 1 Nephi 8:27–28; emphasis added.
6. 1 Nephi 15:36.
7. M. Russell Ballard, “Stay in the Boat and Hold On!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 92.





By Bishop W. Christopher Waddell  
Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

## A Pattern for Peace

*The peace we all seek requires us to act—by learning of Jesus Christ, by listening to His words, and by walking with Him.*

A few years ago, our daughter and son-in-law were asked to team teach a Primary class of five active four-year-old little boys. Our daughter was the designated teacher and our son-in-law the designated enforcer, doing their best to maintain a sense of calm amidst occasional chaos in order to teach gospel principles to the children.

During one especially rough class, after a number of warnings to an energetic little boy, our son-in-law escorted the four-year-old out of the classroom. Once outside the room, and about to talk to the little boy about his behavior and the need to find his parents, the little boy stopped our son-in-law before he could say a word and, with his hand up in the air, and with great emotion, blurted out, “Sometimes—sometimes—it’s just hard for me to think about Jesus!”

In our journey through mortality, as glorious as our intended destination may be and as exhilarating as the journey may prove, we will all be subject to trials and sorrow along the way. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught: “The dial on the wheel of sorrow eventually points to each of us. At one time or another, everyone must experience sorrow. No one is exempt.”<sup>1</sup> “The Lord

in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness.”<sup>2</sup> However, our ability to travel this road in peace is, in large part, dependent on whether or not we too have a hard time thinking about Jesus.

Peace of mind, peace of conscience, and peace of heart are not determined by our ability to avoid trials, sorrow, or heartache. Despite our sincere pleas, not every storm will change course, not every infirmity will be healed, and we may not fully understand every doctrine, principle, or practice taught

by prophets, seers, and revelators. Nevertheless, we have been promised peace—with a condition attached.

In the Gospel of John, the Savior taught that despite the tribulations of life, we can be of good cheer, we can be of good hope, and we need not fear, because He declared, “*In me* ye might have peace.”<sup>3</sup> Faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice is, and forever will be, the first principle of the gospel and the foundation upon which our hope for “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” is built.<sup>4</sup>

In our search for peace amidst the daily challenges of life, we’ve been given a simple pattern to keep our thoughts focused on the Savior, who said: “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me. I am Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

Learn, listen, and walk—three steps with a promise.

### First Step: “Learn of Me”

In Isaiah we read, “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let



us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways.”<sup>6</sup>

In the ever-increasing number of temples dotting the earth, we learn of Jesus Christ and His role in the Father’s plan as the Creator of this world, as our Savior and Redeemer, and as the source of our peace.

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “The world can be a challenging and difficult place in which to live. . . . As you and I go to the holy houses of God, as we remember the covenants we make within, we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation. In this sacred sanctuary we will find peace.”<sup>7</sup>

During a stake conference assignment a few years ago while serving in South America, I met a couple that was grieving the recent death of their infant son.

It was in an interview during the course of the conference that I first met with Brother Tumiri and learned of his loss. As we spoke, he shared that not only was he deeply saddened by the death of his son, but he was also devastated at the thought of never seeing him again. He explained that as relatively new members of the Church, they had saved enough money to attend the temple just one time, prior to the birth of their little boy, where they had been sealed as a couple and had their two daughters sealed to them. He then described how they had been saving money for a return trip to the temple but hadn’t yet been able to take their little boy in order to be sealed to him as well.

Recognizing a possible misunderstanding, I explained that he would indeed see his son again, if he remained faithful, because the sealing ordinance that had bound him to his



wife and daughters was also sufficient to bind him to his son, who had been born in the covenant.

Amazed, he asked if this was really true, and when I confirmed that it was, he then asked if I would be willing to speak with his wife, who had been inconsolable during the two weeks since their son’s death.

Sunday afternoon, following the conference, I met with Sister Tumiri and explained this glorious doctrine to her as well. With the pain of her loss still fresh, but now with a glimmer of hope, she tearfully asked, “Will I really be able to hold my little boy in my arms again? Is he really mine forever?” I assured her that as she kept her covenants, the sealing power found in the temple, effective because of the authority of Jesus Christ, would indeed allow her to be with her son again and hold him in her arms.

Sister Tumiri, though heartbroken by the death of her son, left our meeting with tears of gratitude and filled with peace because of the sacred ordinances of the temple, made possible by our Savior and Redeemer.

Each time we attend the temple—in all that we hear, do, and say; in every ordinance in which we participate;

and in every covenant that we make—we are pointed to Jesus Christ. We feel peace as we hear His words and learn from His example. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught, “Go to the house of the Lord and there feel of His Spirit and commune with Him and you will know a peace that you will find nowhere else.”<sup>8</sup>

#### Second Step: “Listen to My Words”

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”<sup>9</sup> From the days of Adam and down through the ages to our current prophet, Thomas Spencer Monson, the Lord has spoken through His authorized representatives. Those who choose to listen and give heed to the words of the Lord, as delivered through His prophets, will find safety and peace.

In the Book of Mormon we find many examples of the importance of following prophetic counsel and standing with the prophet, including a lesson learned from Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, found in 1 Nephi chapter 8. Never has the great and spacious building been more crowded or the noise coming from its open windows

more misguided, mocking, and confusing than in our day. In this passage we read of two groups of people and their responses to the shouts from the building.

Beginning in verse 26, we read:

“And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building. . . .

“And it was filled with people, . . . and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come . . . and were partaking of the fruit.

“And after they had *tasted* of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”<sup>10</sup>

In verse 33 we read of others who had a different response to the scoffing and mocking coming from the building. The prophet Lehi explains that those in the building “did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were *partaking* of the fruit also; but we heeded them not.”<sup>11</sup>

A key difference between those who were ashamed, fell away, and were lost and those who did not heed the mocking from the building and stood with the prophet is found in two phrases: first, “after they had *tasted*,” and second, “those that were *partaking*.”

The first group had arrived at the tree, stood for a time with the prophet, but only *tasted* the fruit. By not continuing to eat, they allowed the taunting from the building to affect them, drawing them away from the prophet and into forbidden paths, where they were lost.

In contrast to those who tasted and wandered off were those who were found continuously *partaking* of the fruit. These individuals ignored the commotion from the building, stood by



the prophet, and enjoyed the accompanying safety and peace. Our commitment to the Lord and His servants cannot be a part-time commitment. If so, we leave ourselves vulnerable to those who seek to destroy our peace. As we listen to the Lord through His authorized servants, we stand in holy places and cannot be moved.

The adversary offers counterfeit solutions that may appear to provide answers but take us even further from the peace we seek. He offers a mirage that has the appearance of legitimacy and safety but ultimately, like the great and spacious building, will collapse, destroying all who seek peace within its walls.

Truth is found in the simplicity of a Primary song: “Words of a prophet: Keep the commandments. In this there is *safety* and *peace*.”<sup>12</sup>

### Third Step: “Walk in the Meekness of My Spirit”

However far we may wander from the path, the Savior invites us to return and walk with Him. This invitation to walk with Jesus Christ is an invitation to accompany Him to Gethsemane and from Gethsemane to Calvary and from Calvary to the Garden Tomb. It is an invitation to observe and apply His great atoning sacrifice, whose reach is as individual as it is infinite. It is an

invitation to repent, to draw upon His cleansing power, and to grasp His loving, outstretched arms. It is an invitation to be at peace.

We have all felt, at some time in our lives, the pain and heartache associated with sin and transgression, for “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”<sup>13</sup> However, “though [our] sins be as scarlet,” as we apply the Atonement of Jesus Christ and walk with Him through sincere repentance, “they shall be as white as snow.”<sup>14</sup> Though we have been weighed down with guilt, we shall obtain peace.

Alma the Younger was compelled to confront his sins when visited by an angel of the Lord. He described his experience in these words:

“My soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

“. . . Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.”<sup>15</sup>

As serious as his sins were, and in the midst of this ordeal, he continues:

“I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“. . . I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.”<sup>16</sup>



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

“And never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and *I did find peace to my soul.*”<sup>17</sup>

Like Alma, we too will find peace to our souls as we walk with Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, and apply His healing power in our lives.

The peace we all seek requires more than a desire. It requires us to act—by learning of Him, by listening to His words, and by walking with Him. We may not have the ability to control all that happens around us, but we can control how we apply the pattern for peace that the Lord has provided—a pattern that makes it easy to think often about Jesus.

I testify that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life”<sup>18</sup> and that only through Him can we obtain true peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 27.
2. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” 26.
3. John 16:33; emphasis added.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 19:23–24.
6. Isaiah 2:3.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 93.
8. Gordon B. Hinckley, in “Rejoice in the Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2002, 63; *Liahona*, Dec. 2002, 33.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
10. 1 Nephi 8:26–28; emphasis added.
11. 1 Nephi 8:33; emphasis added.
12. “Keep the Commandments,” *Children’s Songbook*, 147; emphasis added.
13. 1 John 1:8.
14. Isaiah 1:18.
15. Alma 36:12–13.
16. Alma 36:17–18.
17. Alma 38:8; emphasis added.
18. John 14:6.

## Fathers

*I focus today on the good that men can do in the highest of masculine roles—husband and father.*

I speak today of fathers. Fathers are fundamental in the divine plan of happiness, and I want to raise a voice of encouragement for those who are striving to fill well that calling. To praise and encourage fatherhood and fathers is not to shame or discount anyone. I simply focus today on the good that men can do in the highest of masculine roles—husband and father.

David Blankenhorn, the author of *Fatherless America*, has observed: “Today, American society is fundamentally divided and ambivalent about the fatherhood idea. Some people do not even remember it. Others are offended by it. Others, including more than a few family scholars, neglect it or disdain it.

Many others are not especially opposed to it, nor are they especially committed to it. Many people wish we could act on it, but believe that our society simply no longer can or will.”<sup>1</sup>

As a Church, we believe in fathers. We believe in “the ideal of the man who puts his family first.”<sup>2</sup> We believe that “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.”<sup>3</sup> We believe that in their complementary family duties, “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”<sup>4</sup> We believe that far from being superfluous, fathers are unique and irreplaceable.



Some see the good of fatherhood in social terms, as something that obligates men to their offspring, impelling them to be good citizens and to think about the needs of others, supplementing “maternal investment in children with paternal investment in children. . . . In short, the key for men is to be fathers. The key for children is to have fathers. The key for society is to create fathers.”<sup>5</sup> While these considerations are certainly true and important, we know that fatherhood is much more than a social construct or the product of evolution. The role of father is of divine origin, beginning with a Father in Heaven and, in this mortal sphere, with Father Adam.

The perfect, divine expression of fatherhood is our Heavenly Father. His character and attributes include abundant goodness and perfect love.



*Fathers manifest love as they labor in the service and support of their families.*



*Fatherhood requires sacrifice, but it is a source of incomparable satisfaction.*

His work and glory are the development, happiness, and eternal life of His children.<sup>6</sup> Fathers in this fallen world can claim nothing comparable to the Majesty on High, but at their best, they are striving to emulate Him, and they indeed labor in His work. They are honored with a remarkable and sobering trust.

For men, fatherhood exposes us to our own weaknesses and our need to improve. Fatherhood requires sacrifice, but it is a source of incomparable satisfaction, even joy. Again, the ultimate model is our Heavenly Father, who so loved us, His spirit children, that He gave us His Only Begotten Son for our salvation and exaltation.<sup>7</sup> Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>8</sup> Fathers manifest that love as they lay down their lives day by day, laboring in the service and support of their families.

Perhaps the most essential of a father’s work is to turn the hearts of his children to their Heavenly Father. If by his example as well as his words a father can demonstrate what fidelity to God looks like in day-to-day living, that father will have given his children the key to peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.<sup>9</sup> A father who reads scripture to and with his children acquaints them with the voice of the Lord.<sup>10</sup>

We find in the scriptures a repeated emphasis on the parental obligation to teach one’s children:

“And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. . . .



“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1833, the Lord reprimanded members of the First Presidency for inadequate attention to the duty of teaching their children. To one He said specifically, “You have not taught your children light and truth, according to the commandments; and that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you, and this is the cause of your affliction.”<sup>12</sup>

Fathers are to teach God’s law and works anew to each generation. As the Psalmist declared:

“For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

“That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should [then] arise and declare them to their children:

“That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.”<sup>13</sup>

Certainly teaching the gospel is a shared duty between fathers and

mothers, but the Lord is clear that He expects fathers to lead out in making it a high priority. (And let's remember that informal conversations, working and playing together, and listening are important elements of teaching.) The Lord expects fathers to help shape their children, and children want and need a model.

I myself was blessed with an exemplary father. I recall that when I was a boy of about 12, my father became a candidate for the city council in our rather small community. He did not mount an extensive election campaign—all I remember was that Dad had my brothers and me distribute copies of a flyer door to door, urging people to vote for Paul Christofferson. There were a number of adults that I handed a flyer to who remarked that Paul was a good and honest man and that they would have no problem voting for him. My young boy heart swelled with pride in my father. It gave me confidence and a desire to follow in his footsteps. He was not perfect—no one is—but he was upright and good and an aspirational example for a son.

Discipline and correction are part of teaching. As Paul said, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."<sup>14</sup> But in discipline a father must exercise particular care, lest there be anything even approaching abuse, which is never justified. When a father provides correction, his motivation must be love and his guide the Holy Spirit:

"Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov'd, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death."<sup>15</sup>

Discipline in the divine pattern is not so much about punishing as it is about helping a loved one along the path of self-mastery.

The Lord has said that "all children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age."<sup>16</sup> Breadwinning is a consecrated activity. Providing for one's family, although it generally requires time away from the family, is not inconsistent with fatherhood—it is the essence of being a good father. "Work and family are overlapping domains."<sup>17</sup> This, of course, does not justify a man who neglects his family for his career or, at the other extreme, one who will not exert himself and is content to shift his responsibility to others. In the words of King Benjamin:

"Ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another."<sup>18</sup>

We recognize the agony of men who are unable to find ways and means adequately to sustain their families. There is no shame for those who, at a given moment, despite their best efforts, cannot fulfill all the duties and functions of fathers. "Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed."<sup>19</sup>

Loving the mother of his children—and showing that love—are two of the best things a father can do for his children. This reaffirms and strengthens the marriage that is the foundation of their family life and security.

Some men are single fathers, foster fathers, or stepfathers. Many of them

strive mightily and do their very best in an often difficult role. We honor those who do all that can be done in love, patience, and self-sacrifice to meet individual and family needs. It should be noted that God Himself entrusted His Only Begotten Son to a foster father. Surely some of the credit goes to Joseph for the fact that as Jesus grew, He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."<sup>20</sup>

Regrettably, due to death, abandonment, or divorce, some children don't have fathers living with them. Some may have fathers who are physically present but emotionally absent or in other ways inattentive or nonsupportive. We call on all fathers to do better and to be better. We call on media and entertainment outlets to portray devoted and capable fathers who truly



*A father who reads scripture to and with his children acquaints them with the voice of the Lord.*



*The Lord expects fathers to help shape their children, and children want and need a model.*



love their wives and intelligently guide their children, instead of the bumbler and buffoons or “the guys who cause problems,” as fathers are all too frequently depicted.

To children whose family situation is troubled, we say, you yourself are no less for that. Challenges are at times an indication of the Lord’s trust in you. He can help you, directly and through others, to deal with what you face. You can become the generation, perhaps the first in your family, where the divine patterns that God has ordained for families truly take shape and bless all the generations after you.

To young men, recognizing the role you will have as provider and protector, we say, prepare now by being diligent in school and planning for postsecondary training. Education, whether in a university, technical school, apprenticeship, or similar program, is key to developing the skills and capabilities you will need. Take

advantage of opportunities to associate with people of all ages, including children, and learn how to establish healthy and rewarding relationships. That typically means talking face to face with people and sometimes doing things together, not just perfecting your texting skills. Live your life so that as a man you will bring purity to your marriage and to your children.

To all the rising generation, we say, wherever you rank your own father on the scale of good-better-best (and I predict that ranking will go higher as you grow older and wiser), make up your mind to honor him and your mother by your own life. Remember the yearning hope of a father as expressed by John: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”<sup>21</sup> Your righteousness is the greatest honor any father can receive.

To my brethren, the fathers in this Church, I say, I know you wish you were a more perfect father. I know I

wish I were. Even so, despite our limitations, let us press on. Let us lay aside the exaggerated notions of individualism and autonomy in today’s culture and think first of the happiness and well-being of others. Surely, despite our inadequacies, our Heavenly Father will magnify us and cause our simple efforts to bear fruit. I am encouraged by a story that appeared in the *New Era* some years ago. The author recounted the following:

“When I was young, our little family lived in a one-bedroom apartment on the second floor. I slept on the couch in the living room. . . .

“My dad, a steelworker, left home very early for work each day. Every morning he would . . . tuck the covers around me and stop for a minute. I would be half-dreaming when I could sense my dad standing beside the couch, looking at me. As I slowly awoke, I became embarrassed to have him there. I tried to pretend I was still asleep. . . . I became aware that as he stood beside my bed he was praying with all his attention, energy, and focus—for me.

“Each morning my dad prayed for me. He prayed that I would have a good day, that I would be safe, that I would learn and prepare for the future. And since he could not be with me until evening, he prayed for the teachers and my friends that I would be with that day. . . .

“At first, I didn’t really understand what my dad was doing those mornings when he prayed for me. But as I got older, I came to sense his love and interest in me and everything I was doing. It is one of my favorite memories. It wasn’t until years later, after I was married, had children of my own, and would go into their rooms while they were asleep and pray for them

that I understood completely how my father felt about me.”<sup>22</sup>

Alma testified to his son:

“Behold, I say unto you, that it is [Christ] that surely shall come . . . ; yea he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people.

“And now, my son, this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; or rather . . . that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming.”<sup>23</sup>

That is the ministry of fathers today. God bless and make them equal to it, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (1995), 62.
2. Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 5.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
5. Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 25, 26.
6. See Moses 1:39.
7. See John 3:16.
8. John 15:13.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23; Moses 6:59.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25, 28.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 93:42.
13. Psalm 78:5–7.
14. Hebrews 12:6.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43–44.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 83:4.
17. Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*, 113.
18. Mosiah 4:14–15.
19. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
20. Luke 2:52.
21. 3 John 1:4.
22. Julian Dyke, “Thanks, Dad,” *New Era*, Apr. 1993, 38; *Tambuli*, Oct. 1994, 45.
23. Alma 39:15–16.



By Elder Quentin L. Cook

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## See Yourself in the Temple

*I pray that each of us will honor the Savior and make any necessary changes to see ourselves in His sacred temples.*

The rolling forth of the Lord’s plan of salvation during this dispensation of the fulness of times is almost beyond comprehension.<sup>1</sup> This is exemplified by President Thomas S. Monson’s announcement of 4 new temples in this conference session. When President Monson was called as an Apostle in 1963, there were 12 operating temples in the world.<sup>2</sup> With the dedication of the Provo City Center Temple, there are now 150, and there will be 177 when all announced

temples are dedicated. This is cause for us to humbly rejoice.

One hundred eighty years ago, on this very day, April 3, 1836, a magnificent vision was opened to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple. This occurred just one week after the dedication of that temple. In this vision they saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit in the temple. Among other things, the Savior declared:



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“Let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.

“For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.”<sup>3</sup>

On that sacred occasion, ancient prophets appeared, including Elijah, who bestowed the keys essential for temple ordinances.

We have some sense of the rejoicing that is going on in Quito, Ecuador; Harare, Zimbabwe; Belém, Brazil; and Lima, Peru, both with members and missionaries, based on what happened in Bangkok, Thailand, a year ago when that temple was announced. Sister Shelly Senior, wife of the then-president of the Thailand Bangkok Mission, David Senior, emailed family and friends to say that after she and her husband had listened to President Monson announce that temple, there had been “12 sleepless hours and lots of tears of happiness.” They called their mission assistants at 11:30 p.m. and informed them. The assistants called all the missionaries. The report came back that the “whole mission was awake in the middle of the night jumping on their beds.” Sister Senior humorously admonished family and friends, “Please don’t tell the Missionary Department!”<sup>4</sup>

The deep spiritual response of the members in Thailand was equally strong. I am confident there have been spiritual preparations in hearts and homes and manifestations from heaven preparing the Saints where these newly announced temples will be located.

Sister Senior, in Thailand, had some special hand mirrors made for her personal teaching, especially with sisters. There was a temple etched in the mirror with the wording, “See Yourself

in the Temple.” As people gazed into the mirror, they saw themselves in the temple. The Seniors taught the investigators and members to picture themselves in the temple and make the necessary lifestyle changes and spiritual preparations to meet this goal.

My challenge this morning is for each of us, wherever we live, to see ourselves in the temple. President Monson has stated: “Until you have entered the house of the Lord and have received all the blessings which await you there, you have not obtained everything the Church has to offer. The all-important and crowning blessings of membership in the Church are those blessings which we receive in the temples of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite the lack of righteousness in the world today, we live in a sacred, holy time. Prophets, with loving and longing hearts, have described our day for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

The Prophet Joseph Smith, citing both Obadiah<sup>7</sup> in the Old Testament and 1 Peter<sup>8</sup> in the New Testament, acknowledged the great purpose of God in providing baptism for the dead and allowing us to be saviors on Mount Zion.<sup>9</sup>

The Lord has prospered our people and provided the resources and prophetic guidance so we can be valiant in



*Specially made hand mirrors helped people in Thailand see themselves in the temple.*

attending to our temple responsibilities for both the living and the dead.

Because of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we understand the purpose of life, the Father’s plan of salvation for His children, the Savior’s redemptive sacrifice, and the central role of families in the organization of heaven.<sup>10</sup>

The combination of increased numbers of temples and advanced technology to fulfill our sacred family history responsibilities for our ancestors makes this the most blessed time in all history. I rejoice in the extraordinary faithfulness of our youth in indexing and finding their ancestors and then doing the baptism and confirmation work in the temple. You are literally among the prophesied saviors on Mount Zion.

#### **How Do We Prepare for the Temple?**

We know that righteousness and sanctification are essential parts of preparing for the temple.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 97, it reads, “And inasmuch as my people build a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it.”<sup>11</sup>

Until 1891 the President of the Church signed each temple recommend to protect the sanctity of the temple. That responsibility was then delegated to bishops and stake presidents.

It is our great desire that members of the Church will live to be worthy of a temple recommend. Please don’t see the temple as some distant and perhaps unachievable goal. Working with their bishop, most members can achieve all righteous requirements in a relatively short period of time if they have a determination to qualify and fully repent of transgressions. This includes

being willing to forgive ourselves and not focus on our imperfections or sins as disqualifying us from ever entering a sacred temple.

The Savior's Atonement was accomplished for all of God's children. His redeeming sacrifice satisfies the demands of justice for all those who truly repent. The scriptures describe this in a most beautiful fashion:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."<sup>12</sup>

"And I will remember [them] no more."<sup>13</sup>

We assure you that living righteous principles will bring you and your family happiness, fulfillment, and peace.<sup>14</sup> Members, both adults and youth,<sup>15</sup> self-certify their worthiness when they answer the temple recommend questions. The essential requirement is to increase our testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Restoration of His gospel and to experience the ministering of the Holy Ghost.

#### The Blessings of the Temple Are Numerous

The primary blessings of the temple are the ordinances of exaltation. The gospel plan is about exaltation and encompasses making and keeping sacred covenants with God. Except for baptism and confirmation, these ordinances and covenants are performed and received in the temple for the living. For the dead, all the saving ordinances and covenants are received in the temple.

Brigham Young taught, "There is not one thing that the Lord could do for the salvation of the human family that he has neglected to do; . . . all that can be accomplished for their salvation, independent of them, has been accomplished in and by the Savior."<sup>16</sup>



Church leaders organize stakes, wards, quorums, Church auxiliaries, missions, and so forth in our chapels and other buildings. The Lord organizes eternal families only in temples.

It is clear that those with broken hearts and contrite spirits who have truly repented of their sins are completely acceptable to the Lord in His holy house.<sup>17</sup> We know "God is no respecter of persons."<sup>18</sup> One of the precious things I love about the temple is that among those who attend, there are no distinctions of wealth, rank, or position of any kind. We are all equal before God. Everyone is dressed in white to signify we are a pure and righteous people.<sup>19</sup> All sit side by side with a desire in their hearts to be worthy sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father.

Just think, across the entire world women and men can through "sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples . . . return to the presence of God and . . . be united eternally."<sup>20</sup> They do this in a beautiful, sacred sealing room available to all temple-worthy members. After they enter into these covenants, they can "see themselves in the temple" mirrors that face each other. "Together the temple mirrors reflect back and forth images that stretch seemingly into eternity."<sup>21</sup> These reflected images help us contemplate parents, grandparents, and all previous generations.

They help us recognize the sacred covenants that connect us to all generations that follow. This is incredibly significant, and it starts when you see yourself in the temple.

President Howard W. Hunter counseled us to "consider the majestic teachings in the great dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, a prayer the Prophet Joseph Smith said was given to him by revelation. It is a prayer that continues to be answered upon us individually, upon us as families, and upon us as a people because of the priesthood power the Lord has given us to use in His holy temples."<sup>22</sup> We would do well to study the 109th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and to follow President Hunter's admonition "to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of [our] membership."<sup>23</sup>

The temple is also a place of refuge, thanksgiving, instruction, and understanding, "that [we] may be perfected . . . in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth."<sup>24</sup> Throughout my life it has been a place of tranquility and peace in a world that is literally in commotion.<sup>25</sup> It is wonderful to leave the cares of the world behind in that sacred setting.

Often in the temple, and as we engage in family history research, we feel promptings and have impressions from the Holy Ghost.<sup>26</sup> Occasionally in the temple the veil between us and

those on the other side becomes very thin. We get additional assistance in our efforts to be saviors on Mount Zion.

Several years ago in a temple in Central America, the wife of one of our now-emeritus General Authorities assisted a father, a mother, and their children in receiving eternal covenants in the sealing room, where the temple mirrors are located. As they concluded and faced those mirrors, she noticed there was a face in the mirror that was not in the room. She inquired of the mother and learned that a daughter had passed away and accordingly was not physically present. The deceased daughter was then included by proxy in the sacred ordinance.<sup>27</sup> Never underestimate the assistance provided in temples from the other side of the veil.

Please know how earnestly we desire that everyone make any necessary changes to qualify for the temple. Prayerfully review where you are in your life, seek the guidance of the Spirit, and talk to your bishop about preparing yourself for the temple. President Thomas S. Monson has said, “There is no more important goal for you to work toward than being worthy to go to the temple.”<sup>28</sup>

#### **The Savior “Is the Chief, Immovable Cornerstone of Our Faith and His Church”**

I was privileged to participate with President Henry B. Eyring at the rededication of the Suva Fiji Temple two months ago. It was a special, sacred occasion. President Eyring’s courage and strong spiritual impressions allowed the rededication to proceed in the face of the worst cyclone ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. Physical and spiritual protections were provided to youth, missionaries, and members.<sup>29</sup> The hand of the Lord was clearly evident. The Suva Fiji Temple



rededication was a refuge from the storm. Often as we experience the storms of life, we witness the Lord’s hand in providing eternal protections.

The original dedication of the Suva Fiji Temple on June 18, 2000, was also remarkable. As the temple neared completion, members of parliament were taken hostage by a group of rebels. Downtown Suva, Fiji, was looted and burned. The military declared martial law.

As the Area President, I went with the four stake presidents in Fiji and met the military leaders at the Queen Elizabeth barracks. After we explained the proposed dedication, they were supportive but concerned about the safety of President Gordon B. Hinckley. They recommended a small dedication with no events outside the temple, like the cornerstone ceremony. They emphasized that anyone outside the temple could be a potential target for violence.

President Hinckley approved one small dedicatory session with just the new temple presidency and a few local leaders; no others were invited because of the danger. However, he emphatically stated, “If we do dedicate the temple, we will have the cornerstone ceremony because Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and this is His Church.”

When we actually went outside for the cornerstone ceremony, there were no nonmembers, children, media, or others present. But a faithful prophet demonstrated his courageous and unwavering commitment to the Savior.

Later President Hinckley, speaking of the Savior, said: “There is none to equal Him. There never has been. There never will be. Thanks be to God for the gift of His Beloved Son, who gave His life that we might live and who is the chief, immovable cornerstone of our faith and His Church.”<sup>30</sup>

Brothers and sisters, I pray that each of us will honor the Savior and make any necessary changes to see ourselves in His sacred temples. In doing so, we can accomplish His holy purposes and prepare ourselves and our families for all the blessings the Lord and His Church can bestow in this life and eternity. I bear my sure witness that the Savior lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### **NOTES**

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 112:30–32.
2. The 12th temple, the London England Temple, was dedicated on September 7, 1958.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 110:6–7.
4. Shelly Senior, email, Apr. 6, 2015.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 93.
6. See Isaiah 2:2.
7. See Obadiah 1:21.

8. See 1 Peter 4:6.
9. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 409.
10. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 177, 192–93.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 97:15; see also verse 17.
12. Isaiah 1:18.
13. Jeremiah 31:34.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
15. In addition to the recommend held by endowed adults, a limited-use recommend for baptisms for the dead may be received by worthy youth and unendowed adults. Both recommends require the signature of the recipient certifying personal worthiness. The limited-use recommend is valid for one year and provides an opportunity for the bishopric to discuss with each person his or her worthiness annually.
16. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 32.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
18. Acts 10:34; see also Moroni 8:12; Doctrine and Covenants 1:35; 38:16.
19. See Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
20. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
21. Gerrit W. Gong, “Temple Mirrors of Eternity: A Testimony of Family,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 37.
22. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (2015), 183.
23. *Teachings: Howard W. Hunter*, 178.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 97:13–14.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26–27.
26. We often refer to this as the spirit of Elijah. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that the spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (“A New Harvest Time,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 34).
27. Shared with permission.
28. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple— a Beacon to the World,” 93.
29. Missionaries and youth brought in from outer islands were housed in safe Church schools and Church buildings and were safe from the worst aspects of Cyclone Winston.
30. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Four Cornerstones of Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Feb. 2004, 4–5.



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

# He Will Place You on His Shoulders and Carry You Home

*Just as the Good Shepherd finds His lost sheep, if you will only lift up your heart to the Savior of the world, He will find you.*

One of my haunting childhood memories begins with the howl of distant air-raid sirens that awaken me from sleep. Before long, another sound, the rattle and hum of propellers, gradually increases until it shakes the very air. Trained well by our mother, we children each grab our bag and run up the hill to a bomb shelter. As we hurry through the pitch-dark night, green and white flares drop from the sky to mark the targets for the bombers. Strangely enough, everyone calls these flares Christmas trees.

I am four years old, and I am a witness to a world at war.

## Dresden

Not far from where my family lived was the city of Dresden. Those who lived there witnessed perhaps a thousand times what I had seen. Massive firestorms, caused by thousands of tons of explosives, swept through Dresden, destroying more than 90 percent of the city and leaving little but rubble and ash in their wake.

In a very short time, the city once nicknamed the “Jewel Box” was no more. Erich Kästner, a German author, wrote of the destruction, “In a thousand years was her beauty built, in one night was it utterly destroyed.”<sup>1</sup> During my childhood I could not imagine how the destruction of a war our own people had started could ever be overcome. The world around us appeared totally hopeless and without any future.

Last year I had the opportunity to return to Dresden. Seventy years after the war, it is, once again, a “Jewel Box” of a city. The ruins have been cleared, and the city is restored and even improved.

During my visit I saw the beautiful Lutheran church Frauenkirche, the Church of Our Lady. Originally built in the 1700s, it had been one of Dresden’s shining jewels, but the war reduced it to a pile of rubble. For many years it remained that way, until finally it was determined that the Frauenkirche would be rebuilt.



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*If a destroyed city like Dresden, Germany, can be rebuilt, how much more capable is our Almighty Father to restore His children who have fallen, struggled, or become lost?*

Stones from the destroyed church had been stored and cataloged and, when possible, were used in the reconstruction. Today you can see these fire-blackened stones pockmarking the outer walls. These “scars” are not only a reminder of the war history of this building but also a monument to hope—a magnificent symbol of man’s ability to create new life from ashes.

As I pondered the history of Dresden and marveled at the ingenuity and resolve of those who restored what had been so completely destroyed, I felt the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit. Surely, I thought, if man can take the ruins, rubble, and remains of a broken city and rebuild an awe-inspiring structure that rises toward the heavens, how much more capable is our Almighty Father to restore His children who have fallen, struggled, or become lost?

It matters not how completely ruined our lives may seem. It matters not how scarlet our sins, how deep our bitterness, how lonely, abandoned, or broken our hearts may be. Even those who are without hope, who live in despair, who have betrayed trust, surrendered their integrity, or turned away from God can be rebuilt. Save those rare sons of perdition, there is no life so shattered that it cannot be restored.

The joyous news of the gospel is this: because of the eternal plan of

happiness provided by our loving Heavenly Father and through the infinite sacrifice of Jesus the Christ, we can not only be redeemed from our fallen state and restored to purity, but we can also transcend mortal imagination and become heirs of eternal life and partakers of God’s indescribable glory.

#### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

During the Savior’s ministry, the religious leaders of His day disapproved of Jesus spending time with people they had labeled “sinners.”

Perhaps to them it looked like He was tolerating or even condoning sinful behavior. Perhaps they believed that the best way to help sinners repent was by condemning, ridiculing, and shaming them.

When the Savior perceived what the Pharisees and scribes were thinking, He told a story:

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”

“And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”<sup>2</sup>

Over the centuries, this parable has traditionally been interpreted as a call to action for us to bring back the lost sheep and to reach out to those who are lost. While this is certainly appropriate and good, I wonder if there is more to it.

Is it possible that Jesus’s purpose, first and foremost, was to teach about the work of the Good Shepherd?

Is it possible that He was testifying of God’s love for His wayward children?

Is it possible that the Savior’s message was that God is fully aware of those who are lost—and that He will find them, that He will reach out to them, and that He will rescue them?

If that is so, what must the sheep do to qualify for this divine help?

Does the sheep need to know how to use a complicated sextant to calculate its coordinates? Does it need to be able to use a GPS to define its position? Does it have to have the expertise to create an app that will call for help? Does the sheep need endorsements by a sponsor before the Good Shepherd will come to the rescue?

No. Certainly not! The sheep is worthy of divine rescue simply because it is loved by the Good Shepherd.

To me, the parable of the lost sheep is one of the most hopeful passages in all of scripture.

Our Savior, the Good Shepherd, knows and loves us. He knows and loves you.

He knows when you are lost, and He knows where you are. He knows your grief. Your silent pleadings. Your fears. Your tears.

It matters not how you became lost—whether because of your own poor choices or because of circumstances beyond your control.

What matters is that you are His child. And He loves you. He loves His children.

Because He loves you, He will find you. He will place you upon His shoulders, rejoicing. And when He brings you home, He will say to one and all, “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.”<sup>3</sup>



*Fire-blackened stones used in the restoration of the Lutheran church Frauenkirche stand as a magnificent symbol of man's ability to create new life from ashes.*

### What Must We Do?

But, you might be thinking, what is the catch? Surely I have to do more than simply wait to be rescued.

While our loving Father desires that all of His children return to Him, He will force no one to heaven.<sup>4</sup> God will not rescue us against our will.

So what must we do?

His invitation is simple:

“Turn . . . to me.”<sup>5</sup>

“Come unto me.”<sup>6</sup>

“Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you.”<sup>7</sup>

This is how we show Him that we want to be rescued.

It requires a little faith. But do not despair. If you cannot muster faith right now, begin with hope.

If you cannot say you know God is there, you can hope that He is. You can desire to believe.<sup>8</sup> That is enough to start.

Then, acting on that hope, reach out to Heavenly Father. God will extend His love toward you, and His work of rescue and transformation will begin.

Over time, you will recognize His hand in your life. You will feel His love. And the desire to walk in His light and follow His way will grow with every step of faith you take.

We call these steps of faith “obedience.”

That is not a popular word these days. But obedience is a cherished concept in the gospel of Jesus Christ because we know that “through the

Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>9</sup>

As we increase in faith, we also must increase in faithfulness. Earlier I quoted a German author who lamented the destruction of Dresden. He also penned the phrase “Es gibt nichts Gutes, ausser: Man tut es.” For those who do not speak the celestial language, this is translated as “There is nothing good unless you do it.”<sup>10</sup>

You and I may speak most eloquently of spiritual things. We may impress people with our keen intellectual interpretation of religious topics. We may rhapsodize about religion and “dream of [our] mansion above.”<sup>11</sup> But if our faith does not change the way we live—if our beliefs do not influence our daily decisions—our religion is vain, and our faith, if not dead, is certainly not well and is in danger of eventually flatlining.<sup>12</sup>

Obedience is the lifeblood of faith. It is by obedience that we gather light into our souls.

But sometimes I think we misunderstand obedience. We may see obedience as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Or we may pound the metaphorical hammer of obedience against the iron anvil of the commandments in an effort to shape those we love, through constant heating and repeated battering, into holier, heavenly matter.

No doubt about it, there are times when we need a stern call to repentance. Certainly, there are some who may be reached only in this manner.

But perhaps there is a different metaphor that can explain why we obey the commandments of God. Maybe obedience is not so much the process of bending, twisting, and pounding our souls into something we are not.

Instead, it is the process by which we discover what we truly are made of.

We are created by the Almighty God. He is our Heavenly Father. We are literally His spirit children. We are made of supernal material most precious and highly refined, and thus we carry within ourselves the substance of divinity.

Here on earth, however, our thoughts and actions become encumbered with that which is corrupt, unholy, and impure. The dust and filth of the world stain our souls, making it difficult to recognize and remember our birthright and purpose.

But all this cannot change who we truly are. The fundamental divinity of our nature remains. And the moment we choose to incline our hearts to our beloved Savior and set foot upon the path of discipleship, something miraculous happens. The love of God fills our hearts, the light of truth fills our minds, we start to lose the desire to sin, and we do not want to walk any longer in darkness.<sup>13</sup>

We come to see obedience not as a punishment but as a liberating path to our divine destiny. And gradually, the corruption, dust, and limitations of this earth begin to fall away. Eventually, the priceless, eternal spirit of the heavenly being within us is revealed, and a radiance of goodness becomes our nature.

#### You Are Worthy of Rescue

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends, I testify that God sees us as we truly are—and He sees us worthy of rescue.

You may feel that your life is in ruins. You may have sinned. You may be afraid, angry, grieving, or tortured by doubt. But just as the Good Shepherd finds His lost sheep, if you will only lift up your heart to the Savior of the world, He will find you.



He will rescue you.

He will lift you up and place you on His shoulders.

He will carry you home.

If mortal hands can transform rubble and ruins into a beautiful house of worship, then we can have confidence and trust that our loving Heavenly Father can and will rebuild us. His plan is to build us into something far greater than what we were—far greater than what we can ever imagine. With each step of faith on the path of discipleship, we grow into the beings of eternal glory and infinite joy we were designed to become.

This is my testimony, my blessing, and my humble prayer in the sacred name of our Master, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See Erich Kästner, *Als ich ein kleiner Junge war* (1996), 51–52.
2. Luke 15:4–5.
3. Luke 15:6.
4. See “Know This, That Every Soul Is Free,” *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. Joel 2:12.
6. Matthew 11:28.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
8. See Alma 32:27.
9. Articles of Faith 1:3.
10. Erich Kästner, *Es gibt nichts Gutes, ausser: Man tut es* (1950).
11. “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, no. 223.
12. See James 2:26.
13. See John 8:12.



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

# The Holy Ghost

*I express my love and gratitude to Heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Ghost, through which He reveals His will and sustains us.*

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, I speak today as a servant of the Lord and also as a great-grandfather. To you and to my beloved posterity, I teach and bear testimony of the remarkable gift of the Holy Ghost.

I begin by acknowledging the Light of Christ, which is given to “every man [and woman] that cometh into the world.”<sup>1</sup> All of us benefit from this holy light. It is “in all and through all things,”<sup>2</sup> and it allows us to distinguish right from wrong.<sup>3</sup>

But the Holy Ghost is different from the Light of Christ. He is the third member of the Godhead, a distinct personage of spirit with sacred responsibilities, and one in purpose with the Father and the Son.<sup>4</sup>

As members of the Church, we may experience the companionship of the Holy Ghost continually. Through the restored priesthood of God, we are baptized by immersion for the remission of our sins and then confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this ordinance, we are given the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of the holders of the priesthood.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, we can receive and retain the companionship of the Holy Ghost by always remembering the Savior, keeping His

commandments, repenting of our sins, and worthily partaking of the sacrament on the Sabbath day.

The Holy Ghost provides personal revelation to help us make major life decisions about such things as education, missions, careers, marriage, children, where we will live with our families, and so on. In these matters, Heavenly Father expects us to use our agency, study the situation out in our minds according to gospel principles, and bring a decision to Him in prayer.

Personal revelation is essential, but it is only one part of the work of the Holy Ghost. As the scriptures attest, the Holy Ghost also testifies of the Savior

and God the Father.<sup>6</sup> He teaches us “the peaceable things of the kingdom”<sup>7</sup> and causes us to “abound in hope.”<sup>8</sup> He “leadeth [us] to do good . . . [and] to judge righteously.”<sup>9</sup> He gives “to every man [and woman] . . . a [spiritual] gift . . . that all may be profited thereby.”<sup>10</sup> He “giveth [us] knowledge”<sup>11</sup> and “bring[s] all things to [our] remembrance.”<sup>12</sup> Through the Holy Ghost, we “may be sanctified”<sup>13</sup> and receive “a remission of [our] sins.”<sup>14</sup> He is the “Comforter,” the same who was “promised unto [the Savior’s] disciples.”<sup>15</sup>

I remind all of us that the Holy Ghost is not given to control us. Some of us unwisely seek the Holy Ghost’s direction on every minor decision in our lives. This trivializes His sacred role. The Holy Ghost honors the principle of agency. He speaks to our minds and our hearts gently about many matters of consequence.<sup>16</sup>

Each of us may feel the influence of the Holy Ghost differently. His promptings will be felt in different degrees of intensity according to our individual needs and circumstances.

In these latter days, we affirm that only the prophet may receive revelation through the Holy Ghost for the



entire Church. Some forget this, as when Aaron and Miriam tried to convince Moses to agree with them. But the Lord taught them and us. He said:

“If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him. . . .

“With him will I speak mouth to mouth.”<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes the adversary tempts us with false ideas that we may confuse with the Holy Ghost. I testify that faithfulness in obeying the commandments and keeping our covenants will protect us from being deceived. Through the Holy Ghost, we will be able to discern those false prophets who teach for

doctrine the commandments of men.<sup>18</sup>

As we receive the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for ourselves, it is wise to remember that we cannot receive revelation for others. I know of a young man who told a young woman, “I’ve had a dream that you are to be my wife.” The young woman pondered that statement and then responded, “When I have the same dream, I’ll come and talk to you.”

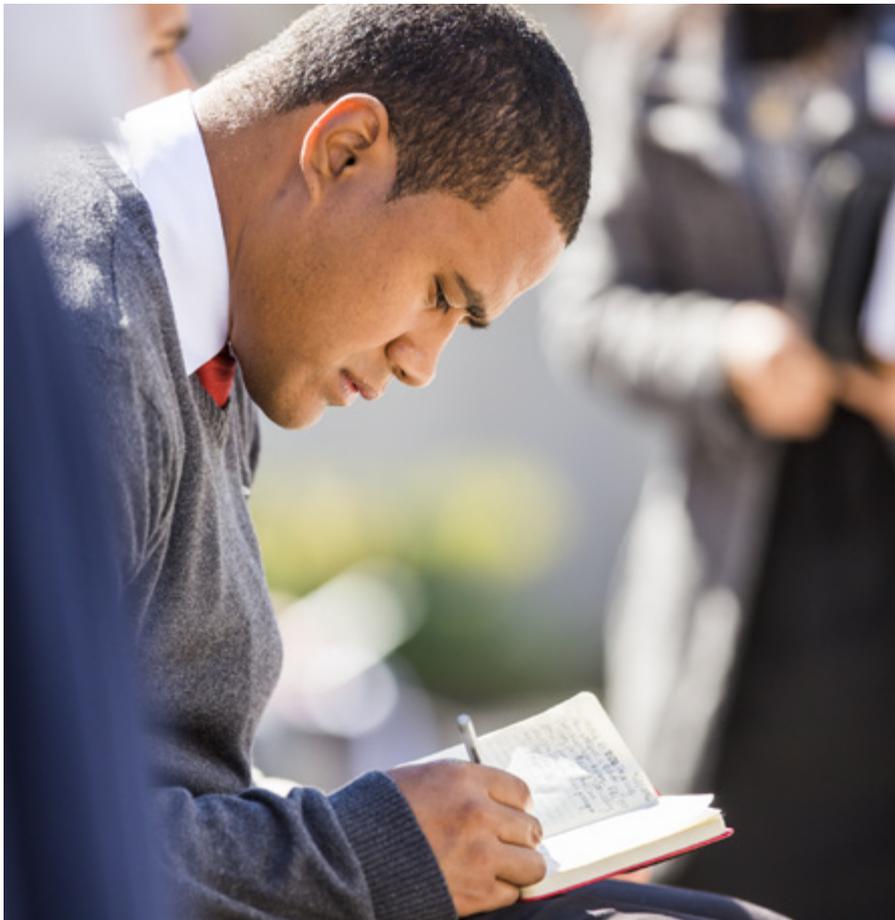
All of us may be tempted to let our personal desires overcome the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith pleaded with Heavenly Father for permission to lend the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon to Martin Harris.

Joseph thought it was a good idea. At first the Holy Ghost did not give him confirming feelings. Eventually, the Lord allowed Joseph to lend the pages anyway. Martin Harris lost them. For a season, the Lord withdrew the Prophet’s gift to translate, and Joseph learned a painful but valuable lesson that shaped the remainder of his service.

The Holy Ghost is central to the Restoration. Regarding his boyhood reading of James 1:5, the Prophet Joseph recounted, “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine.”<sup>19</sup> The power described by Joseph Smith was the influence of the Holy Ghost. As a result, Joseph went into a grove of trees near his home and knelt down to ask of God. The First Vision that followed was truly momentous and magnificent. But the path to that in-person visitation of the Father and the Son began with a prompting from the Holy Ghost to pray.

The revealed truths of the restored gospel came through the pattern of seeking in prayer and then receiving and following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Consider these examples: translating the Book of Mormon; the restoration of the priesthood and its ordinances, beginning with baptism; and the organization of the Church—to name a few. I testify that today, revelation from the Lord to the First Presidency and the Twelve comes according to this same sacred pattern. This is the same sacred pattern that allows personal revelation.

We pay tribute to all who have followed the Holy Ghost to receive the restored gospel, beginning with Joseph Smith’s own family members. When young Joseph told his father about Moroni’s visit, his father received a confirming witness for himself.



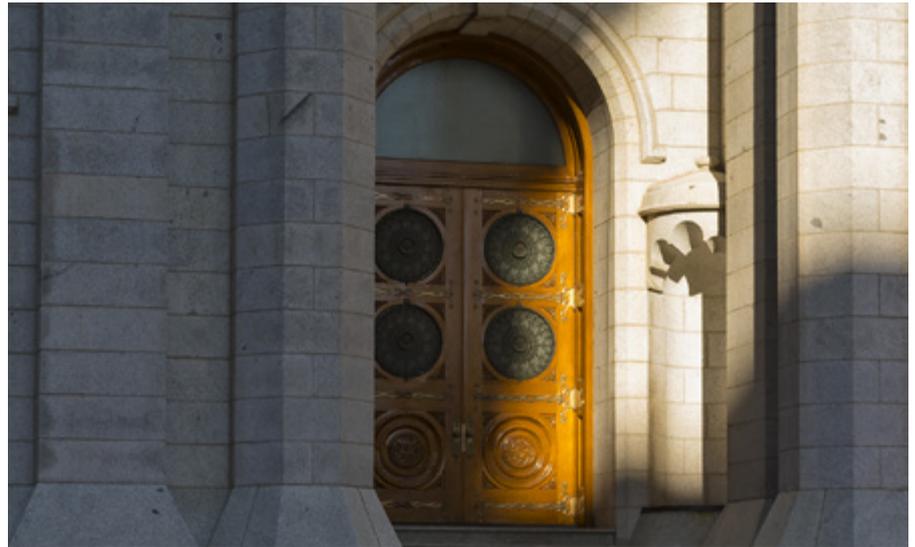
Immediately, Joseph was released from his farm responsibilities and encouraged to follow the angel's direction.

Let us, as parents and leaders, do likewise. Let us encourage our children and others to follow the direction of the Holy Ghost. In doing so, let us follow the example of the Holy Ghost ourselves, leading through gentleness, meekness, kindness, long-suffering, and love unfeigned.<sup>20</sup>

The Holy Ghost is a medium for God's work in families and throughout the Church. With that understanding, may I share a few personal examples of the Holy Ghost in my own life and Church service? I offer them as a personal witness that the Holy Ghost blesses us all.

Many years ago, Sister Hales and I planned to host some of my work associates at a special dinner in our home. On my way home from the office, I had an impression to stop at the house of a widow whom I home taught. When I knocked on the sister's door, she said, "I have been praying for you to come." Where did that impression come from? The Holy Ghost.

Once, following a serious illness, I presided at a stake conference. To conserve my energy, I planned to leave the chapel immediately after the priesthood leadership session. However, following the benediction, the Holy Ghost said to me, "Where are you going?" I was inspired to shake hands with everyone as they left the room. As one young elder stepped forward, I was prompted to give him a special message. He was looking down, and I waited for his eyes to come up and meet mine, and I was able to say, "Pray to Heavenly Father, listen to the Holy Ghost, follow the promptings you are given, and all will be well in your life." Later the stake president told me that



the young man had just returned early from his mission. The stake president, acting on a clear impression, had promised the young man's father that if he brought his son to the priesthood meeting, Elder Hales would speak with him. Why did I stop to shake everyone's hand? Why did I pause to talk to this special young man? What was the source of my counsel? It's simple: the Holy Ghost.

In early 2005, I was guided to prepare a general conference message about senior missionary couples. Following the conference, a brother recounted: "As we listened to conference, . . . immediately the Spirit of the Lord touched my very soul. . . . There was no mistaking the message for me and for my sweetheart. We were to serve a mission, and the time was now. When I . . . looked at my wife, I realized that she had received the very same impressions from the Spirit."<sup>21</sup> What had brought this strong simultaneous response? The Holy Ghost.

To my own posterity and all within the sound of my voice, I offer my testimony of the personal revelation and constant flow of daily guidance, caution, encouragement, strength, spiritual cleansing, comfort, and peace that have come to our family through the Holy Ghost. Through the Holy Ghost, we experience "the multitude of [Christ's] tender mercies"<sup>22</sup> and miracles that do not cease.<sup>23</sup>

I bear my special witness that the Savior lives. I express my love and gratitude to Heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Ghost, through which He reveals His will and sustains us in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2; see also John 1:9.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6.
3. See Bible Dictionary, "Light of Christ"; see also Moroni 7:12–19.
4. See John 17.
5. See lesson 5, "Performing Priesthood Ordinances," in *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B* (2000), 41–48.
6. See John 15:26; Romans 8:16.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 39:6.
8. Romans 15:13.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 11:12.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 46:11–12; see also Moroni 10:8–17; Doctrine and Covenants 13–16.
11. Alma 18:35.
12. John 14:26.
13. 3 Nephi 27:20.
14. 2 Nephi 31:17.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:3.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
17. Numbers 12:6, 8.
18. See Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
19. Joseph Smith—History 1:12.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
21. Letter from Frederick E. Hibben.
22. 1 Nephi 8:8.
23. See Moroni 7:29.



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By Elder Gerrit W. Gong  
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

# Always Remember Him

*I humbly testify and pray that we will always remember Him—in all times, all things, and all places we may be in.*

Dear brothers and sisters, when I served in Asia, people sometimes asked, “Elder Gong, how many people live in the Asia Area of the Church?”

I said, “Half the world’s population—3.6 billion people.”

Someone asked, “Is it hard to remember all their names?”

Remembering—and forgetting—are part of everyday life. For example, once, after looking everywhere for her new mobile phone, my wife finally decided to call it from another phone. When she heard her phone ring, my wife thought, “Who could be calling me? I haven’t given that number to anyone!”

Remembering—and forgetting—are also part of our eternal journey. Time, agency, and memory help us learn, grow, and increase in faith.

In the words of a favorite hymn:

*We’ll sing all hail to Jesus’ name,  
And praise and honor give. . . .  
Ye Saints, partake and testify  
Ye do remember him.<sup>1</sup>*

Each week, in partaking of the sacrament, we covenant to always remember Him. Drawing on the nearly 400 scripture references to the word *remember*, here are six ways we can always remember Him.

First, we can always remember Him by having confidence in His covenants, promises, and assurances.

The Lord remembers His everlasting covenants—from Adam’s time to the day Adam’s posterity “shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord remembers His promises, including promises to gather scattered Israel through the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and promises given to every member and missionary who remembers the worth of souls.<sup>3</sup>

The Lord remembers and assures nations and peoples. In these days of motion and commotion,<sup>4</sup> “some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God,”<sup>5</sup> who guides “the future as he has the past.”<sup>6</sup> In “perilous times,”<sup>7</sup> we “remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, we can always remember Him by gratefully acknowledging His hand throughout our lives.

The Lord’s hand in our lives is often clearest in hindsight. As Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard put it: “Life must be understood backward. But . . . it must be *lived forward*.”<sup>9</sup>

My dear mother recently celebrated her 90th birthday. She gratefully testified of God’s blessing at each major juncture in her life. Family histories, family traditions, and family ties help us savor remembrance of things past while providing future patterns and hope. Priesthood lines of authority and patriarchal blessings witness of God’s hand across generations.

Have you ever thought of yourself as your own living book of



remembrance—reflecting what and how you choose to remember?

For example, when I was younger, I really wanted to play school basketball. I practiced and practiced. One day the coach pointed to our 6-foot-4-inch (1.93 m) all-state center and our 6-foot-2-inch (1.88 m) all-star forward and said to me, “I can put you on the team, but you’ll likely never play.” I remember how kindly he then encouraged, “Why not try out for soccer? You’d be good.” My family cheered when I scored my first goal.

We can remember those who give us a chance, and a second chance, with honesty, kindness, patience, and encouragement. And we can become someone others remember when they most needed help. Gratefully remembering the assistance of others and the Spirit’s guiding influence is a way we remember Him. It is a way we count our many blessings and see what God hath done.<sup>10</sup>

Third, we can always remember Him by trusting when the Lord assures us, “He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>11</sup>

When we fully repent, including by confessing and forsaking our sins, we ask with Enos, as our guilt is swept away, “Lord, how is it done?” and hear the answer “Because of thy faith in Christ”<sup>12</sup> and His invitation to “put me in remembrance.”<sup>13</sup>

Once we repent and priesthood leaders declare us worthy, we need not continue to confess and confess these past sins. To be worthy does not mean to be perfect. Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness invites us to be humbly at peace on our life’s journey to someday become perfected in Christ,<sup>14</sup> not constantly worried, frustrated, or unhappy in our imperfections today. Remember,



He knows all the things we don’t want anyone else to know about us—and loves us still.

Sometimes life tests our trust in Christ’s mercy, justice, and judgment and in His liberating invitation to allow His Atonement to heal us as we forgive others and ourselves.

A young woman in another country applied to work as a journalist, but the official who assigned jobs was merciless. He said to her, “With my signature, I guarantee you will not become a journalist but will dig sewers.” She was the only woman digging sewers in a gang of men.

Years later this woman became an official. One day a man came in needing her signature for a job.

She asked, “Do you remember me?” He did not.

She said, “You do not remember me, but I remember you. With your signature, you guaranteed I never became a journalist. With your signature, you sent me to dig sewers, the only woman in a gang of men.”

She told me, “I feel I should treat that man better than he treated

me—but I do not have that strength.” Sometimes that strength is not within us, but it can be found in remembering the Atonement of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

When trust is betrayed, dreams shattered, hearts broken and broken again, when we want justice and need mercy, when our fists clench and our tears flow, when we need to know what to hold onto and what to let go of, we can always remember Him. Life is not as cruel as it can sometimes seem. His infinite compassion can help us find our way, truth, and life.<sup>15</sup>

When we remember His words and example, we will not give or take offense.

My friend’s father worked as a mechanic. His honest labor showed even in his carefully washed hands. One day someone at a temple told my friend’s father he should clean his hands before serving there. Instead of being offended, this good man began to scrub the family dishes by hand with extra soapy water before attending the temple. He exemplifies those who “ascend into the hill of the Lord” and



“stand in his holy place” with the cleanest of hands and the purest of hearts.<sup>16</sup>

If we have unkind feelings, grudges, or resentments or if we have cause to ask forgiveness of others, now is the time to do so.

Fourth, He invites us to remember that He is always welcoming us home.

We learn by asking and searching. But please do not cease exploration until you arrive—in the words of T. S. Eliot—“where [you] started and know the place for the first time.”<sup>17</sup> When you are ready, please open your heart to the Book of Mormon, again, for the first time. Please pray with real intent, again, for the first time.

Trust that early or faint memory. Let it enlarge your faith. With God, there is no point of no return.

Prophets ancient and modern implore us not to let human foibles, faults, or weaknesses—others’ or our own—cause us to miss the truths, covenants, and redeeming power in His restored gospel.<sup>18</sup> This is especially important in a church where we each grow through our imperfect participation. The Prophet Joseph said, “I never

told you I was perfect; but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught.”<sup>19</sup>

Fifth, we can always remember Him on the Sabbath through the sacrament. At the end of His mortal ministry and the beginning of His resurrected ministry—both times—our Savior took bread and wine and asked that we remember His body and blood,<sup>20</sup> “for as oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.”<sup>21</sup>

In the ordinance of the sacrament, we witness unto God the Father that we are willing to take upon us the name of His Son and always remember Him and keep His commandments, which He has given us, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>22</sup>

As Amulek teaches, we remember Him when we pray over our fields, our flocks, and our households and when we remember the needy, the naked, the sick and afflicted.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, sixth, our Savior invites us to always remember Him as He always remembers us.

In the New World, our resurrected Savior invited those present to come,

one by one, to thrust their hands into His side and to feel the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet.<sup>24</sup>

The scriptures describe resurrection as “every limb and joint shall be restored to . . . their proper and perfect frame,” and “even a hair of the head shall not be lost.”<sup>25</sup> That being so, please consider how it is that our Savior’s perfect, resurrected body still bears the wounds in His side and the nail prints in His hands and feet.<sup>26</sup>

At times in history, mortal men have been executed by crucifixion. But only our Savior, Jesus Christ, embraces us still carrying the marks of His pure love. Only He fulfills the prophecy of being lifted up upon the cross that He might draw each of us, by name, to Him.<sup>27</sup>

Our Savior declares:

“Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

“Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”<sup>28</sup>

He testifies: “I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.”<sup>29</sup>



By Elder Patrick Kearon  
Of the Seventy

I humbly testify and pray that we will always remember Him—in all times, all things, and all places we may be in.<sup>30</sup> In the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “We’ll Sing All Hail to Jesus’ Name,” *Hymns*, no. 182.
2. Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 9:22 (in the Bible appendix).
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
5. Psalm 20:7.
6. “Be Still, My Soul,” *Hymns*, no. 124.
7. 2 Timothy 3:1; see also verses 2–7.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 3:3.
9. *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks: Volume 2, Journals EE–KK*, Bruce H. Kirmmse and others, ed. (2008), 2:179; emphasis in original.
10. See “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Isaiah 43:25.
12. Enos 1:7, 8.
13. Isaiah 43:26.
14. See Moroni 10:32.
15. See John 14:6.
16. Psalm 24:3; see also verse 4; experience used with permission.
17. T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” in *Four Quartets* (1943), section 5, lines 241–42.
18. See, for example, Ether 12:23–28; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 21–24.
19. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522. He continues here, “Must I, then, be thrown away as a thing of naught?”
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:2–4 for modern revelation on the use of water instead of wine.
21. Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:21 (in the Bible appendix).
22. See Moroni 4:3; 5:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
23. See Alma 34:20–21, 28–29. In modern revelation, the Lord likewise enjoins us, “Remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Doctrine and Covenants 52:40).
24. See 3 Nephi 11:14–15.
25. Alma 40:23.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:37.
27. See 3 Nephi 27:14; see also, for example, John 12:32–33; 1 Nephi 11:33; Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; 33:19; Helaman 8:14–15.
28. Isaiah 49:15–16; see also 1 Nephi 21:15–16.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 45:52.
30. See Mosiah 18:9.

# Refuge from the Storm

*This moment does not define the refugees, but our response will help define us.*

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: “Naked, and ye clothed me. . . . “ . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>1</sup>

There are an estimated 60 million refugees in the world today, which means that “1 in every 122 humans . . . has been forced to flee their homes,”<sup>2</sup> and half of these are children.<sup>3</sup> It is shocking to consider the numbers involved and to reflect on what this means in each individual life. My current assignment is in Europe, where one and a quarter million of these refugees have arrived over the last year from war-torn parts of the Middle East and Africa.<sup>4</sup> We see many of them coming with only the clothes they are wearing and what they can carry in one small bag. A large proportion of them are well educated, and all have had to abandon homes, schools, and jobs.

Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church is working with 75 organizations in 17 European countries. These organizations range from large international institutions to small community initiatives, from

government agencies to faith-based and secular charities. We are fortunate to partner with and learn from others who have been working with refugees around the world for many years.

As members of the Church, as a people, we don’t have to look back far in our history to reflect on times when we were refugees, violently driven from homes and farms over and over again. Last weekend in speaking of refugees, Sister Linda Burton asked the women of the Church to consider, “What if *their* story were *my* story?”<sup>5</sup> Their story *is* our story, not that many years ago.

There are highly charged arguments in governments and across society regarding what the definition of a refugee is and what should be done to assist the refugees. My remarks are not intended in any way to form part of that heated discussion, nor to comment on immigration policy, but rather to focus on the *people* who have been driven from their homes and their countries by wars that they had no hand in starting.

The Savior knows how it feels to be a refugee—He was one. As a young child, Jesus and His family fled to Egypt to escape the murderous swords of Herod. And at various points in His ministry, Jesus found



Himself threatened and His life in danger, ultimately submitting to the designs of evil men who had plotted His death. Perhaps, then, it is all the more remarkable to us that He repeatedly taught us to love one another, to love as He loves, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Truly, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction”<sup>6</sup> and to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer.”<sup>7</sup>

It has been inspiring to witness what Church members from around the world have generously donated to help these individuals and families who have lost so much. Across Europe specifically, I have seen many members of the Church who have experienced a joyful awakening and enriching of the soul as they have responded to that deep, innate desire to reach out and serve those in such extreme need around them. The Church has provided shelter and medical care. Stakes and missions have

assembled many thousands of hygiene kits. Other stakes have provided food and water, clothing, waterproof coats, bicycles, books, backpacks, reading glasses, and much more.

Individuals from Scotland to Sicily have stepped in to every conceivable role. Doctors and nurses have volunteered their services at the point where refugees arrive soaked, chilled, and often traumatized from their water crossings. As refugees begin the resettlement process, local members are helping them learn the language of their host country, while others are lifting the spirits of both children and parents by providing toys, art supplies, music, and play. Some are taking donated yarn, knitting needles, and crochet hooks and teaching these skills to local refugees old and young.

Seasoned members of the Church who have given years of service and leadership attest to the fact that ministering to these people so immediately in need has provided the richest, most fulfilling experience in their service so far.

The reality of these situations must be seen to be believed. In winter I met, amongst many others, a pregnant woman from Syria in a refugee transit camp desperately seeking assurance that she would not need to deliver her baby on the cold floors of the vast hall where she was housed. Back in Syria she had been a university professor. And in Greece I spoke with a family still wet, shivering, and frightened from their crossing in a small rubber boat from Turkey. After looking into their eyes and hearing their stories, both of the terror they had fled and of their perilous journey to find refuge, I will never be the same.

Extending care and aid is a vast range of dedicated relief workers, many of them volunteers. I saw in action a member of the Church who, for many months, worked through the night, providing for the most immediate needs of those arriving from Turkey into Greece. Among countless other endeavors, she administered first aid to those in most critical medical need; she saw that the women and children traveling alone were cared for; she held those who had been bereaved along the way and did her best to allocate limited resources to limitless need. She, as so many like her, has been a literal ministering angel, whose deeds are not forgotten by those she cared for, nor by the Lord, on whose errand she was.

All who have given of themselves to relieve the suffering around them are much like the people of Alma: “And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; . . . they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the

church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.”<sup>8</sup>

We must be careful that news of the refugees’ plight does not somehow become commonplace when the initial shock wears off and yet the wars continue and the families keep coming. Millions of refugees worldwide, whose stories no longer make the news, are still in desperate need of help.

If you are asking, “What can I do?” let us first remember that we should not serve at the expense of our families and other responsibilities,<sup>9</sup> nor should we expect our leaders to organize projects for us. But as youth, men, women, and families, we can join in this great humanitarian endeavor.

In response to the invitation from the First Presidency to participate in Christlike service to refugees worldwide,<sup>10</sup> the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary have organized a relief effort entitled “I Was a Stranger.”

Sister Burton introduced this to the women of the Church last weekend in the general women’s session. There are multiple helpful ideas, resources, and suggestions for service on [IWasAStranger.lds.org](http://IWasAStranger.lds.org).

Begin on your knees in prayer. Then think in terms of doing something close to home, in your own community, where you will find people who need help in adapting to their new circumstances. The ultimate aim is their rehabilitation to an industrious and self-reliant life.

The possibilities for us to lend a hand and be a friend are endless. You might help resettled refugees learn their host country language, update their work skills, or practice job interviewing. You could offer to mentor a family or a single mother as they transition to an unfamiliar culture, even with something as simple as accompanying them to the grocery store or the school. Some wards and stakes have existing

trusted organizations to partner with. And, according to your circumstances, you can give to the Church’s extraordinary humanitarian effort.

Additionally, each one of us can increase our awareness of the world events that drive these families from their homes. We must take a stand against intolerance and advocate respect and understanding across cultures and traditions. Meeting refugee families and hearing their stories with your own ears, and not from a screen or newspaper, will change you. Real friendships will develop and will foster compassion and successful integration.

The Lord has instructed us that the stakes of Zion are to be “a defense” and “a refuge from the storm.”<sup>11</sup> We have found refuge. Let us come out from our safe places and share with them, from our abundance, *hope* for a brighter future, *faith* in God and in our fellowman, and *love* that sees beyond cultural and ideological differences to the





By Elder Dallin H. Oaks  
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glorious truth that we are all children of our Heavenly Father.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love.”<sup>12</sup>

Being a refugee may be a defining moment in the lives of those who are refugees, but being a refugee does not define *them*. Like countless thousands before them, this will be a period—we hope a short period—in their lives. Some of them will go on to be Nobel laureates, public servants, physicians, scientists, musicians, artists, religious leaders, and contributors in other fields. Indeed, many of them *were* these things before they lost everything. This moment does not define them, but our response will help define us.

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”<sup>13</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

For further reference, see [IWasAStranger.lds.org](http://IWasAStranger.lds.org) and [mormonchannel.org/blog/post/40-ways-to-help-refugees-in-your-community](http://mormonchannel.org/blog/post/40-ways-to-help-refugees-in-your-community).

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 25:35–36, 40.
2. See Stephanie Nebehay, “World’s Refugees and Displaced Exceed Record 60 Million,” Dec. 18, 2015, reuters.com.
3. See “Facts and Figures about Refugees,” unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html.
4. See “A Record 1.25 Million Asylum Seekers Arrived in the EU Last Year,” Mar. 4, 2016, businessinsider.com.
5. Linda K. Burton, “I Was a Stranger,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 14.
6. James 1:27.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 38:35; see also Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
8. Alma 1:30.
9. See First Presidency letter, Mar. 26, 2016; see also Mosiah 4:27.
10. See First Presidency letter, Oct. 27, 2015.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6; see also Isaiah 4:5–6.
12. 2 Timothy 1:7.
13. Matthew 25:40.

# Opposition in All Things

*Opposition permits us to grow toward what our Heavenly Father would have us become.*

Central to the gospel of Jesus Christ is the Father’s plan of salvation for the eternal progress of His children. That plan, explained in modern revelation, helps us understand many things we face in mortality. My message focuses on the essential role of opposition in that plan.

I.

The purpose of mortal life for the children of God is to provide the experiences needed “to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> As President Thomas S. Monson taught us so powerfully this morning, we progress by making choices, by which we are tested to show that we will keep God’s commandments (see Abraham 3:25). To be tested, we must have the agency to choose between alternatives. To provide alternatives on which to exercise our agency, we must have opposition.

The rest of the plan is also essential. When we make wrong choices—as we inevitably will—we are soiled by sin and must be cleansed to proceed toward our eternal destiny. The Father’s plan provides the way to do this, the way to satisfy the eternal demands of justice: a Savior pays the

price to redeem us from our sins. That Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father, whose atoning sacrifice—whose suffering—pays the price for our sins if we will repent of them.

One of the best explanations of the planned role of opposition is in the Book of Mormon, in Lehi’s teachings to his son Jacob.

“It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11; see also verse 15).

As a result, Lehi continued, “the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other” (verse 16). Similarly, in modern revelation the Lord declares, “It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves” (D&C 29:39).

Opposition was necessary in the Garden of Eden. If Adam and Eve had not made the choice that introduced mortality, Lehi taught, “they would have remained in a state of innocence, . . . doing no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Nephi 2:23).

From the beginning, agency and opposition were central to the Father's plan and to Satan's rebellion against it. As the Lord revealed to Moses, in the council of heaven Satan "sought to destroy the agency of man" (Moses 4:3). That destruction was inherent in the terms of Satan's offer. He came before the Father and said, "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1).

Thus, Satan proposed to carry out the Father's plan in a way that would prevent the accomplishment of the Father's purpose and give Satan His glory.

Satan's proposal would have ensured perfect equality: it would "redeem all mankind," that not one soul would be lost. There would be no agency or choice by anyone and, therefore, no need for opposition. There would be no test, no failure, and no success. There would be no growth to attain the purpose the Father desired for His children. The scriptures record that Satan's opposition resulted in a "war in heaven" (Revelation 12:7), in which two-thirds of the children of God earned the right to experience mortal life by choosing the Father's plan and rejecting Satan's rebellion.

Satan's purpose was to gain for himself the Father's honor and power (see Isaiah 14:12–15; Moses 4:1, 3). "Wherefore," the Father said, "because that Satan rebelled against me, . . . I caused that he should be cast down" (Moses 4:3) with all the spirits who had exercised their agency to follow him (see Jude 1:6; Revelation 12:8–9; D&C 29:36–37). Cast down as unembodied spirits in mortality, Satan and his followers tempt and seek to deceive and captivate the children of God (see

Moses 4:4). So it is that the evil one, who opposed and sought to *destroy* the Father's plan, actually *facilitated* it, because it is opposition that enables choice and it is the opportunity of making the right choices that leads to the growth that is the purpose of the Father's plan.

#### II.

Significantly, the temptation to sin is not the only kind of opposition in mortality. Father Lehi taught that if the Fall had not taken place, Adam and Eve "would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery" (2 Nephi 2:23). Without the experience of opposition in mortality, "all things must needs be a compound in one," in which there would be no happiness or misery (verse 11). Therefore, Father Lehi continued, after God had created all things, "to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, . . . it must needs be

that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter" (verse 15).<sup>2</sup> His teaching on this part of the plan of salvation concludes with these words:

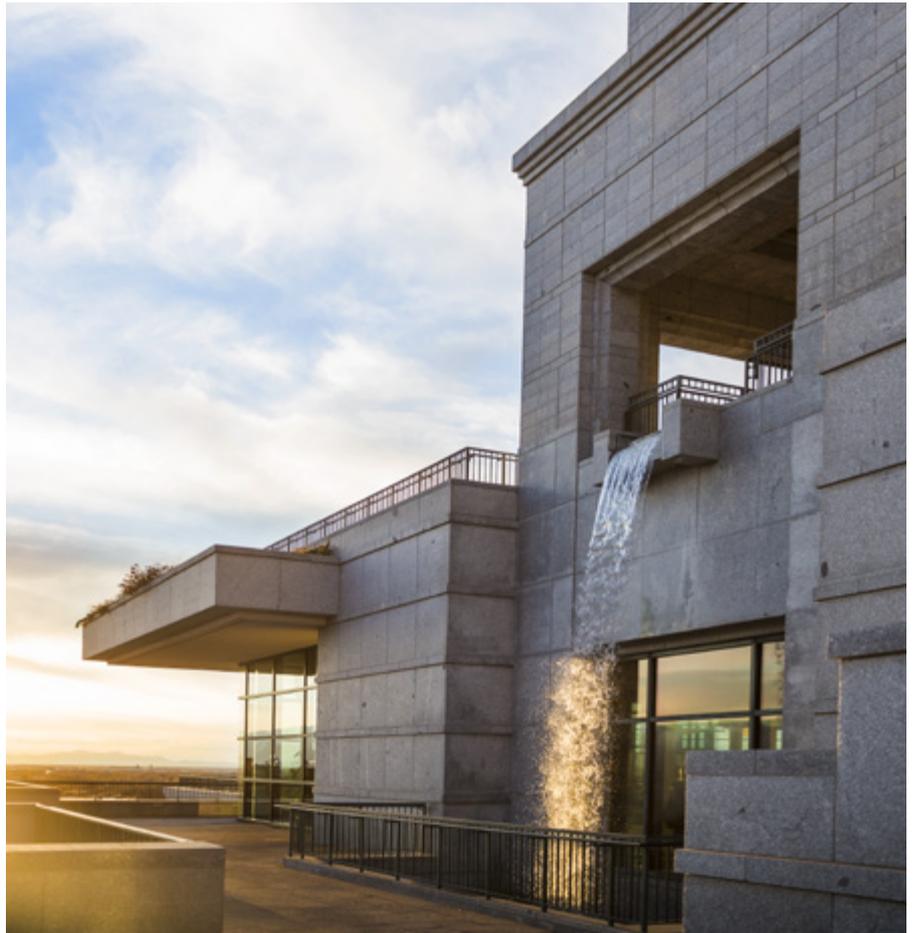
"Behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (verses 24–25).

Opposition in the form of difficult circumstances we face in mortality is also part of the plan that furthers our growth in mortality.

#### III.

All of us experience various kinds of opposition that test us. Some of these tests are temptations to sin. Some are mortal challenges apart from personal sin. Some are very great. Some are minor. Some are continuous, and some are mere episodes. None of us





is exempt. Opposition permits us to grow toward what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

After Joseph Smith had completed translating the Book of Mormon, he still had to find a publisher. This was not easy. The complexity of this lengthy manuscript and the cost of printing and binding thousands of copies were intimidating. Joseph first approached E. B. Grandin, a Palmyra printer, who refused. He then sought another printer in Palmyra, who also turned him down. He traveled to Rochester, 25 miles (40 km) away, and approached the most prominent publisher in western New York, who also turned him down. Another Rochester publisher was willing, but circumstances made this alternative unacceptable.

Weeks had passed, and Joseph must have been bewildered at the opposition to accomplishing his divine mandate. The Lord did not make it easy, but He did make it possible. Joseph's fifth attempt, a second approach to

the Palmyra publisher Grandin, was successful.<sup>3</sup>

Years later, Joseph was painfully imprisoned in Liberty Jail for many months. When he prayed for relief, the Lord told him that “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7).

We are all acquainted with other kinds of mortal opposition not caused by our personal sins, including illness, disability, and death. President Thomas S. Monson explained:

“Some of you may at times have cried out in your suffering, wondering why our Heavenly Father would allow you to go through whatever trials you are facing. . . .

“Our mortal life, however, was never meant to be easy or consistently pleasant. Our Heavenly Father . . . knows that we learn and grow and become refined through hard challenges, heart-breaking sorrows, and difficult choices. Each one of us experiences dark days when our loved ones pass away, painful times when our health is lost,

feelings of being forsaken when those we love seem to have abandoned us. These and other trials present us with the real test of our ability to endure.”<sup>4</sup>

Our efforts to improve our observance of the Sabbath day pose a less stressful example of opposition. We have the Lord's commandment to honor the Sabbath. Some of our choices may violate that commandment, but other choices in how to spend time on the Sabbath are simply a question of whether we will do what is merely good or what is better or best.<sup>5</sup>

To illustrate the opposition of temptation, the Book of Mormon describes three methods the devil will use in the last days. First, he will “rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good” (2 Nephi 28:20). Second, he will “pacify, and lull [members] away into carnal security,” saying “Zion prospereth, all is well” (verse 21). Third, he will tell us “there is no hell; and . . . I am no devil, for there is none” (verse 22), and therefore there is no right and

wrong. Because of this opposition, we are warned not to be “at ease in Zion!” (verse 24).

The Church in its divine mission and we in our personal lives seem to face increasing opposition today. Perhaps as the Church grows in strength and we members grow in faith and obedience, Satan increases the strength of his opposition so we will continue to have “opposition in all things.”

Some of this opposition even comes from Church members. Some who use personal reasoning or wisdom to resist prophetic direction give themselves a label borrowed from elected bodies—“the loyal opposition.” However appropriate for a democracy, there is no warrant for this concept in the government of God’s kingdom, where questions are honored but opposition is not (see Matthew 26:24).

As another example, there are many things in our early Church history, such as what Joseph Smith did or did not do in every circumstance, that some use as a basis for opposition.

To all I say, exercise faith and put reliance on the Savior’s teaching that we should “know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16). The Church is making great efforts to be transparent with the records we have, but after all we can publish, our members are sometimes left with basic questions that cannot be resolved by study. That is the Church history version of “opposition in all things.” Some things can be learned only by faith (see D&C 88:118). Our ultimate reliance must be on faith in the witness we have received from the Holy Ghost.

God rarely infringes on the agency of any of His children by intervening against some for the relief of others. But He does ease the burdens of our afflictions and strengthen us to bear them, as He did for Alma’s people in the land of Helam (see Mosiah 24:13–15). He does not prevent all disasters, but He does answer our prayers to turn them aside, as He did with the uniquely powerful cyclone that threatened to prevent the dedication of the

temple in Fiji;<sup>6</sup> or He does blunt their effects, as He did with the terrorist bombing that took so many lives in the Brussels airport but only injured our four missionaries.

Through all mortal opposition, we have God’s assurance that He will “consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain” (2 Nephi 2:2). We have also been taught to understand our mortal experiences and His commandments in the context of His great plan of salvation, which tells us the purpose of life and gives us the assurance of a Savior, in whose name I testify of the truth of these things. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. Similarly, modern revelation teaches that if we never had the bitter, we could not know the sweet (see Doctrine and Covenants 29:39).
3. See Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light: Joseph Smith’s Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (2015), 163–79.
4. Thomas S. Monson, “Joy in the Journey” (address given at the BYU Women’s Conference, May 2, 2008), [womensconference.ce.byu.edu](http://womensconference.ce.byu.edu). A short essay on sportsmanship and democracy by John S. Tanner, now president of BYU–Hawaii, includes this insight on a subject with which we are all familiar: “Learning how to lose gracefully is not only a civil duty; it is a religious imperative. God designed mortality to ensure ‘opposition in all things’ (2 Nephi 2:11). Setbacks and defeats are part of his plan for our perfection. . . . Defeat plays an integral role in our ‘quest for perfection’” (*Notes from an Amateur: A Disciple’s Life in the Academy* [2011], 57).
5. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–8.
6. See Sarah Jane Weaver, “Rededication Goes Forward,” *Church News*, Feb. 28, 2016, 3–4.



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By Elder Kent F. Richards  
Of the Seventy

# The Power of Godliness

*Each temple is God’s holy, sacred house, and therein each of us may learn and know the powers of godliness.*

Just a few months before the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, he met with the Twelve Apostles to talk about the greatest needs the Church was facing in that very difficult time. He told them, “*We need the temple more than anything else.*”<sup>1</sup> Surely, today in these trying times, each of us and our families need the temple more than anything else.

During a recent temple dedication, I was thrilled with the entire experience. I loved the open house, greeting many of the visitors who came to see the temple; the cultural celebration with the vibrancy and excitement of the youth; followed by the wonderful dedicatory sessions. The Spirit was sweet. Many people were blessed. And then the next morning, my wife and I entered the baptismal font to participate in baptisms for some of our own ancestors. As I raised my arm to begin the ordinance, I was nearly overcome by the power of the Spirit. I realized again that the real power of the temple is in the ordinances.

As the Lord has revealed, the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood is found in the temple and its ordinances, “for therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory.”<sup>2</sup> “Therefore, in the

ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.”<sup>3</sup> This promise is for you and for your family.

Our responsibility is to “receive” that which our Father offers.<sup>4</sup> “For unto him that receiveth it shall be given more abundantly, even power”:<sup>5</sup> power to receive *all* that He can and will give us—now and eternally;<sup>6</sup> power to become sons and daughters of God,<sup>7</sup> to know “the powers of heaven,”<sup>8</sup> to speak in His name,<sup>9</sup> and to receive “the power of [His] Spirit.”<sup>10</sup> These powers become available personally to each



one of us through the ordinances and the covenants of the temple.

Nephi saw our day in his great vision: “I, Nephi, beheld the *power* of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the *covenant people* of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were *armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.*”<sup>11</sup>

I had the privilege recently of being in a temple open house with President Russell M. Nelson and his family as he gathered them around the sealing altar and explained to them that everything we do in the Church—every meeting, activity, lesson, and service—is to prepare each of us to come to the temple and kneel at the altar to receive all the Father’s promised blessings for eternity.<sup>12</sup>

As we feel the blessings of the temple in our own lives, our hearts turn to our families, both living and dead.

Recently, I witnessed a three-generation family participate in baptisms together for their ancestors. Even the grandmother participated—though she had some trepidation about going under the water herself. As she emerged from the water and hugged her husband, she had tears of joy. The grandfather and father then baptized each other and many of the grandchildren. What greater joy could a family experience together? Each temple has a family priority time to allow you as a family to schedule time in the baptistry.

Shortly before his death, President Joseph F. Smith received the vision of the redemption of the dead. He taught that those who are in the spirit world are fully dependent upon the ordinances that we receive on their behalf. The scripture reads, “The dead who

repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God.”<sup>13</sup> We receive the ordinances in their behalf, but they make and are held accountable for each covenant associated with each ordinance. Surely, the veil is thin for us and parts completely for them in the temple.

What then is our personal responsibility to be engaged in this work, both as patrons and as workers? The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the Saints in 1840 that “considerable exertion must be made, and means will be required—and as the work [to build the temple] must be hastened in righteousness, it behooves the Saints to weigh the importance of these things, in their minds, . . . and then take such steps as are necessary to carry them into operation; and arming themselves with courage, resolve to do all they can, and feel themselves as much interested as though the whole labor depended on themselves alone.”<sup>14</sup>

In the book of Revelation we read: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”<sup>15</sup>

Can’t you just see in your mind’s eye those who serve in the temple today?

There are more than 120,000 ordinance workers in the 150 operating temples around the world. Yet there is opportunity for even more to have this sweet experience. When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the concept of many smaller temples throughout the world, he taught that “all ordinance workers would be local



people who would serve in other capacities in their wards and stakes.”<sup>16</sup> Normally, workers are called to serve for two to three years, with the possibility of extending beyond. It is not intended that once you are called, you will stay as long as you are able. Many long-serving workers carry their love for the temple with them as they are released and allow other, new workers to serve.

Nearly 100 years ago, Apostle John A. Widtsoe taught: “We need more workers to accomplish [this] wonderful work. . . . We need more converts to temple work, drawn from all ages. . . . The time has come, . . . in this new

temple movement, to bring into active service all the people, of all ages. . . . Temple work is . . . of as much benefit to the young and the active, as it is to the aged, who have laid behind them many of the burdens of life. The young man needs his place in the temple even more than his father and his grandfather, who are steadied by a life of experience; and the young girl just entering life, needs the spirit, influence and direction that come from participation in the temple ordinances.”<sup>17</sup>

In many temples, temple presidents are welcoming newly called and endowed missionaries, young men and women, to serve for just a short time as



ordination workers before going to the MTC. These young people are not only blessed to serve, but “they enhance the beauty and spirit for all serving in the temple.”<sup>18</sup>

I asked a number of young men and women who have served as ordination workers before and after their missions to share their feelings. They used phrases like the following to describe their experience in the temple:

When I serve in the temple—

- I feel “a sense of being closer to my Father and the Savior”;
- I feel “complete peace and happiness”;
- I have a feeling of “being home”;
- I receive “sacredness, power, and strength”;
- I feel “the importance of my sacred covenants”;
- “The temple has become a part of me”;
- “Those whom we serve are close during the ordinances”;
- “It gives me the strength to overcome temptations”; and
- “The temple has changed my life forever.”<sup>19</sup>

Serving in the temple is a rich and powerful experience for people of all ages. Even some newly married couples are serving together. President Nelson has taught, “Service in the

temple . . . is a sublime activity for a family.”<sup>20</sup> As ordination workers, in addition to receiving ordinances for your ancestors, you can also *officiate* in ordinances for them.

As President Wilford Woodruff said: “What greater calling can any man [or woman] have on the face of the earth than to hold in his [or her] hands power and authority to go forth and administer in the ordinances of salvation? . . .

“ . . . You become an instrument in the hands of God in the salvation of that soul. There is nothing given to the children of men that is equal to it.”<sup>21</sup>

He also said: “The sweet whisperings of the Holy Spirit will be given to [you] and the treasures of Heaven, the communion of angels, will be added from time to time.”<sup>22</sup>

“This is worth all you or I can sacrifice [during] the few years we have to spend here in the flesh.”<sup>23</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson recently reminded us that “the blessings of the temple are priceless.”<sup>24</sup> “No sacrifice is too great.”<sup>25</sup>

Come to the temple. Come often. Come with and for your family. Come, and help others to come too.

“What are these which are arrayed in white?” My brothers and sisters, *you* are they—you who have received the ordinances of the temple, who have kept your covenants even by sacrifice;

you who are helping your families find the blessings of temple service and who have helped others along the way. Thank you for your service. I testify that each temple is God’s holy, sacred house and that therein each of us may learn and know the powers of godliness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 416; emphasis added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 124:34.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:20.
4. See Mark 4:20, 24–25.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 71:6.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38: “And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.” These are the promises associated with the covenants in the temple ordinances; see also Doctrine and Covenants 132:20–24.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 39:4; see also Doctrine and Covenants 45:8; Moses 6:65–68.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:20: “But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world.”
10. Doctrine and Covenants 29:30.
11. 1 Nephi 14:14; emphasis added.
12. See Russell M. Nelson, “Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 32; *Liahona*, July 2001, 37.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58; see also verses 53–54.
14. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 415.
15. Revelation 7:13–15.
16. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 49.
17. John A. Widtsoe, “Temple Worship,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 51–52.
18. Personal correspondence from President Brent Belliston, Boise Idaho Temple.
19. Personal correspondence.
20. Russell M. Nelson, “The Spirit of Elijah,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 86.
21. “Discourse by President Wilford Woodruff,” *Millennial Star*, May 14, 1896, 307.
22. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), xxx.
23. *Teachings: Wilford Woodruff*, 177.
24. Thomas S. Monson, “Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 93.
25. Thomas S. Monson, “The Holy Temple—a Beacon to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 92.



By Elder Paul V. Johnson  
Of the Seventy

# And There Shall Be No More Death

*For all who have grieved over the death of someone they loved,  
the Resurrection is a source of great hope.*

A week ago was Easter, and our thoughts were focused again on the atoning sacrifice and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This past year I have been thinking and pondering about the Resurrection more than normal.

Nearly one year ago, our daughter Alisa died. She had struggled with cancer for almost eight years, with several surgeries, many different treatments,

exciting miracles, and deep disappointments. We watched her physical condition deteriorate as she came to the close of her mortal life. It was excruciating to see that happen to our precious daughter—that bright-eyed little baby who had grown up to be a talented, wonderful woman, wife, and mother. I thought my heart would break.

Last year at Easter time, a little over a month before she passed away, Alisa

wrote: “Easter is a reminder of all that I hope for myself. That someday I will be healed and someday I will be whole. Someday I won’t have any metal or plastic inside of me. Someday my heart will be free of fear and my mind free of anxieties. I am not praying that this happens soon, but I am so glad I truly believe in a beautiful afterlife.”<sup>1</sup>

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ ensures the very things Alisa hoped for and instills in each of us “a reason [for] the hope that is in [us].”<sup>2</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley referred to the Resurrection as “the greatest of all events in the history of mankind.”<sup>3</sup>

The Resurrection is brought to pass by the Atonement of Jesus Christ and is pivotal to the great plan of salvation.<sup>4</sup> We are spirit children of heavenly parents.<sup>5</sup> When we come to this earth life, our spirit is united with our body. We experience all the joys and challenges associated with mortal life. When a person dies, their spirit is separated from their body. Resurrection makes it possible for a person’s spirit and body to be united again, only this



time that body will be immortal and perfect—not subject to pain, disease, or other problems.<sup>6</sup>

After resurrection, the spirit will never again be separated from the body because the Savior's Resurrection brought total victory over death. In order to obtain our eternal destiny, we need to have this immortal soul—a spirit and body—united forever. With spirit and immortal body inseparably connected, we can “receive a fulness of joy.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, without the Resurrection we could never receive a fulness of joy but would be miserable forever.<sup>8</sup> Even faithful, righteous people view the separation of their bodies from their spirits as captivity. We are released from this captivity through the Resurrection, which is redemption from the bands or chains of death.<sup>9</sup> There is no salvation without both our spirit and our body.

Each of us has physical, mental, and emotional limitations and weaknesses. These challenges, some of which seem so intractable now, will eventually be resolved. None of these problems will plague us after we are resurrected. Alisa researched survival rates for persons with the type of cancer she had, and the numbers were not encouraging. She wrote: “But there is a cure, so I'm not scared. Jesus has already cured my cancer, and yours. . . . *I will* be better. I'm glad I know this.”<sup>10</sup>

We can replace the word *cancer* with any of the other physical, mental, or emotional ailments we may face. Because of the Resurrection, they have already been cured too. The miracle of resurrection, the ultimate cure, is beyond the power of modern medicine. But it is not beyond the power of God. We know it can be done

because the Savior is resurrected and will bring to pass the Resurrection of each of us too.<sup>11</sup>

The Resurrection of the Savior proves that He is the Son of God and that what He taught is real. “He is risen, as he said.”<sup>12</sup> There could be no stronger proof of His divinity than Him coming forth from the grave with an immortal body.

We know of witnesses to the Resurrection in New Testament times. In addition to the women and men we read about in the Gospels, the New Testament assures us that hundreds actually saw the resurrected Lord.<sup>13</sup> And the Book of Mormon tells of many hundreds more: “The multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, . . . and [they] did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and



did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.”<sup>14</sup>

To those ancient witnesses are added witnesses in the latter days. In fact, in the opening scene of this dispensation, Joseph Smith saw the resurrected Savior with the Father.<sup>15</sup> Living prophets and apostles have testified of the reality of the resurrected, living Christ.<sup>16</sup> So we may say, “We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”<sup>17</sup>

And each of us can be part of a cloud of witnesses who know through the power of the Holy Ghost that what we celebrate on Easter actually happened—that the Resurrection is real.

The reality of the Resurrection of the Savior overwhelms our heartbreak with hope because with it comes the assurance that all the other promises of the gospel are just as real—promises that are no less miraculous than the Resurrection. We know that He has the power to cleanse us from all our sins. We know that He has taken upon Himself all our infirmities, pains, and the injustices we have suffered.<sup>18</sup> We know that He has “rise[n] from the dead, with healing in his wings.”<sup>19</sup> We know that He can make us whole no matter what is broken in us. We know that He “shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”<sup>20</sup> We know that we can be “made perfect through Jesus . . . , who wrought out this perfect atonement,”<sup>21</sup> if we will just have faith and follow Him.

Toward the end of the inspiring oratorio *Messiah*, Handel put to beautiful music the Apostle Paul’s words that rejoice over the Resurrection.

“Behold, I [tell] you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,



“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: . . . the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“. . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . .

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

I am grateful for the blessings that are ours because of the Atonement and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For all who have laid a child in a grave or wept over the casket of a spouse or someone they loved, the Resurrection is a source of great hope. What a powerful experience it will be to see them again—not just as spirits but with resurrected bodies.

I long to see my mother again and feel her gentle touch and look into her loving eyes. I want to see my father’s smile and hear his laugh and see him as a resurrected, perfect being. With an eye of faith, I picture Alisa completely beyond the reach of any earthly troubles or any sting of death—a resurrected, perfected Alisa,

victorious and with a fulness of joy.

A few Easters ago, she wrote simply: “Life through His name. So much hope. Always. Through everything. I love Easter to remind me.”<sup>23</sup>

I testify of the reality of the Resurrection. Jesus Christ lives, and because of Him, we will all live again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Alisa Linton, “Easter,” Apr. 14, 2015.
2. 1 Peter 3:15; see also 1 Peter 1:3.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Empty Tomb Bore Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 65.
4. See Alma 42:23.
5. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
6. See Alma 11:43.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 93:33; 138:17.
8. See 2 Nephi 9:8–9; Doctrine and Covenants 93:34.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:14–19.
10. Alisa Linton, “I Draw the Line at the Easter Bunny,” Mar. 25, 2008.
11. See 1 Corinthians 15:20–22; 2 Nephi 2:8; Helaman 14:17; Mormon 9:13.
12. Matthew 28:6.
13. See 1 Corinthians 15:6, 8.
14. 3 Nephi 11:15.
15. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17.
16. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2; “Special Witnesses of Christ,” [lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/what-are-prophets-testimonies](https://www.lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/what-are-prophets-testimonies).
17. Hebrews 12:1.
18. See Alma 7:11–12.
19. 2 Nephi 25:13.
20. Revelation 21:4.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 76:69.
22. 1 Corinthians 15:51–55, 57.
23. Alisa Linton, “Life through His Name,” Apr. 8, 2012.



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

# Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You

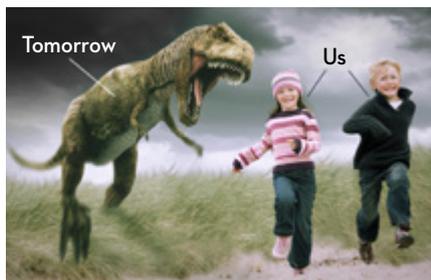
*Keep loving. Keep trying. Keep trusting. Keep believing. Keep growing.  
Heaven is cheering you on today, tomorrow, and forever.*

Brothers and sisters, do you have any idea—do you have any notion or inkling whatsoever—of how much we love you? For 10 hours you watch, fixed on one face at this pulpit sequentially, but for those same 10 hours, we seated behind this pulpit watch, fixed on you. You thrill us to the center of our soul, whether that be the 21,000 here in the Conference Center, or multitudes in meeting-houses and chapels, or finally millions in homes around the globe, perhaps huddled around a family computer screen. Here you are, there you are, hour after hour, in your Sunday best, being your best. You sing and you pray. You listen and you believe. You are the miracle of this Church. And we love you.

What another remarkable general conference we have had. We have been especially blessed by President Thomas S. Monson's presence and prophetic messages. President, we love you, we pray for you, we thank you, and above all, we sustain you.

We are grateful to have been taught by you and your marvelous counselors and so many of our other great men and women leaders. We have heard incomparable music. We have been urgently prayed for and pleaded with. Truly the Spirit of the Lord has been here in rich abundance. What an inspirational weekend it has been in every way.

Now, I do see a couple of problems. One is the fact that I am the only person standing between you and the ice cream you always have ready at the close of general conference. The other potential problem is captured in this photo I saw recently on the Internet.



My apologies to all the children who are now hiding under the sofa, but the fact of the matter is none of us want tomorrow, or the day after that, to destroy the wonderful feelings we have had this weekend. We want to hold fast to the spiritual impressions we have had and the inspired teachings we have heard. But it is inevitable that after heavenly moments in our lives, we, of necessity, return to earth, so to speak, where sometimes less-than-ideal circumstances again face us.

The author of Hebrews warned us of this when he wrote, “Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.”<sup>1</sup> That post-illumination affliction can come in many ways, and it can come to all of us. Surely every missionary who has ever served soon realized that life in the field wasn't going to be quite like the rarefied atmosphere of the missionary training center. So too for all of us upon leaving a sweet session in the temple or concluding a particularly spiritual sacrament meeting.

Remember that when Moses came down from his singular experience on Mount Sinai, he found that his people had “corrupted themselves” and had “turned aside quickly.”<sup>2</sup> There they were at the foot of the mountain, busily fashioning a golden calf to worship, in the very hour that Jehovah, at the summit of the mountain, had been telling Moses, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” and “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.”<sup>3</sup> Moses was *not* happy with his flock of wandering Israelites that day!

During His earthly ministry, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the Mount of Transfiguration, where, the scriptures say, “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the

light.”<sup>4</sup> The heavens opened, ancient prophets came, and God the Father spoke.

After such a celestial experience, what does Jesus come down the mountain to find? Well, first He found an argument between His disciples and their antagonists over a failed blessing administered to a young boy. Then He tried to convince the Twelve—unsuccessfully, it turns out—that He would soon be delivered up to local rulers who would kill Him. Then someone mentioned that a tax was due, which was forthrightly paid. Then He had to rebuke some of the brethren because they were arguing about who would be the greatest in His kingdom. All of this led Him at

one point to say, “O faithless generation, . . . how long shall I suffer you?”<sup>5</sup> He had occasion to ask that question more than once during His ministry. No wonder He longed for the prayerful solitude of mountaintops!

Realizing that we *all* have to come down from peak experiences to deal with the regular vicissitudes of life, may I offer this encouragement as general conference concludes.

First of all, if in the days ahead you not only see limitations in those around you but also find elements in your own life that don’t yet measure up to the messages you have heard this weekend, please don’t be cast down in spirit and don’t give up. The gospel, the Church, and these wonderful

semiannual gatherings are intended to give hope and inspiration. They are not intended to discourage you. Only the adversary, the enemy of us all, would try to convince us that the ideals outlined in general conference are depressing and unrealistic, that people don’t really improve, that no one really progresses. And why does Lucifer give that speech? Because he knows *he* can’t improve, *he* can’t progress, that worlds without end *he* will never have a bright tomorrow. He is a miserable man bound by eternal limitations, and he wants you to be miserable too. Well, don’t fall for that. With the gift of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the strength of heaven to help us, we *can* improve, and the great thing about the



gospel is we get credit for *trying*, even if we don't always succeed.

When there was a controversy in the early Church regarding who was entitled to heaven's blessings and who wasn't, the Lord declared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "Verily I say unto you, [the gifts of God] are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep . . . my commandments, and [for them] that *seeketh* so to do."<sup>6</sup> Boy, aren't we *all* thankful for that added provision "and . . . seeketh so to do"! That has been a lifesaver because sometimes that is all we can offer! We take some solace in the fact that if God were to reward only the perfectly faithful, He wouldn't have much of a distribution list.

Please remember tomorrow, and all the days after that, that the Lord blesses those who *want* to improve, who accept the need for commandments and *try* to keep them, who cherish Christlike virtues and *strive* to the best of their ability to acquire them. If you stumble in that pursuit, so does everyone; the Savior is there to help you keep going. If you fall, summon His strength. Call out like Alma, "O Jesus, . . . have mercy on me."<sup>7</sup> He will help you get back up. He will help you repent, repair, fix whatever you have to fix, and keep going. Soon enough you will have the success you seek.

"As you desire of me so it shall be done unto you," the Lord has declared.

". . . Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously. . . .

". . . [Then] *whatsoever you desire of me [in] righteousness, . . . you shall receive.*"<sup>8</sup>

I love that doctrine! It says again and again that we are going to be blessed for our *desire* to do good, even as we actually strive to be so. And it reminds us that to qualify for those blessings, we must make certain we do not deny them to others: we are to deal justly, never unjustly, never unfairly; we are to walk humbly, never arrogantly, never pridefully; we are to judge righteously, never self-righteously, never unrighteously.



My brothers and sisters, the first great *commandment* of all eternity is to love God with all of *our* heart, might, mind, and strength—that’s the first great commandment. But the first great *truth* of all eternity is that God loves *us* with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength. That love is the foundation stone of eternity, and it should be the foundation stone of our daily life. Indeed it is only with that reassurance burning in our soul that we can have the confidence to keep trying to improve, keep seeking forgiveness for our sins, and keep extending that grace to our neighbor.

President George Q. Cannon once taught: “No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so]. . . . He will [always] stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them.”<sup>9</sup>

Now, with that majestic devotion ringing from heaven as the great constant in our lives, manifested most purely and perfectly in the life, death, and Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can escape the consequences of both sin and stupidity—our own or that of others—in whatever form they may come to us in the course of daily living. If we give our heart to God, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ, if we do the best we can to live the gospel, then tomorrow—and every other day—is ultimately going to be magnificent, even if we don’t always recognize it as such. Why? Because our Heavenly Father wants it to be! He wants to bless us. A rewarding, abundant, and eternal life is the very object of His merciful



plan for His children! It is a plan predicated on the truth “that all things work together for good to them that love God.”<sup>10</sup> So keep loving. Keep trying. Keep trusting. Keep believing. Keep growing. Heaven is cheering you on today, tomorrow, and forever.

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?” Isaiah cried.

“[God] giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. . . .

. . . They that wait upon [Him] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. . . .

“For . . . the Lord . . . God will hold [their] right hand, saying unto [them], Fear not; I will help thee.”<sup>11</sup>

Brothers and sisters, may a loving Father in Heaven bless us tomorrow to remember how we felt today. May He bless us to strive with patience and persistence toward the ideals we have heard proclaimed this conference weekend, knowing that His divine love and unfailing help will be with us even when we struggle—no, will be with us *especially* when we struggle.

If gospel standards seem high and the personal improvement needed in the days ahead seems out of reach, remember Joshua’s encouragement to his people when they faced a

daunting future. “Sanctify yourselves,” he said, “for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”<sup>12</sup> I declare that same promise. It is the promise of this conference. It is the promise of this Church. It is the promise of Him who performs those wonders, who is Himself “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, . . . The Prince of Peace.”<sup>13</sup> Of Him I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness. And to Him this conference stands as a testament of His ongoing work in this great latter day. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. Hebrews 10:32.
2. Exodus 32:7, 8.
3. Exodus 20:3–4.
4. Matthew 17:2.
5. Mark 9:19.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 46:9; emphasis added.
7. Alma 36:18.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 11:8, 12, 14; emphasis added.
9. George Q. Cannon, “Remarks,” *Deseret Evening News*, Mar. 7, 1891, 4.
10. Romans 8:28.
11. Isaiah 40:28, 29, 31; 41:13.
12. Joshua 3:5.
13. Isaiah 9:6.



#### Share Conference

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## Making Conference Part of Our Lives

Consider using some of these activities and questions as a starting point for family discussions or personal pondering.

### For Children

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson talked about a scene from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to show that decisions are important. He encouraged us to choose the right, even if it is the harder path. As a family, talk about difficult decisions you face. What can you do to help each other choose the right? For an activity, draw a CTR shield on a poster and write your ideas on it. Then hang it somewhere your family will see it often.
- Page 101: President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, described a city in Germany that was destroyed in war but was later rebuilt and made beautiful again. President Uchtdorf taught that when we feel broken, the Savior and Heavenly Father can rebuild us. What examples has your family seen of something broken that



became beautiful and strong again? Consider sharing your testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ with your children.

- Page 53: Elder Mervyn B. Arnold of the Seventy encouraged us to “go to the rescue” by reaching out to our less-active or nonmember friends. As a family, think about how you can reach out to those who haven’t

been to church in a while or who are not members. What can you do to share the gospel with others? Think of a fun way to create a family missionary plan with simple, realistic goals.

- Page 13: Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president, invited us to prayerfully consider how we can help refugees in our community. As a family, visit [IWasaStranger.lds.org](http://IWasaStranger.lds.org) and watch the video titled “I Was a Stranger: Love One Another.” What are some things your family can do to serve neighbors in need?

*Note: Child-friendly conference coverage can be found in this month's Friend magazine.*

### For Youth

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson said, “The door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people’s lives.” He also said, “The path we follow in this life leads to our destination in the next life.” Think about the major choices coming up in your life. Imagine where those choices might lead you, and write a list of the ideas and impressions that come to you.
- Page 46: Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “The Restoration of the gospel began with a youth, Joseph Smith, asking a question.” Elder Rasband said questions indicate a desire to learn, add truth to our testimonies, and “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). Bring your questions to God in prayer, search the scriptures and the talks from general conference, and watch and listen closely for answers.
- Page 10: Have you ever felt afraid or lonely? Sister Neill F. Marriott, second counselor in the Young Women

general presidency, shared what happened before her wedding. She was far from home and would be staying with a relative of her future husband whom she had never met. When she arrived at the relative's home, Sister Marriott said, "The door opened . . . and Aunt Carol, without a word, reached out and took me into her arms." That moment melted away her fears. "Love is making space in your life for someone else," she said. Is there someone you can make room for?

- Page 70: Brother Stephen W. Owen, Young Men general president, taught that we are all both leaders and followers. He shared an experience he had of meeting a group of young men who supported and encouraged each other in their quorums. He said, "Leadership is an expression of discipleship—it is simply a matter of helping others come unto Christ." Choose someone you can help come unto Christ this week.

*Note: Youth-friendly conference coverage can be found in this month's New Era magazine.*

#### For Young Adults

- Page 101: Want to keep your faith from flatlining? President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught that obedience is the answer! "Obedience is the lifeblood of faith," he said. "It is by obedience that we gather light into our souls." Think about a time when you obeyed the word of the Lord even though it was difficult. How did your obedience strengthen your faith and help you discover what you are made of?
- Pages 23, 59, and 105: Sister Mary R. Durham, recently released second counselor in the Primary general presidency, referred to the

Holy Ghost as a "divine source of strength." Read her talk and the talks by Elders David A. Bednar and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Take note of the many roles the Holy Ghost plays and of the ways He can bless you. Make a goal to change something in your life so you can be more worthy of His influence.

- Pages 26 and 124: Take time to ask yourself the questions Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy asked: "When difficult things occur in our lives, what is our immediate response? Is it confusion or doubt or spiritual withdrawal? Is it a blow to our faith? Do we blame God or others for our circumstances? Or is our first response to remember . . . that we are children of a loving God?" Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "The first great *truth* of all eternity is that God loves *us* with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength." How can strengthening your testimony of God's love for you help you endure difficult things?

#### For Adults

- Page 86: President Thomas S. Monson said that when contemplating our daily decisions, "if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice." What daily religious practices could you develop or strengthen in your life and in your family so that Christ remains at the center of your decisions?
- Pages 81 and 93: President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged fathers to make necessary changes in order

to lead their families to the celestial kingdom. As a father, what can you do, in Elder Christofferson's words, to better "demonstrate what fidelity to God looks like in day-to-day living"?

- Page 77: By embracing charity, even families with great challenges can succeed, said President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. "Whatever problems your family is facing, whatever you must do to solve them," he added,



"the beginning and the end of the solution is charity." In your family, consider scriptural counsel to "pray unto the Father . . . that ye may be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48).

- Page 63: Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Apostles said that regular family councils "will counter the impact of modern technology that often distracts us from spending quality time with each other and also tends to bring evil right into our homes." Consider implementing in your family the four types of family councils that Elder Ballard suggests "will assist us to be more successful and happy in our precious relationships." ■

The following list of selected experiences related during 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
<b>Neil L. Andersen</b>	(49) Children and youth are blessed when adults reach out to them in love, teach them the gospel, and welcome them to church.
<b>Mervyn B. Arnold</b>	(53) The mother of Mervyn B. Arnold rescues Heavenly Father's lost and wounded sheep. Elder Alejandro Patania's fisherman brother dies at sea while awaiting rescue during a storm. A friend of Mervyn B. Arnold joins the Church after being fellowshipped for 25 years. A bishop helps rescue 21 young men.
<b>Linda K. Burton</b>	(13) Sisters take action in 1856 to help Saints stranded on the plains. A caring couple helps a refugee family. At her funeral, a former stake Relief Society president is remembered for her service and love.
<b>D. Todd Christofferson</b>	(93) Young D. Todd Christofferson desires to follow in the footsteps of his honest father. A father prays for his son every morning because of his love for him.
<b>Quentin L. Cook</b>	(97) Members of the Thailand Bangkok Mission rejoice upon learning that a temple will be built in Thailand. A deceased daughter is sealed to her family after appearing in the temple to the wife of a General Authority. Despite political unrest, President Gordon B. Hinckley insists on a cornerstone ceremony at the dedication of the Suva Fiji Temple.
<b>Kevin R. Duncan</b>	(33) A sliver emerges from Kevin R. Duncan's finger after he repeatedly applies ointment and bandages.
<b>Mary R. Durham</b>	(23) A father carrying his daughter across a lake avoids being pulled under water by prying his shoes off his feet.
<b>Cheryl A. Esplin</b>	(6) A devotional speaker teaches the importance of focusing on and serving others. A child learns in Primary that Jesus loves her.
<b>Henry B. Eyring</b>	(19) Two Church members fear that their trials and tests will overcome their faith unless they can regain their love for the Savior and His Church. (81) Henry B. Eyring feels pain over a family that was not sealed in the temple. A widow who joins the Church anticipates eternal life with her family.
<b>Gerrit W. Gong</b>	(108) A basketball coach encourages young Gerrit W. Gong to try out for soccer. Before going to the temple, a mechanic cleans his hands by scrubbing dishes.
<b>Robert D. Hales</b>	(105) Robert D. Hales receives impressions from the Holy Ghost in his Church service and personal life.
<b>Donald L. Hallstrom</b>	(26) The young daughter of Donald L. Hallstrom writes in a school paper that she will be with Heavenly Father if she dies. Church members in Liberia quote scripture and sing "How Firm a Foundation" with uncommon conviction.
<b>Paul V. Johnson</b>	(121) The adult daughter of Paul V. Johnson dies with a hope in the afterlife and the Resurrection.
<b>Patrick Kearon</b>	(111) Patrick Kearon is not the same after hearing stories of refugees and witnessing dedicated relief workers care for them.
<b>Neill F. Marriott</b>	(10) Neill F. Marriott receives nurturing from her fiancé's step-grandmother. Neill F. Marriott defends motherhood to an anonymous caller.
<b>Jairo Mazzagardi</b>	(56) As a recent convert to the Church, Jairo Mazzagardi searches for and finds answers to his questions about the Restoration.
<b>Thomas S. Monson</b>	(85) A worthy priesthood holder commands a rescue ship to rescue him and his crew from their life rafts.
<b>Russell M. Nelson</b>	(66) Russell M. Nelson seals a family in the temple after the family's two deceased daughters plead with him from beyond the veil and their father and brother become temple worthy.
<b>Dallin H. Oaks</b>	(114) Joseph Smith faces opposition while seeking a publisher for the Book of Mormon.
<b>Bonnie L. Oscarson</b>	(87) The Holy Ghost confirms the truth of the gospel to a mother whose son is seriously ill.
<b>Stephen W. Owen</b>	(70) While climbing a mountain on horseback, Stephen W. Owen knows he will be OK if he follows his father. Stephen W. Owen is happy to pass the sacrament. A young man in New Zealand gives a priesthood blessing to his mother.
<b>Ronald A. Rasband</b>	(46) Ronald A. Rasband's visit to Pakistan is a "golden day" for him and the Saints there. Ronald A. Rasband participates in a Face to Face broadcast.
<b>Dale G. Renlund</b>	(39) As she partakes of the sacrament, a sister in South Africa realizes the personal nature of the Savior's sacrifice.
<b>Kent F. Richards</b>	(118) Following a temple dedication, Kent F. Richards and his wife are baptized for their ancestors. Kent F. Richards witnesses a three-generation family being baptized for their ancestors.
<b>Steven E. Snow</b>	(36) The prayers of Steven E. Snow and his family become more humble, heartfelt, and sincere as his son recovers from a serious head injury.
<b>Gary E. Stevenson</b>	(29) After losing his car keys, Gary E. Stevenson draws an analogy between keys needed to start a car and priesthood keys needed to run the Church. While her children are being baptized for another temple patron's ancestors, a mother realizes that they are her ancestors as well.
<b>Dieter F. Uchtdorf</b>	(101) Dieter F. Uchtdorf feels the influence of the Holy Ghost as he ponders the restoration of Dresden, Germany, after World War II.
<b>W. Christopher Waddell</b>	(90) A boy in Primary finds it hard to think about Jesus. A father and mother find peace upon learning that they are sealed to their deceased infant son.



**Elder W. Mark Bassett**

*General Authority Seventy*

Every summer as a little boy, W. Mark Bassett would travel with his family from their home in the Sacramento, California, USA, area to visit his maternal grandmother in Alabama, USA. During their days traveling there, the family would regularly make a point to visit Church historic sites.

Whether it was visiting the historic grounds of Nauvoo, Illinois, or walking through the Sacred Grove in Palmyra, New York, Elder Bassett remembers the powerful feelings he had—even as a young boy—as he visited those sacred places.

“We felt something there,” he says. “That’s how my testimony was formed, through little experiences.”

That testimony gained as a young man has been a source of strength for Elder Bassett throughout his life.

Born on August 14, 1966, to Edwina Acker and William Lynn Bassett, in Carmichael, California, Elder Bassett is the second of five children. Serving in the Church and living the gospel were important priorities in his family.

After serving in the Guatemala Guatemala City Mission from 1985 to 1987, Elder Bassett moved to Provo, Utah, to attend Brigham Young University. He married Angela Brasher in the Salt Lake Temple on December 20, 1989. They are the parents of five children and have two grandchildren.

In 1991, Elder Bassett earned a degree in accounting from BYU and later moved with his family back to the Sacramento area to work in the wholesale auto auction industry. He worked as controller at Brasher’s Sacramento Auto Auction and as the chief financial officer and co-owner of West Coast Auto Auctions, Inc., where he operated automobile auctions throughout the western United States.

Elder Bassett has served in many capacities in the Church, including ward Young Men president, bishop, high councilor, stake president, president of the Arizona Mesa Mission from 2007 to 2010, and Area Seventy. ■



**Elder Mark A. Bragg**

*General Authority Seventy*

When Mark Bragg was 14 years old, friends from his baseball team introduced his family to the Church. Mark was baptized, and his mother became active.

“It changed our lives,” says Elder Bragg.

Mark Allyn Bragg was born on April 16, 1962, in Santa Monica, California, USA, to Donald E. and Diane Bragg.

While attending the University of Utah, Elder Bragg was called to serve in the Mexico Monterrey Mission, under the direction of mission president Roy H. King and his wife, Darlene O. King.

When Elder Bragg completed his missionary service, he began dating his mission president’s youngest daughter, Yvonne. They married in the Los Angeles California Temple on March 17, 1984.

After the untimely death of Elder Bragg’s father, the couple returned to California to start his career in the banking industry (he completed his career as senior vice president of Bank of America) and to be close to Elder Bragg’s mother.

It would be seven years before children would join the Bragg family. “At times we felt out of place, even in our family,” recalls Elder Bragg.

Then—“on the best day in the world”—Sister Bragg gave birth to the first of four children. “I remember . . . thinking there couldn’t be anyone happier than I was at the moment,” Elder Bragg says.

Life has not always been easy for the family, however. The day after Elder Bragg was sustained as a bishop in the ward where he grew up, his mother was tragically killed during a car hijacking. Her funeral was the first one he presided over as a bishop. “The Relief Society was there for our family every day,” he recalls.

Those lessons of love, service, and empathy would guide Elder Bragg through his future service in the Church—as a stake president, Area Seventy, and temple ordinance worker. ■



## Elder Weatherford T. Clayton

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Weatherford T. Clayton is extremely grateful for the opportunity to serve. The work of the Lord is a priority for him. He feels a great love for people and strong ties to his family.

“With the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can all gather home,” says Elder Clayton. “My family has felt the influence of those who have gone before. They are as real as those who are present.”

Born in California, USA, on March 1, 1952, to Whitney Clayton Jr. and Elizabeth Touchstone Clayton, Elder Clayton gained a strong testimony in his youth of home teaching. Because of the efforts of a home teacher, he, at age 12, and his family accepted sacred gospel covenants and were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple in 1964 by then-Elder Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Thinking about ways the Lord prepared him to serve, Elder Clayton says he was often inspired by the example of others: “I watched how friends and family dedicated their lives to the Lord and found their joy in the service they offered to God.”

After serving in the French Canadian Mission, he enrolled at the University of Utah, where he met Lisa Thomas. They were married on March 16, 1976, in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of five children.

Elder Clayton earned a degree in psychology and completed medical school at the University of Utah. He worked in a private medical practice as an obstetrician-gynecologist from 1985 to 2013, prior to his call to serve as president of the Canada Toronto Mission.

He has served as ward mission leader, Gospel Doctrine teacher, Young Men president, family history consultant, youth Sunday School teacher, bishop, high councilor, counselor in a stake presidency, and stake president. ■



## Elder Valeri V. Cordón

*General Authority Seventy*

From his mother, who joined the Church at age 16, Elder Valeri Vladimir Cordón Orellana received a foundation in the gospel that served him well when he moved 95 miles (150 km) away from his hometown of Zacapa, Guatemala, to attend high school in Guatemala City and study computer science.

“The most important thing I received from my mother was to be very reverent about all the sacred things of the Church,” recalls Elder Cordón, who is the son of Ovidio and Ema Orellana Cordón.

Elder Cordón was born on February 19, 1969, in Guatemala City, and spent his boyhood in Zacapa. His father went to Chicago, Illinois, in the United States to work. While there, he was influenced by Church members and received the message of the gospel from missionaries. The family was sealed in the Mesa Arizona Temple in 1972, when Valeri was three years old.

Elder Cordón says he grew to love the gospel as he heard his mother frequently singing Church hymns and songs such as “I Am a Child of God” and “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission.” Elder Cordón served in the El Salvador Mission from 1987 to 1989.

He married Glenda Zelmira Zea Diaz on March 25, 1995, in the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple. Sister Cordón had intended to serve a mission herself, but her plans changed when she met Valeri. Later she recognized him as the young man who had caught her eye when she saw his photo in a Church magazine years earlier. They have three daughters.

Elder Cordón received a bachelor’s degree from Mariano Galvez University in Guatemala in 2010 and a master of business administration degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2012. He worked as an information systems director at a pharmaceutical company and since 2012 at Pepsico Foods Mexico, Central America and Caribbean.

At the time of his call, Elder Cordón was serving in the Fourth Quorum of the Seventy in the Central America Area. He served in the presidency of the Costa Rica San José East Mission from 1998 to 2000. ■



## Elder Joaquin E. Costa

*General Authority Seventy*

A matchmaking friend set Joaquin Esteban Costa on the path that led to his conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ, a temple marriage, and leadership in the Church.

Joaquin Costa was born on March 8, 1965, to Eduardo J. Costa and Graciela M. Fassi. As a university student in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a friend, Alin Spannaus, now an Area Seventy, introduced him to Renée Varela. A second-generation Latter-day Saint, Renée hesitated before accepting a date with the 21-year-old, who was not a member of the Church. After three dates she decided she “liked him too much” and felt they shouldn’t date anymore. At the end of the school year, he returned to his birthplace, Entre Rios, Argentina.

Renée accepted a call to serve in the Chile Osorno Mission. After she returned home, Brother Spannaus arranged for her and Joaquin to attend the same party, at which Joaquin asked her for a date. “I prayed and decided to give him a chance,” Sister Costa says.

Soon, Joaquin was learning about the Church. As he studied with the missionaries, Renée asked him to pray and read the Book of Mormon from beginning to end.

“He didn’t make it to the end before he received a strong testimony,” Sister Costa says. “He didn’t get baptized just to please me. We dated one more year and then married in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple in 1989.”

Elder Costa received a bachelor’s degree in economics in 1987 from the University of Buenos Aires. As a young couple they moved to Provo, Utah, USA, where he received a master of business administration degree in 1994 from Brigham Young University. They and their growing family, which includes four children, lived in Chicago, Illinois, USA, as he worked for a multinational investment banking and financial services corporation. His banking career took his family back to Argentina for a few years and then to the Czech Republic and to the Sultanate of Oman. For the past two years, he and his family have lived in Lima, Peru, where he has been working with a Danish investment firm focused on microfinance. ■



## Elder Massimo De Feo

*General Authority Seventy*

Shortly before accepting his full-time mission call, Elder Massimo De Feo learned key lessons of sacrifice and love from his father, Vittorio De Feo.

The De Feo family had few financial resources, and neither Vittorio nor his wife, Velia, were Church members. But the elder De Feo respected his son’s desire to share the gospel.

“My father asked me, ‘Do you really want to do this?’” remembers Elder De Feo. “I said, ‘Yes, with all my heart I want to serve the Lord.’”

Vittorio promised to do all he could to help cover the cost of his son’s two years of service in the Italy Rome Mission.

“I considered that money to be sacred—it was the fruit of great sacrifice from a man who did not believe in the Church,” says Elder De Feo. “So I served my mission with all my heart, might, mind, and strength because I loved the Lord and I loved my father.”

Gospel principles such as sacrifice, hard work, family, and service have helped define Elder De Feo.

Born in Taranto, Italy, on December 14, 1960, Massimo De Feo learned of the Church at the age of nine when two missionaries knocked on the door of his home. Massimo and his older brother, Alberto, were soon baptized.

The De Feo boys enjoyed the love and support of devoted branch leaders as they attended Primary and, later, Mutual. Massimo also made lifelong friends with other youth in the branch—including fellow convert Loredana Galeandro, whom he would marry after his mission. They were sealed on August 14, 1984, in the Bern Switzerland Temple. The De Feos have three children.

Prior to becoming a General Authority Seventy, Elder De Feo lived in Rome and worked more than 30 years for the U.S. State Department. He has served as a branch president, district president, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■



## Elder Peter F. Meurs

General Authority Seventy

When he was young, Peter Meurs and his family lived next to a neighbor who ran a “fix anything” shop for farming equipment. Peter and his best friend spent much time in the shop tinkering with farm equipment and building minibikes and go-karts. Peter later studied mechanical engineering at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

While pursuing his studies at age 18, he informed the university that he needed a two-year break to serve a mission for the Church. He was told that he could defer for only one year; deferring longer meant he would lose his place in his program. He decided not to serve.

A short time later, however, he heard President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) proclaim during general conference that every worthy young man should serve a mission (see “Planning for a Full and Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 87).

“It was like he was speaking to me. It just went straight through me,” Elder Meurs recalls. He decided to serve, after all. One week before he left, he received a letter from the university allowing him to defer for two years.

Peter returned to school after his mission, but his missionary service, he says, was “the best education I’ve had.” The gospel taught him that “helping people be successful is the most important leadership principle.”

After completing his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, Elder Meurs worked as project engineer for Esso Australia and was a founding partner of WorleyParsons Limited. He recently served as director of development for Fortescue Metals Group.

Following his mission, he married a woman he calls his best friend, Maxine Evelyn Thatcher, on January 2, 1979, in the Hamilton New Zealand Temple. They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Elder Meurs—born on December 21, 1956, in Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia, to Frederik and Lois Jones Meurs—has served in many callings, including as elders quorum president, ward organist, ward and stake Young Men president, public affairs director, branch and district president, bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. ■



## Elder K. Brett Nattress

General Authority Seventy

Elder K. Brett Nattress and his wife, Shauna Lee Adamson Nattress, describe themselves as “imperfect people looking for perfect moments.”

They have found many such moments over the course of their lives—all are connected in some way to the Savior and the Atonement, says Elder Nattress.

Elder Nattress says he was born of goodly parents, David and Judy Sorensen Nattress, and remembers his mother reading the Book of Mormon to the family every day.

On one occasion he was home on a break from college. He was focused on upcoming finals and was not feeling right, though he didn’t feel physically ill.

“If you’re feeling well and don’t feel right,” his mother told him, “you need to go serve somebody.”

Brett threw a snow shovel in the back of the family pickup and went around shoveling the driveways of the widows in the ward. He felt much better.

“I was so focused on myself and the finals, I had forgotten that the real purpose of life is to serve others,” he says.

Elder Nattress was born on March 4, 1965, in Pocatello, Idaho, USA. The family moved to Lehi, Utah, USA, where he and his five siblings experienced life on a small family farm.

He met his future bride while they were both seniors at neighboring high schools. After he returned from serving in the California Sacramento Mission from 1984 to 1986, they were married in the Salt Lake Temple on April 24, 1987. They have seven children.

He attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and graduated from the University of Utah in 1990 with a degree in physical therapy. With his brother David, he cofounded Advanced Health Care Corp. in 2000.

Elder Nattress has served in numerous Church callings, including as ward Young Men president, bishop, stake Young Men president, stake president, and Area Seventy. At the time of his call, he was presiding over the newly formed Arizona Gilbert Mission. ■



## Elder S. Mark Palmer

*General Authority Seventy*

In 1992, time was a precious and limited commodity for Elder S. Mark Palmer and his wife, Jacqueline.

Elder Palmer was serving on the stake high council at the time. He was also working hard to build his professional career. Sister Palmer's time was stretched just as thin. The Palmers were raising six children in their Austin, Texas, USA, home—including a six-month-old baby boy.

When their stake president invited them to serve as workers at the Dallas Texas Temple, they didn't know how they could handle one more duty. But they accepted the call—and then prayerfully asked for the Lord's help.

Making a monthly bus trip to serve all day in the temple required sacrifice and careful planning. "But it blessed our lives enormously," says Elder Palmer.

Serving in the temple, he adds, prepared him spiritually for future priesthood callings. It also made him a better husband and father—and he found balance in his busy life.

"Going to the temple often helps you reset your priorities and be reminded of the covenants you have made," he says.

Stanley Mark Palmer was born on February 11, 1956, in Te Puke, New Zealand, to Kenneth and Jill Palmer. His family joined the Church when he was a young boy. He served a full-time mission in the New Zealand Wellington Mission.

After earning an undergraduate degree at the University of Auckland, he enrolled in the master of business administration program at Brigham Young University. While living in Provo, Utah, USA, he met a returned missionary named Jacqueline Wood on a blind date. They were married on December 18, 1981, in the Salt Lake Temple. The Palmers have six children and nine grandchildren.

Elder Palmer is the founder and president of SMP Ventures, a real estate development company. He has served as bishop, stake president, president of the Washington Spokane Mission (2009–12), interim president of the Australia Sydney South Mission (2014), and Area Seventy. ■



## Elder Gary B. Sabin

*General Authority Seventy*

Three Christmas trees stand out in the memory of Elder Gary B. Sabin.

The first was a beautiful Christmas tree of his youth. When Gary scaled the tree trying to reach a candy cane, the entire tree crashed to the ground.

The second was an evergreen branch he found as a missionary while serving in Belgium and the Netherlands from 1973 to 1975. Elder Sabin and his companion took the branch home to their apartment and propped it up around the Christmas cards they had received from home.

The third was a tree made of Christmas lights strung on the IV stand next to his daughter's hospital bed. One of three Sabin children to suffer from cystic fibrosis, his daughter had received a double-lung transplant one year after the death of her brother from the same disease.

"We have learned a lot more from our children than they have learned from us," says Elder Sabin.

As a General Authority he will remember the Christmas trees and the lessons he learned from them. Each tree highlights portions of his journey—from a young boy wanting a candy cane to a missionary teaching the plan of salvation to a father who relied on the plan and the Savior's love to sustain his family through mortal trials.

Gary Byron Sabin was born in Provo, Utah, USA, on April 7, 1954, to Marvin E. and Sylvia W. Sabin. He married Valerie Purdy in August 1976. They are the parents of five children; a sixth child was stillborn.

After graduating from Brigham Young University in Provo, Elder Sabin earned a master's degree in management from Stanford University.

Elder Sabin has served in numerous Church callings, including as bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. He has worked as a founder, chairman, and CEO of several companies, including Excel Realty Trust, Price Legacy, Excel Realty Holdings, and Excel Trust.

In 1993, Elder and Sister Sabin formed Sabin Children's Foundation, an organization dedicated to addressing the medical needs of children. ■



## Elder Evan A. Schmutz

*General Authority Seventy*

Elder Evan Antone Schmutz is grateful for the revelatory experiences entrusted to him by the Lord. His conversion to the gospel has been deepened through regular scripture study, service in the kingdom, and obedience to his commitments to God.

Born on June 6, 1954, in St. George, Utah, USA, to Richard and Miriam Schmutz, Elder Schmutz learned early about the power of prayer. As a Cub Scout he sold U.S. \$17 worth of tickets to a jamboree but couldn't find the money when it was time to turn it in. His mother encouraged him to pray, and the Lord revealed to him exactly where the money was. It was a strong confirmation of God's love for and awareness of him.

At 18, Elder Schmutz lost his older sister to an auto accident. It had a tremendous impact on him, bringing about significant spiritual experiences.

Shortly thereafter he was called on a mission and reported for training. He prayed for a personal witness of the gospel. While observing some instructors teaching about the First Vision, he says, "I received a testimony so powerful that I could hardly stay in the room."

After serving in the North Carolina Greensboro Mission, Elder Schmutz made a point of continuing to study the scriptures every day for the rest of his life. "I have found great joy, personal learning, and understanding through early morning study for a long, long time."

Elder Schmutz married Cindy Lee Sims on February 3, 1978, in the Provo Utah Temple. Elder Schmutz earned a degree in English and a juris doctorate from Brigham Young University. He worked professionally for several law firms from 1984 to 2016.

While managing the demands of five children, Elder Schmutz served as a high councilor, bishop, member of a stake presidency, president of the Philippines Cebu Mission (2011–14), missionary training center branch president, and as a member of the Fifth Quorum of Seventy. ■



## Sister Joy D. Jones

*Primary General President*

For Joy D. Jones, her loving parents were her heroes.

"I felt like my dad could do anything," Sister Jones says of her father, an electrician. Of her mother, she says, "My mom was an amazing woman" who made everything from the food the family ate to the clothes they wore—from scratch. "To me, she was a saint, and I wanted to grow up to be like her."

In addition to cherishing memories of her parents, Aldo Harmon and Eleanor Ellsworth Harmon, Sister Jones cherishes the childhood memory of listening to Elder Robert L. Backman as he spoke in a district conference in Oregon, USA. Elder Backman, now an emeritus General Authority Seventy, was a mission president at the time.

"I felt something very powerful when he was talking," Sister Jones says. "I felt something really different than I had felt before. . . . I am so grateful for that because I received a witness from the Spirit that the things he was saying were true."

Joy Diane Harmon was born on July 20, 1954, in The Dalles, Oregon. Both she and her future husband, Robert Bruce Jones, grew up in Oregon, but they met at Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, USA. They were married on August 14, 1974, in the Manti Utah Temple. They have five children and 17 grandchildren.

Soon after she earned an associate of science degree in family living, they moved to Portland, Oregon, and later to Santa Rosa, California, USA, where Brother Jones practiced as a chiropractic physician. Brother and Sister Jones felt impressed to move to Draper, Utah, 22 years ago. Sister Jones has enjoyed the blessing of living close to a temple ever since.

"The Jordan River Utah Temple became my sacred space," she says. "I have a testimony of the power of the temple and the peace and direction that it has brought me in my life."

Sister Jones has served as a ward Relief Society president and Primary president and as a counselor in ward and stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies. She served most recently on the Primary general board. ■



## Sister Jean B. Bingham

*First Counselor, Primary General Presidency*

For almost six years, Sister Jean Barrus Bingham has loved serving in her calling on the Primary general board. She has visited the homes of members and attended Primaries, witnessing the strong faith of Latter-day Saints—especially the Primary children—around the world.

Sister Bingham, who was recently sustained as the first counselor in the Primary general presidency, has spent much of her life teaching, nurturing, and loving children. Whether it has been with her younger siblings growing up, her own two daughters, her foster daughters, grandchildren, visitors to her home, or those she has met as a member of the Primary general board, she has been an advocate and source of strength for many.

“Every child has wonderful potential, and if we see them through Heavenly Father’s eyes, we can help them become all that He has designed them to be,” she says.

Born on June 10, 1952, in Provo, Utah, USA, to Edith Joy Clark and Robert Rowland Barrus, Sister Bingham is the third of nine children. When she was three months old, her family moved to Indiana so her father could continue his schooling. In the first six years of her life, Sister Bingham and her family lived in four states.

After graduating from high school in New Jersey, Sister Bingham moved to Provo, Utah, to attend Brigham Young University. In her second year there, she met her future husband, Bruce Bryan Bingham, a farm boy from Illinois who was baptized as a teenager with his parents. They were married on December 22, 1972, in the Provo Utah Temple.

Her lifetime of Church service has included time as a ward Primary president, Young Women president, counselor in a Relief Society presidency, stake Young Women president, temple worker, and early-morning seminary teacher.

“The pattern I have seen in her life, over our 43 years of marriage, is a consistent adherence to the promptings of the Spirit,” Brother Bingham says of his wife. “She has, over and over, done what the Lord wanted her to do.” ■



## Sister Bonnie H. Cordon

*Second Counselor, Primary General Presidency*

Throughout her childhood in southeast Idaho, USA, Bonnie Hillam Cordon learned many important life lessons. Working, playing, and living on a farm taught her self-reliance, hard work, and “not to be afraid to try things,” says the new second counselor in the Primary general presidency.

The most important lesson, however, came from her parents, Harold and Carol Rasmussen Hillam, who taught her that with the help of the Lord, she could do anything. “There are no limits,” her father would say.

Sister Cordon relied on that knowledge as a newly called missionary in Lisbon, Portugal, struggling to learn Portuguese. “I was on my knees a lot asking for a miracle. But because of my father, I had learned that I could do hard things.”

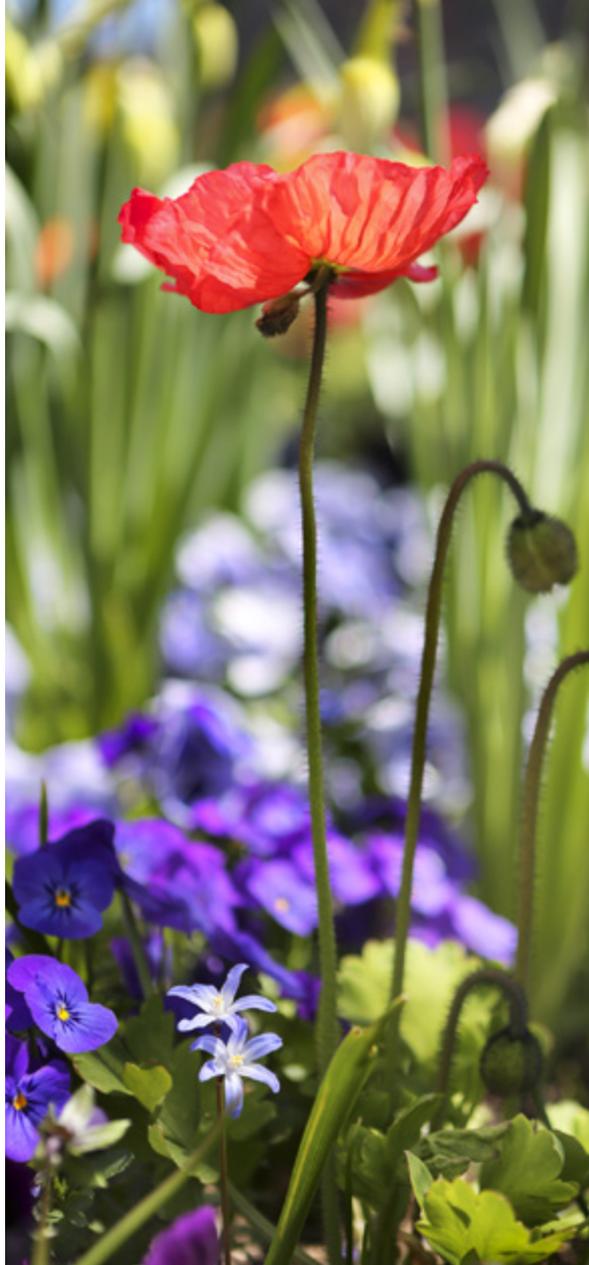
After much prayer, work, and patience, she slowly became fluent in Portuguese, which blessed her many years later when she and her husband were called to serve in Curitiba, Brazil.

“It’s interesting how the Lord prepares us and builds us, a little at a time,” she says. “It always makes more sense when we look in the rearview mirror. We just have to have faith.”

Bonnie Hillam was born on March 11, 1964, in Idaho Falls, Idaho. After her mission she studied education at Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, USA. While there she became good friends with Derek Lane Cordon. Their friendship blossomed into romance, and the two were married on April 25, 1986, in the Salt Lake Temple. They have four children—three boys and one girl—and three grandsons.

Through the years they have served in many Church callings. She served with her husband as he presided over the Brazil Curitiba Mission from 2010 to 2013, and she has served as a stake Young Women president, nursery leader, and seminary teacher, and in ward Young Women, Relief Society, and Primary organizations.

In her new assignment, Sister Cordon says she hopes to teach one essential truth to the Primary children of the Church: “Heavenly Father loves them.” ■



## LDS.org Conference Section Redesigned

Finding and studying general conference addresses online will now be easier than ever, thanks to the redesign of the general conference section of [LDS.org](http://LDS.org). Features include:

- Quick identification of desired addresses, with photographs of each speaker located next to the title of the address.
- A single navigation bar atop all pages, allowing (1) access to all general conferences from 1971 to the present, (2) the ability to search by the speaker's name, and (3) the ability to search for talks according to gospel topics.
- Simplified presentation of each individual address, incorporating icons at the top of the page for those who wish to listen, download, print, or share.

The new design works well for desktop, laptop, and mobile device users. The changes are already incorporated in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and will be made available in more than 80 languages in coming months. ■

*Take a look at the changes at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).*

## New Seventies, Primary Presidency Sustained

Eleven new General Authority Seventies, 62 Area Seventies, and a new Primary general presidency were sustained during the Saturday afternoon session of April 2016 general conference.

Called as new General Authority Seventies were Elders W. Mark Bassett, Mark A. Bragg, Weatherford T. Clayton, Valeri V. Cordon, Joaquin E. Costa, Massimo De Feo, Peter F. Meurs,

K. Brett Nattress, S. Mark Palmer, Gary B. Sabin, and Evan A. Schmutz.

Joy D. Jones was sustained as Primary general president, with Jean B. Bingham as first counselor and Bonnie H. Cordon as second counselor.

Biographies of these leaders are found starting on page 131. ■

## New Missions Announced

Three new missions have been created, two in Africa and one in Asia. They are the Democratic Republic of the Congo Mbuji-Mayi Mission, the Nigeria Owerri Mission, and the Vietnam Hanoi Mission. Each of these new missions will be created by realigning boundaries of existing missions and will be operational on or before July 1, 2016. ■

## New Ministering Resources

Four new topics have been added to Ministering Resources ([ministering.lds.org](http://ministering.lds.org)) to support stake and ward leaders as they minister to the following groups: caregivers, missionaries who return home early, couples who struggle with marital conflict, and individuals who struggle with mental illness.

Members of the ward council have access to these resources to help them learn how to better help members. The resources are available in English and will soon be translated into nine additional languages. ■

## Transforming Gospel Learning and Teaching

Learning, living, and teaching the gospel are critical to our personal growth and are essential parts of our Sabbath day worship. As part of the ongoing effort to help members grow as they build faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and improve Sabbath worship, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles introduced during general conference leadership meetings a new effort to improve teaching and learning the gospel. Members are invited to:

1. Adopt the principles in *Teaching in the Savior's Way*. This new manual focuses on the simple but powerful principles the Master Teacher used. The goal for every teacher, as stated in the manual, is "to teach the pure doctrine of the gospel, by the Spirit, in order to help God's children build their faith in the Savior and become more like Him."

Although the manual is intended for those with a calling to teach, anyone will find it useful in learning to teach the way the Savior taught. Parents can benefit from applying the principles within the booklet when teaching at home.

2. Participate in teacher council meetings. Teacher council meetings are not the same as previous teacher improvement courses. As councils, these meetings will provide opportunities for teachers to discuss together and learn from each other the principles of *Teaching in the Savior's Way*. These meetings, to be held once a month during the Sunday block of meetings, will be rolled out worldwide throughout 2016.

3. Be diligent gospel learners. Members and teachers alike are encouraged to be diligent gospel learners at home. Learning and living the gospel during the week prepares members to participate in Sunday lessons, which can create more meaningful learning experiences for everyone.

As children of our Heavenly Father, we all have the potential to become like Him. Anyone willing to learn and live the gospel can become more like our heavenly parents and return to live with them. Worship at church and in the home helps us build that kind of faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. ■

Find the new manual and learn more at [teaching.lds.org](http://teaching.lds.org).



## More Scriptures Editions Available

Scriptures have recently been made available in several languages.

In Portuguese, a printed edition of the Bible and an updated edition of the triple combination are now available. A digital edition has been available since September 2015 at [asescrituras.lds.org](http://asescrituras.lds.org) and on the Gospel Library mobile app. Additional information is available in Portuguese at [bibliasagrada.lds.org](http://bibliasagrada.lds.org).

In Spanish, updated editions of the standard works are available online at [escrituras.lds.org](http://escrituras.lds.org) and in the Gospel Library mobile app. Printed copies will begin to be available by the end of June 2016.

The new triple combination in Marshallese, Xhosa, and Zulu and the

Book of Mormon in Chuukese are now printed and available through distribution centers and at [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org). They are also available online and in the Gospel Library mobile app.

Scripture translations in 16 additional languages, previously available only in print, were published on [LDS.org](http://LDS.org) and in the Gospel Library app: the triple combination in Afrikaans, Armenian, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Fante, Igbo, Latvian, Lithuanian, Shona, and Swahili; and the Book of Mormon in Hindi, Hmong, Serbian, Tok Pisin, Twi, and Yapese. ■

## Patriarchal Blessings Online

New online tools will enable members to have easier access to patriarchal blessings. Members can request a copy of their patriarchal blessing in digital form and request a copy of blessings from deceased ancestors (received via mail or email). Priesthood leaders can submit online recommendations for blessings, and patriarchs can view recommendations for blessings and submit digital text of blessings after the blessings are given.

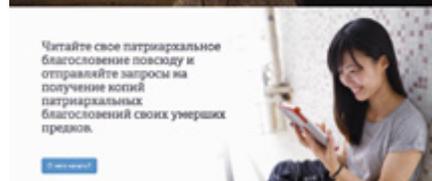
These tools are now available to more than 50 percent of the Church's stakes, in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. By next year they should be available in 14 languages and to all stakes. ■

To learn more or to request a copy of your patriarchal blessing, go to [apps.lds.org/pbrequest](http://apps.lds.org/pbrequest).

## Teachings for Our Time

From May 2016 through October 2016, Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society lessons on fourth Sundays are prepared from one or more talks given in the April 2016 general conference. In October 2016, talks may be selected from either the April or October general conference. Stake and district presidents choose which talks will be used in their areas, or they may delegate this responsibility to bishops and branch presidents. ■

The talks are available in many languages at [conference.lds.org](http://conference.lds.org).





## Refugee Relief: “I Was a Stranger”

With the approval of the First Presidency, the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary are inviting women of all ages to give service to refugees in their neighborhoods and local communities through a relief effort titled “I Was a Stranger” (see Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 25:35).

“There are many among us who can be blessed by friendship, mentoring, and other Christlike love and service,” said Sister Linda K. Burton, Relief Society general president. “Giving such service is a fundamental part of the gospel.

“I am reminded of the scripture that says we should not be ‘forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained

angels unawares’ [Hebrews 13:2],” Sister Burton said. “We encourage sisters to prayerfully seek opportunities to serve and to consider finding ways to support trusted local community and civic organizations. You may find some helpful ideas at [IWAsAStranger.lds.org](http://IWAsAStranger.lds.org), and you can share experiences by sending an email to [IWAsAStranger@ldschurch.org](mailto:IWAsAStranger@ldschurch.org).”

A letter from the First Presidency concerning “I Was a Stranger” was sent to stake, ward, and branch councils at the end of March. Guidelines for leaders accompanied the letter. “Sisters may participate in this effort when time and circumstances allow,” the letter counsels, “making sure that no one is expected to ‘run

faster than [she] has strength’ and that all ‘things are done in wisdom and order’ (Mosiah 4:27).” A First Presidency letter dated October 27, 2015, also encouraged all members to render Christlike service to those in need.

A letter from the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidents giving more information about “I Was a Stranger” was also recently distributed in meetings of those organizations. ■



## 150 Temples Operating

**D**uring the Sunday morning session of the conference, President Thomas S. Monson announced plans to build four additional temples: in Belém, Brazil; Quito, Ecuador; Lima, Peru; and Harare, Zimbabwe.

Since the last general conference, these events involving temples have occurred:

### Dedications and Rededications

With the dedication of the Provo City Center Temple in Provo, Utah, USA, the Church now has 150 temples in operation around the world. The temple was dedicated on March 20, 2016, days before the 180th anniversary of the March 27, 1836, dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the first temple of the Restoration.

Three other temples were dedicated or rededicated: the Montreal Quebec

Temple in November 2015, the Tijuana Mexico Temple in December 2015, and the Suva Fiji Temple in February 2016.

Dedications are also scheduled for the Sapporo Japan Temple, August 21, 2016; the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple, September 18, 2016; the Fort Collins Colorado Temple, October 16, 2016; the Star Valley Wyoming Temple, October 30, 2016; and the Hartford Connecticut Temple, November 20, 2016.

The renovated Freiberg Germany Temple will be rededicated on September 4, 2016.

### Construction and Renovations

Construction continues on the Concepción Chile Temple, Paris France Temple, Rome Italy Temple, and the following temples in the United States: Cedar City Utah, Meridian Idaho, and



Tucson Arizona. Completion dates range from 2016 through 2018. Full-scale construction is pending for the Fortaleza Brazil Temple. The Frankfurt Germany, Jordan River Utah, and Idaho Falls Idaho Temples are undergoing renovation.

### Groundbreakings

Groundbreakings were held for the Lisbon Portugal Temple in December 2015 and the Barranquilla Colombia Temple and the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of the Congo Temple in February 2016. The Durban South Africa Temple groundbreaking took place on April 9, 2016.

### Planning and Preparation

These temples have been announced but are still in planning and preparation stages: Abidjan Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), Arequipa Peru, Bangkok Thailand, Port-au-Prince Haiti, Rio de Janeiro Brazil, Urdaneta Philippines, and Winnipeg Manitoba. ■

For more about temples, go to [temples.lds.org](http://temples.lds.org).





## Prophets and Apostles Minister

As “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23), prophets and apostles continue a worldwide ministry. Since the last general conference, members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have, in addition to other assignments:

- Used social media and Face to Face events to reach out to youth and young adults (see [lds.org/youth/activities](http://lds.org/youth/activities)).
- Spoken at anti-pornography and family history conferences.
- Spoken at universities about becoming “true millennials” and in defense of faith and moral values.
- Met with Church members and leaders, government officials, and religious leaders in Argentina, Botswana, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Mozambique, Peru, the Philippines, Uruguay, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. ■

To learn more about the ministry of prophets and apostles, go to [prophets.lds.org](http://prophets.lds.org).

## Church Growing in Africa

Growth of the Church in Africa has continued at a strong rate for the past 30 years. At the beginning of 2016, there were 1,600 LDS congregations in Africa, with more than half a million members of the Church—that is 11 times more wards and branches and 20 times more members there than in 1985.

In 2015 the Church created 17 new stakes throughout Africa.

Leaders attribute the growth, at least in part, to the gospel focus on family. João Castenheira, a stake president in Maputo, Mozambique, says, “The members look for a church that brings them happiness, and the restored gospel of Christ brings happiness to families.”

“I really feel this is Africa’s time,” says Elder Edward Dube of the Seventy, a native of Zimbabwe. “The Lord’s hand is in the continent.” ■



## Doing Good around the World

Latter-day Saints continue to follow the Savior's example of "[going] about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Here are some recent examples.

In Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Church members and friends from nine countries in the Middle East—native to six continents—gathered for a conference and interfaith humanitarian project. They assembled and distributed 8,500 hygiene kits and food packages.

In Uganda, two dentists and three oral hygienists, all Latter-day Saints, spent a week filling cavities, extracting and cleaning teeth, teaching good oral hygiene, and instructing local dentists

and dental students on best practices.

In Malaysia, Church members focused on the family during the celebration of the Chinese New Year, an event that traditionally includes visiting burial sites as ancestors are remembered, honored, and revered.

In Thailand, members ages 18 to 35 gathered in Bangkok for a cooking competition and a service project.

In Fiji, members and missionaries provided relief efforts to victims of Cyclone Winston. Church leaders worked with governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide food, water, tents, hygiene packs, and other emergency supplies. ■



## Changes to Family History and Temple Service

New tools and procedures will help individuals and families doing family history and temple service:

- Members can now print temple ordinance cards at home on white paper and bring them to the temple.
- Temples have a family-priority time enabling families to schedule a time to perform ordinances together without a long wait.
- Recent converts performing proxy baptisms for the first time can schedule an appointment so the temple can be prepared to receive and welcome them.
- A new limited-use recommend can be created online and printed by priesthood leaders. The recommend is activated when printed and is valid when signed by the member and the bishop. ■



*The Presiding Bishopric*

*Dean M. Davies, First Counselor; Gérard Caussé, Presiding Bishop; W. Christopher Waddell, Second Counselor*



“May we maintain the courage to defy the consensus. May we ever choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong,” said President Thomas S. Monson during the 186th Annual General Conference of the Church. “As we contemplate the decisions we make in our lives each day—whether to make this choice or that choice—if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice.”

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