Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-fifth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 1 and 2, 2005

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Report of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 2005. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 1, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. He conducted the Sunday morning session. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

Presidency of the Seventy: Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

First Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koelliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, James M. Dunn, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Ronald T. Halverson, Keith K. Hilbig, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

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SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Redeemer of Israel." President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you to this, the first general session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Church's official Internet site.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Redeemer of Israel" and will now favor us with "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "He, Watching over Israel."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The growth of the kingdom of God

My brothers and sisters, I add my welcome to you to this great world conference of the Church. The spacious Conference Center in Salt Lake City is filled to capacity, and other halls in this area are likewise filled. We speak beyond here to you in many lands and climes. We welcome you, every one. We love you as brethren and sisters.

I was on a mission in the British Isles more than 70 years ago. Part of the British Empire was still intact. That empire was the most widely extended political family of nations on the face of the earth. It was said that the sun never set on the British Empire. The Union Jack flew around the world.

Great good came of that empire in many areas. But there was also tremen-

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dous suffering. It came as a result of conquest, oppression, war, and conflict. The remains of British soldiers were buried in graves around the earth.

Now it is all gone. Rudyard Kipling wrote of its demise in his "Recessional":

> Far-called, our navies melt away;
> On dune and headland sinks the fire.
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
> ["God of Our Fathers, Known of Old," *Hymns,* no. 80]

There is now another empire. It is the empire of Christ the Lord. It is the empire of the restored gospel. It is the kingdom of God. And the sun never sets on this kingdom. It has not come of conquest, of conflict, or war. It has come of peaceful persuasion, of testimony, of teaching, one here and another there.

As all of you are aware, this year we commemorate the 200th birthday of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the 175th anniversary of the organization of the Church.

The growth of the Church from its infancy to its present stature is phenomenal, and we have only scratched the surface.

Growth in temple building and service

The building of temples is an indication of this growth. We now have 122 operating in many parts of the world. Our people are being greatly blessed by these. Every individual who qualifies for a temple recommend is also qualified as a faithful Latter-day Saint. He or she will be a full-tithe payer, will observe the Word of Wisdom, will have good family relationships, and will be a better citizen of the community. Temple service is the end product of all of our teaching and activity.

Last year 32 million ordinances were performed in the temples. This is more than have been performed in any previous year. At the moment, some of our temples are crowded to capacity and beyond. The needs and desires of our faithful Saints must be met.

We have previously announced a new temple in the southeast quadrant of the Salt Lake Valley. We have two other excellent sites in the west and southwest areas of the valley through the kindness of the developers of these properties. The first one on which we will build is in the so-called Daybreak development, and this morning we make public announcement of that. You may ask why we favor Utah so generously. It is because the degree of activity requires it. But we are also moving forward with new temples in Rexburg and Twin Falls, Idaho; in Sacramento, California; in Helsinki, Finland; in Panama City, Panama; in Curitiba, Brazil; and another which I had better not name at this time because it has not yet been announced but soon will be. There are yet others under consideration. On all of those I have named, we have the property, and work in various degrees of completion is going forward.

We are grateful for the consecrations of our people which make all of this possible.

Technology aids temple proxy work

One of the most troublesome aspects of our temple activity is that as we get more and more temples scattered across the earth, there is duplication of effort in proxy work. People in various nations simultaneously work on the same family lines and come up with the same names. They do not know that those in other areas are doing the same thing. We therefore have been engaged for some time in a very difficult undertaking. To avoid such duplication, the solution lies in complex computer technology. Preliminary indications are that it will work, and if this is so, it will be a truly remarkable thing with worldwide implications.

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Satellite transmission of conferences

Now, as many of you know, we have been conducting stake conferences through the use of satellite transmission. The Church has grown so large that it is no longer possible for members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities to visit individual stakes, except for reorganizations and divisions. Satellite transmission has made it possible for us to speak in Salt Lake City and be heard and seen in stake centers and other facilities around the globe. It is a miraculous and wonderful thing.

It is in this same way that many of you are participating in our conference today. We are joined together as a vast international family in music and prayer and in the instruction and testimony of our Brethren.

Thank you for all you do, you wonderful Latter-day Saints. Thank you for the tremendous efforts of Area Seventies, of bishoprics and stake presidencies, of auxiliary leaders, of temple and mission presidencies, and the many, many, many more who give so generously of time, effort, and means to advance the kingdom of God on the earth.

I pray, my brethren and sisters, that the choicest blessings of heaven may rest upon you, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "He, Watching over Israel."

President Monson

We shall now hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric. The choir and congregation will then join in singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

We will then hear from Sister Susan W. Tanner, Young Women general president. Following her remarks, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us. The choir will then sing "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

Elder L. Tom Perry

Challenge to read the Book of Mormon

I look forward each month to the arrival of this wonderful magazine, the *Ensign*. It fortifies me with messages from the First Presidency, which are included in each issue. The August issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona* brought with it a challenge from President Hinckley to read or reread the Book of Mormon before the end of the year.

Why does President Hinckley believe reading the Book of Mormon will be so beneficial to each of us? He states:

"Its appeal is as timeless as truth, as universal as mankind. It is the only book that contains within its covers a promise that by divine power the reader may know with certainty of its truth.

"Its origin is miraculous; when the story of that origin is first told to one unfamiliar with it, it is almost unbelievable. But the book is here to be felt and handled and read. No one can dispute its presence. . . .

"No other written testament so clearly illustrates the fact that when men [and women] and nations walk in the fear of God and in obedience to His commandments, they prosper and grow, but when they disregard Him and His word, there comes a decay that, unless arrested by righteousness, leads to impotence and death"

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("A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign,* Aug. 2005, 4–5).

A voice of warning to this generation

Why is the reading of the Book of Mormon so important to us today? It is because the major writers of the Book of Mormon fully understood that their writings were primarily for the people of a future generation rather than for the people of their own generation. Moroni wrote to our generation, "I speak unto you as if ye were present" (Mormon 8:35). The prophet Nephi stated:

"Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand" (2 Nephi 25:21).

The Book of Mormon is a voice of warning to this generation. See how vividly it describes conditions on the earth today:

"And no one need say [these records] shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.

"And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands;

"And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.

"Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity" (Mormon 8:26–31).

A book written to bless us in our day

President Ezra Taft Benson reaffirmed the fact that the Book of Mormon is of particular value to our time when he said:

"The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 94; or *Ensign,* May 1975, 63).

How often we read the record primarily as a history of a fallen people, failing to remember that it was compiled by inspired prophets for the purpose of helping us come unto Christ. The major writers of the Book of Mormon did not intend it to be a history book at all. In fact, Jacob said that his brother Nephi commanded him that he "should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people" (Jacob 1:2).

Each time we read the book we should probably ask ourselves: "Why did these writers choose these particular stories or events to include in the record? What value are they for us today?"

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Among the lessons we learn from the Book of Mormon are the cause and effect of war and under what conditions it is justified. It tells of evils and dangers of secret combinations, which are built up to get power and gain over the people. It tells of the reality of Satan and gives an indication of some of the methods he uses. It advises us on the proper use of wealth. It tells us of the plain and precious truths of the gospel and the reality and divinity of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for all mankind. It informs us of the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days. It tells us of the purpose and principles of missionary work. It warns us against pride, indifference, procrastination, the dangers of false traditions, hypocrisy, and unchastity.

Have a specific plan for study

Now it is up to us to study the Book of Mormon and learn of its principles and apply them in our lives.

The Book of Mormon begins with a great story on the importance of families having and using the scriptures. Lehi, a prophet-father, was warned that there were people who were seeking to take away his life because of his declarations concerning their wickedness. He was instructed to take his family and flee.

"And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:4).

After journeying some distance, Lehi had a dream in which the Lord said that they should not journey farther without returning to Jerusalem and obtaining the record of their fathers which was engraven on plates of brass. These plates also contained the words of the prophets and commandments of the Lord. The assignment was given to Lehi's four sons to make the journey back to obtain the record.

Upon arriving at Jerusalem, they cast lots to decide who would go to the house of Laban and ask for the brass plates. The lot fell to Laman. He approached Laban, "and behold, it came to pass that Laban was angry, and thrust him out from his presence; and he would not that he should have the records. Wherefore, he said unto him: Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee" (1 Nephi 3:13). Laman escaped with his life but without the brass plates.

One thing that strikes me about this first attempt is that the brothers did not seem to have a good plan. This teaches us an important lesson that we can apply to our study of the scriptures. Let us show our commitment to reading the Book of Mormon by approaching our study with a specific plan.

In his article in the *Ensign* and *Liahona,* President Hinckley issued "a challenge to members of the Church throughout the world and to our friends everywhere to read or reread the Book of Mormon." Then he offered us a plan to accomplish the challenge: "If you will read a bit more than one and one-half chapters a day, you will be able to finish the book before the end of this year" (*Ensign,* Aug. 2005, 6). August and September are now past history. According to President Hinckley's plan, we should be reading now in the book of Alma —somewhere between chapters 4 and 12. Are you ahead of schedule or behind?

Blessings of reading the Book of Mormon

When the first attempt to get the brass plates failed, Nephi's brothers wanted to give up and return to their family in the wilderness. But Nephi encouraged them to keep trying and proposed another approach to obtain the record:

"Let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down to the land of our father's inheritance, for behold he left gold and silver, and all manner of riches. And all this he hath done because of the commandments of the Lord. . . .

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"And it came to pass that we went in unto Laban, and desired him that he would give unto us the records . . . , for which we would give unto him our gold, and our silver, and all our precious things" (1 Nephi 3:16, 24).

Nephi's example teaches us that the blessings of the scriptures are far more valuable than property and other worldly things. Pursuing the things of the world can sometimes give us momentary pleasures but not lasting joy and happiness. When we seek after the things of the Spirit, the rewards are eternal and will bring us the satisfaction we seek through this mortal experience.

President Hinckley has encouraged us to read the Book of Mormon to lift us above the things of the world, to enjoy the things of the Lord. He said, "Without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God" (*Ensign,* Aug. 2005, 6). These blessings are far more valuable than material possessions.

Approach the challenge with faith

When Nephi and his brothers offered to exchange their wealth for the brass plates, Laban stole their property and tried to take their lives. Thoroughly discouraged after yet another failed attempt, Laman and Lemuel again wanted to give up on what they felt was an impossible task. Nephi, however, was unwavering in his commitment to obey the Lord's commandments. He reasoned with his brothers this way: "Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?" (1 Nephi 4:1).

Approaching the assignment with faith in the Lord brought the desired result. As Nephi went forward to obtain the record, being led by the Spirit, Laban was delivered into his hands. Through his faith and obedience, Nephi secured for himself and his family the blessings of having the scriptures. Now, with the brass plates in their possession, Nephi and his brothers could return to their father in the wilderness and continue their journey.

If we will approach President Hinckley's challenge with faith, we have the sure promise of our prophet of the blessings we will receive resulting from our study of the Book of Mormon. We will find, as Nephi and his family did, that the scriptures are "desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us" (1 Nephi 5:21). We can also receive the blessing Moroni promised as he closed his writings of the Book of Mormon:

"Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God" (Moroni 10:32).

Read the book to honor Joseph Smith

This is the year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon provides convincing evidence of the Prophet Joseph's ministry and of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. President Hinckley, in the last general conference in April, said this about the Book of Mormon:

"It is a tangible thing that can be handled, that can be read, that can be tested. . . . I would think that the whole Christian

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world would reach out and welcome it and embrace it as a vibrant testimony. It represents another great and basic contribution which came as a revelation to the Prophet [Joseph]" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 84; or *Ensign,* May 2005, 82).

I pray that each of us will read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year in response to the challenge of our current prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, to honor the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. May we have a plan that we will follow in faith to taste and be filled with that which is of infinite and eternal value, even the word of God found in the Book of Mormon, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

Gospel provides answers to all problems

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation where you were suddenly required to remain silent while your point of view was misconstrued and belittled? Such a thing happened to me almost 25 years ago, and the frustration of that unfinished conversation has remained to this day.

As mission president, I had been invited, with others from the Church, to meet with the mayor of one of the cities in our mission. He was cordial as he welcomed us into his office. Our conversation touched upon concerns of the day. Eventually he asked why the Church was doing missionary work in his city.

This was not unexpected. An impression had come to me some weeks before that he would ask this question and what my response should be. I replied, "The gospel of Jesus Christ provides answers and solutions to all of the world's problems, including those confronting the good people of your city. This is why we are here."

I fully expected the mayor would want to know more. Instead, his mood changed. Skepticism then disdain took control of his countenance. He blustered about my naive approach to challenges in the world and brought our visit to an abrupt close. No further explanation was permitted.

This morning I should like to complete that conversation. I hope the good mayor is listening because what follows is vital to a troubled world.

The gospel's teachings about calamities

We are sobered by the terrible calamities of recent years. They occur with increasing frequency and intensity. Natural forces are ferocious in their scope, human assaults are merciless in their carnage, and unchecked appetites are leading to licentiousness, crime, and family decay approaching epic proportions. The tsunami in southern Asia and hurricanes in the United States, with their terrible tolls, are the most recent calamities capturing our attention. Hearts and hands from around the world reach out to those so profoundly affected. For a brief period differences yield to compassion and love.

We are indebted to those who, when buffeted by calamities, remind us of man's dependence upon God. A widow in a refugee camp, anguishing over the brutal slaying of her sons, weeps the words, "I must not lose my faith." Survivors, overwhelmed by Katrina's fury, send out the plea, "Pray for us."[1]

Causes of such calamities are the subject of seemingly endless debate. Commentators, politicians, scientists, and many others have opinions as to the causes.

The Lord Jesus Christ said concerning the restoration of His gospel:

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"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

"Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled."[2]

Let us turn our attention to the reasons or purposes for such calamities. Fortunately, debate is not needed here because we have the fulness of Christ's gospel on which we can rely. Search the words of the prophets in the Book of Mormon and the Bible; read the teachings of Jesus Christ in the 24th chapter of Matthew;[3] study the Lord's latter-day revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.[4] Herein we learn the purposes of God in such matters.

Adversity can bring us to the Savior

Calamities are a form of adversity, and adversity is a necessary part of Heavenly Father's plan for the happiness of His children.

If our hearts are right before God, adversity will school us, help us overcome our carnal nature, and nurture the divine spark within us. Were it not for adversity, we would not know to "choose the better part."[5] Adversity helps us see where we need to repent, to bring into subjection baser instincts, to embrace righteousness and enjoy "peace of conscience."[6]

The more we cleave unto righteousness, the more we enjoy the protecting care of our Savior. He is the Creator and Lord of the universe. He will calm the winds and the waves.[7] His teachings and Atonement will heal the repentant soul. He is the Messiah or Deliverer, and because of Him, each of us can be in charge of his or her personal world, even as tragedies beset us. Listen to these truths:

"The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that *they are redeemed* from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; *to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.*

"Wherefore, *men are free according to the flesh;* and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."[8]

We will do well to remember that the devil is the destroyer.

We each control our personal world

It is true that in this life we are only as free as our mortal circumstances allow. We may not be able to stay the course of war in distant lands or with our puny arm hold back the tempests that rage or run freely when our body is imprisoned by failing health. *But it is verily true that such things do not ultimately control our personal world. We do!*

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."[9]

And so, most honorable mayor, the gospel of Jesus Christ does provide answers to all of the world's problems, *precisely because it provides solutions to the ills of every living soul.*

Every time calamity strikes, there is a corresponding sacred obligation that falls upon each of us to become better. We should ask ourselves, "What part of my life needs to change so that the weight of chastisement need not be felt?"

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In the scriptures the Lord makes clear what He expects of us as such judgments descend. He says: "Gird up your loins and be prepared. Behold, the kingdom is yours, and the enemy shall not overcome."[10]

Righteousness makes us strong, prepared

The Church and its members are commanded to be self-reliant and independent.[11] Preparation begins with faith, which enables us to weather vicissitudes as they come. We see earth life as a preparatory journey. Faith in the Lord and His gospel conquers fear and begets spirituality.

Spirituality grows as we "pray, and . . . walk uprightly before the Lord."[12] It is "the consciousness of victory over self and of communion with the Infinite."[13]

Faith, spirituality, and obedience produce a prepared and self-reliant people. As we obey the covenant of tithing, we are shielded from want and the power of the destroyer. As we obey the fast and give generously to care for others, our prayers are heard and family fidelity increases. Similar blessings come as we obey the counsel of the prophets and live within our means, avoid unnecessary debt, and set aside sufficient of life's necessities to sustain ourselves and our families for at least a year. This may not always be easy, but let us do our "very best,"[14] and our stores shall not fail—there shall be "enough and to spare."[15]

And again the Lord says, "Be ye strong from henceforth; fear not, for the kingdom is yours."[16]

Strength and resiliency come by righteous living. One is not righteous who is a saint on Sunday and a slacker the remainder of the week. Unchecked appetites are destructive and cause men to "trifle . . . with sacred things."[17] President Brigham Young taught, "The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is, that they have not done as well as they knew how."[18]

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the pathway to righteousness. Tragedies never triumph where personal righteousness prevails. Let us, therefore, heed the counsel of the Apostle Paul:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."[19]

Our grand millennial mission

Our duty as Latter-day Saints is to prepare ourselves, this earth, and its inhabitants for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being prepared and being strong as the gospel teaches ensure happiness here and hereafter and make this "grand millennial mission" possible.

Our beloved President Hinckley has admonished: "Now, my brethren and sisters, the time has come for us to stand a little taller, to lift our eyes and stretch our minds to a greater comprehension and understanding of the grand millennial mission of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation, knowing well the meaning, the breadth, and the importance of our mission. It is a time to do what is right regardless of the consequences that might follow. It is a time to be found keeping the commandments. It is a season to reach out with kindness and love to those in distress and to those who are wandering in darkness and pain. It is a time to be considerate and good, decent and courteous toward one another in all of our relationships—in other words, to become more Christlike."[20]

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This admonition by the Lord's prophet points our way through these turbulent times. To all who suffer, our hearts reach out to you. May Heavenly Father, in His infinite mercy, make light your burdens and fill your lives with that peace which "passeth all understanding."[21] You are not alone. Our love and faith and prayers are joined with yours. Press forward in righteousness, and all will be well.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Evan Thomas, "The Lost City," *Newsweek,* Sept. 12, 2005, 44.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 37.
3. See also Joseph Smith—Matthew.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 45; 88; 101; 133.
5. "Father in Heaven, We Do Believe," *Hymns,* no. 180.
6. Mosiah 4:3.
7. See Matthew 8:25–27; Mark 4:39.
8. 2 Nephi 2:26–27; italics added.
9. *History of the Church,* 5:134–35.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 38:9.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:13–14; *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), 5.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 68:28.
13. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1969, 8; or *Improvement Era,* Dec. 1969, 31.
14. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Standing Strong and Immovable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting,* Jan. 10, 2004, 21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 38:15.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 6:12.
18. *Discourses of Brigham Young,* sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 89.
19. Romans 13:12–14.
20. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 95; or *Ensign,* May 1995, 71; see also Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 3; or *Ensign,* May 2005, 4.
21. Philippians 4:7.

The choir and congregation sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

Sister Susan W. Tanner

Eternal importance of our bodies

I have just returned from a visit where I welcomed into the world our newest little granddaughter, Elizabeth Claire Sandberg. She is perfect! I was awestruck, as I am each time a baby is born, with her fingers, toes, hair, beating heart, and distinctive family characteristics—nose, chin, dimples. Her older brothers and sister were equally excited and fascinated by their tiny, perfect little sister. They seemed to sense a holiness in their home from the presence of a celestial spirit newly united with a pure physical body.

In the premortal realm we learned that the body is part of God's great plan of happiness for us. As it states in the family proclamation, "Spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102). In fact, we "shouted for joy" to be part of this plan (Job 38:7).

Why were we so excited? We understood eternal truths about our bodies. We knew that our bodies would be in the image of God. We knew that our bodies would house our spirits. We also understood that our bodies would be subject to pain, illness, disabilities, and temptation. But we were willing, even eager, to accept these challenges because we knew that only with spirit and element inseparably connected could we progress to be-

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come like our Heavenly Father (see D&C 130:22) and "receive a fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33).

With the fulness of the gospel on the earth, we are again privileged to know these truths about the body. Joseph Smith taught: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the Celestial Kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The Devil has no body, and herein is his punishment" (*The Words of Joseph Smith,* ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], 60).

Satan's deceptions about the body

Satan learned these same eternal truths about the body, and yet his punishment is that he does not have one. Therefore he tries to do everything he can to get us to abuse or misuse this precious gift. He has filled the world with lies and deceptions about the body. He tempts many to defile this great gift of the body through unchastity, immodesty, self-indulgence, and addictions. He seduces some to despise their bodies; others he tempts to worship their bodies. In either case, he entices the world to regard the body merely as an object. In the face of so many satanic falsehoods about the body, I want to raise my voice today in support of the sanctity of the body. I testify that the body is a gift to be treated with gratitude and respect.

Treating our bodies as temples

The scriptures declare that the body is a temple. It was Jesus Himself who first compared His body to a temple (see John 2:21). Later Paul admonished the people of Corinth, a wicked city teeming with all manner of lasciviousness and indecency: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

What would happen if we truly treated our bodies as temples? The result would be a dramatic increase in chastity, modesty, observance of the Word of Wisdom, and a similar decrease in the problems of pornography and abuse, for we would regard the body, like the temple, as a sacred sanctuary of the Spirit. Just as no unclean thing may enter the temple, we would be vigilant to keep impurity of any sort from entering the temple of our bodies.

Likewise, we would keep the outside of our bodily temples looking clean and beautiful to reflect the sacred and holy nature of what is inside, just as the Church does with its temples. We should dress and act in ways that reflect the sacred spirit inside us.

Modesty shows respect for our bodies

A short while ago as I visited one of the great tourist-filled cities of the world, I felt an overwhelming sadness that so many people in the world had fallen prey to Satan's deception that our bodies are merely objects to be flaunted and displayed openly. Imagine the contrast and my joy when I entered a classroom of modestly and appropriately dressed young women whose countenances glowed with goodness. I thought, "Here are eight beautiful girls who know how to show respect for their bodies and who know why they are doing it." In *For the Strength of Youth* it says:

"Your body is God's sacred creation. Respect it as a gift from God, and do not defile it in any way. Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. . . . The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside" ([2001], 14–15).

Modesty is more than a matter of avoiding revealing attire. It describes not only the altitude of hemlines and necklines but the attitude of our hearts. The word *modesty* means "measured." It is related to

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moderate. It implies "decency, and propriety . . . in thought, language, dress, and behavior" (in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 5 vols. [1992], 2:932).

Physical pleasure must not be our god

Moderation and appropriateness should govern all of our physical desires. A loving Heavenly Father has given us physical beauties and pleasures "both to please the eye and to gladden the heart" (D&C 59:18), but with this caution: that they are "made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion" (D&C 59:20). My husband used this scripture to teach our children about the law of chastity. He said that the "word *extortion* . . . literally means to 'twist out [or against].' Our use of . . . the body must not be twisted [against] the divinely ordained purposes for which [it was] given. Physical pleasure is good in its proper time and place, but even then it must not become our god" (John S. Tanner, "The Body as a Blessing," *Ensign,* July 1993, 10).

The pleasures of the body can become an obsession for some; so too can the attention we give to our outward appearance. Sometimes there is a selfish excess of exercising, dieting, makeovers, and spending money on the latest fashions (see Alma 1:27).

Selflessness is true beauty

I am troubled by the practice of extreme makeovers. Happiness comes from accepting the bodies we have been given as divine gifts and enhancing our natural attributes, not from remaking our bodies after the image of the world. The Lord wants us to be made over—but in His image, not in the image of the world, by receiving His image in our countenances (see Alma 5:14, 19).

I remember well the insecurities I felt as a teenager with a bad case of acne. I tried to care for my skin properly. My parents helped me get medical attention. For years I even went without eating chocolate and all the greasy fast foods around which teens often socialize, but with no obvious healing consequences. It was difficult for me at that time to fully appreciate this body which was giving me so much grief. But my good mother taught me a higher law. Over and over she said to me, "You must do everything you can to make your appearance pleasing, but the minute you walk out the door, forget yourself and start concentrating on others."

There it was. She was teaching me the Christlike principle of selflessness. Charity, or the pure love of Christ, "envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own" (Moroni 7:45). When we become other-oriented, or selfless, we develop an inner beauty of spirit that glows in our outward appearance. This is how we make ourselves in the Lord's image rather than the world's and receive His image in our countenances. President Hinckley spoke of this very kind of beauty that comes as we learn to respect body, mind, and spirit. He said:

"Of all the creations of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth" ("Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign,* Sept. 1988, 11).

Oh, how I pray that all men and women will seek the beauty praised by the prophet—beauty of body, mind, and spirit!

The spiritual and physical are linked

The restored gospel teaches that there is an intimate link between body, mind,

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and spirit. In the Word of Wisdom, for example, the spiritual and physical are intertwined. When we follow the Lord's law of health for our bodies, we are also promised wisdom to our spirits and knowledge to our minds (see D&C 89:19–21). The spiritual and physical truly are linked.

I remember an incident in my home growing up when my mother's sensitive spirit was affected by a physical indulgence. She had experimented with a new sweet roll recipe. They were big and rich and yummy—and very filling. Even my teenage brothers couldn't eat more than one. That night at family prayer my father called upon Mom to pray. She buried her head and didn't respond. He gently prodded her, "Is something wrong?" Finally she said, "I don't feel very spiritual tonight. I just ate three of those rich sweet rolls." I suppose that many of us have similarly offended our spirits at times by physical indulgences. Especially substances forbidden in the Word of Wisdom have a harmful effect on our bodies and a numbing influence on our spiritual sensitivities. None of us can ignore this connection of our spirits and bodies.

We will receive a perfected body

These sacred bodies, for which we are so grateful, suffer from natural limitations. Some people are born with disabilities, and some suffer the pains of disease throughout their lives. All of us as we age experience our bodies gradually beginning to fail. When this happens, we long for the day when our bodies will be healed and whole. We look forward to the Resurrection that Jesus Christ made possible, when "the soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23). I know that through Christ we can experience a fulness of joy that is available only when spirit and element are inseparably connected (see D&C 93:33).

Our bodies are our temples. We are not less but *more* like Heavenly Father because we are embodied. I testify that we are His children, made in His image, with the potential to become like Him. Let us treat this divine gift of the body with great care. Someday, if we are worthy, we shall receive a perfected, glorious body—pure and clean like my new little granddaughter, only inseparably bound to the spirit. And we shall shout for joy (see Job 38:7) to receive this gift again for which we have longed (see D&C 138:50). May we respect the sanctity of the body during mortality so that the Lord may sanctify and exalt it for eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Fishermen gave warnings of the tsunami

On December 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia, creating a deadly tsunami that killed more than 200,000 people. It was a terrible tragedy. In one day, millions of lives were forever changed.

But there was one group of people who, although their village was destroyed, did not suffer a single casualty.

The reason?

They knew a tsunami was coming.

The Moken people live in villages on islands off the coast of Thailand and Burma (Myanmar). A society of fishermen, their lives depend on the sea. For hundreds and

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perhaps thousands of years, their ancestors have studied the ocean, and they have passed their knowledge down from father to son.

One thing in particular they were careful to teach was what to do when the ocean receded. According to their traditions, when that happened, the "Laboon"—a wave that eats people—would arrive soon after.

When the elders of the village saw the dreaded signs, they shouted to everyone to run to high ground.

Not everyone listened.

One elderly fisherman said, "None of the kids believed me." In fact, his own daughter called him a liar. But the old fisherman would not relent until all had left the village and climbed to higher ground.[1]

The Moken people were fortunate in that they had someone with conviction who warned them of what would follow. The villagers were fortunate because they listened. Had they not, they may have perished.

Prophets warn and lead to higher ground

The prophet Nephi wrote about the great disaster of his day, the destruction of Jerusalem. "As one generation hath been destroyed among the Jews because of iniquity," he said, "even so have they been destroyed from generation to generation according to their iniquities; and never hath any of them been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord."[2]

Since the days of Adam, the Lord has spoken to His prophets, and while His message differs according to the specific needs of the time, there is one consistent, never-changing theme: Depart from iniquity and journey to higher ground.

Prosperity can lead to wickedness

As people heed the words of the prophets, the Lord blesses them. When they disregard His word, however, distress and suffering often follow. Over and over, the Book of Mormon teaches this great lesson. In its pages we read of the ancient inhabitants of the American continent who, because of their righteousness, were blessed of the Lord and became prosperous. Yet often this prosperity turned into a curse in that it caused them to "harden their hearts, and . . . forget the Lord their God."[3]

There is something about prosperity that brings out the worst in some people. In the book of Helaman we learn of one group of Nephites who experienced great loss and slaughter. Of them we read:

"And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, [and] denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation."[4]

This sorrow would not have afflicted them "had it not been for their wickedness."[5] If only they had heeded the words of the prophets of their day and journeyed to higher ground, their lives would have been dramatically different.

Solomon was left to his own strength

The natural consequence that comes to those who depart from the way of the Lord is that they are left to their own strength.[6] While in the heat of our success we might assume that our own strength is sufficient, those who rely upon the arm of the flesh soon discover how weak and unreliable it truly is.[7]

For example, Solomon at first obeyed the Lord and honored His law. Because of this, he prospered and was blessed not only with wisdom but with wealth and honor. If he continued in righteousness, the Lord promised to "establish the throne of [his] kingdom upon Israel for ever."[8]

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But even after heavenly visitations, even after receiving blessings above all men, Solomon turned away from the Lord. Because of this, the Lord decreed that the kingdom would be torn from him and given to his servant."[9]

The name of that servant was Jeroboam. Jeroboam was an industrious man from the tribe of Ephraim whom Solomon had promoted to manage a portion of his laborers.[10]

Jeroboam loses promised blessings

One day as Jeroboam was traveling, a prophet approached and prophesied that the Lord would rend the kingdom from Solomon and give ten of the twelve tribes of Israel to Jeroboam.

Through His prophet, the Lord promised Jeroboam if he would do what is right, "I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee."[11]

The Lord chose Jeroboam and promised remarkable blessings to him if only he would obey the commandments and journey to higher ground. After Solomon's death, the words of the prophet were fulfilled, and ten of the twelve tribes of Israel followed Jeroboam.

After receiving such favor, did the new king obey the Lord? Unfortunately he did not. He set up golden calves and encouraged his people to worship them. He created his own "priesthood" by selecting whomsoever he would, consecrating them to be "priests of the high places."[12] In short, in spite of the great blessings he had received from the Lord, the king was evil above all those before him.[13] In later generations, Jeroboam was the standard by which evil kings of Israel were compared.

Because of such wickedness, the Lord turned away from Jeroboam. As a result of the king's wickedness, the Lord decreed that the king and all of his family would be destroyed until not one was left. This prophecy was later fulfilled to the letter. The seed of Jeroboam perished from the earth.[14]

The tragic cycle

Solomon and Jeroboam are examples of a great, tragic cycle so often illustrated in the Book of Mormon. When the people are righteous, the Lord prospers them. Prosperity often leads to pride, which leads to sin. Sin leads to wickedness and to hearts that become hardened to things of the Spirit. Eventually, the end of this road leads to heartbreak and sorrow.

This pattern is repeated not only in the lives of individual people but by cities, nations, and even the world. The consequences of ignoring the Lord and His prophets are certain and often accompanied by great sorrow and regret. In our day the Lord has warned that wickedness will ultimately lead to "famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven" until "the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God."[15]

It is important to understand, however, that many fine and good people are affected by calamities of man and nature. The early Saints of this dispensation were persecuted and driven from their homes. Some lost their lives. But, perhaps because they had endured so much, they developed an inner strength that was a necessary preparation for the work they were yet to do.

The same happens in our day as well. Because we are not immune to calamities, we must learn from them.

Heeding the Lord brings blessings

While the scriptures show the consequences of disobedience, they also show what can happen when people listen to the Lord and heed His counsel.

When the wicked city of Nineveh heard the warning voice of the prophet Jonah, they cried mightily to the Lord, repented, and were saved from destruction.[16]

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Because the people in Enoch's day were evil, the Lord commanded Enoch to open his mouth and warn the people to turn from their wickedness and serve the Lord their God.

Enoch set aside his fears and did as he was commanded. He traveled among the people, crying with a loud voice, testifying against their works. The scriptures tell us that "all men were offended because of him." They spoke among themselves of "a strange thing in the land" and a "wild man" that had come among them.[17]

Although many hated Enoch, the humble believed his words. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground, and "they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish."[18] In their case, instead of prosperity leading to pride and sin, it led to compassion and righteousness. "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them."[19]

After His Resurrection, the Savior came to the Americas. Because of His wondrous ministry, the people's hearts were softened. They abandoned their sins and journeyed to higher ground. They cherished His words and sought to follow His example.

They lived so righteously that there were no contentions among them, and they dealt justly one with another. They shared freely of their substance one with another, and they prospered exceedingly.

Of this people it was said that "surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God."[20]

Follow the prophets to higher ground

In our day we face a similar choice. We can foolishly ignore the prophets of God, depend on our own strength, and ultimately reap the consequences. Or we can wisely draw near to the Lord and partake of His blessings.

King Benjamin described both paths and both consequences. He said that those who forsake the Lord will be "consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment."[21]

But those who journey to higher ground and keep the commandments of God "are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."[22]

Choose to love God and love others

How do we know which direction we are headed? When the Savior walked the earth, He was asked to name the greatest commandment. Without hesitation He said:

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

"This is the first and great commandment.

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

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."[23]

In these verses the Lord offers a clear way of knowing if we are on the right path. Those who journey to higher ground love the Lord with all their hearts. We see in their lives manifestations of that love. They seek their God in prayer and plead for His Holy Spirit. They humble themselves and open their hearts to the teachings of the prophets. They magnify their callings and seek to serve rather than be served. They stand as witnesses of God. They obey His commandments and grow strong in their testimonies of the truth.

They also love Heavenly Father's children, and their lives manifest that love.

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They care for their brothers and sisters. They nurture, serve, and sustain their spouses and children. In the spirit of love and kindness, they build up those around them. They give freely of their substance to others. They mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.[24]

The pathway of discipleship

This journey to higher ground is the pathway of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a journey that will ultimately lead us to exaltation with our families in the presence of the Father and the Son. Consequently, our journey to higher ground must include the house of the Lord. As we come unto Christ and journey to higher ground, we will desire to spend more time in His temples, because the temples represent higher ground, sacred ground.

In every age we are faced with a choice. We can trust in our own strength, or we can journey to higher ground and come unto Christ.

Each choice has a consequence; each consequence, a destination.

I bear witness that Jesus the Christ is our Redeemer, the living Son of the living God. The heavens are open, and a loving Heavenly Father reveals His word unto man. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the gospel was restored to earth. In our day a prophet, seer, and revelator, President Gordon B. Hinckley, lives and reveals the word of God to man. His voice sounds in harmony with those prophetic voices of all ages past.

"I invite every one of you," he has said, "wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength."[25]

Brothers and sisters, we are called to journey to higher ground.

We can avoid the sorrow and distress that come as a consequence of disobedience.

We can partake of peace, joy, and eternal life if we will heed the words of the prophets, be sensitive to the influence of the Holy Ghost, and fill our hearts with love for our Heavenly Father and our fellowman.

I leave my witness that the Lord will bless all who embark upon the paths of discipleship and journey to higher ground, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves," CBS News, *60 Minutes* transcript, Mar. 20, 2005, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml.
2. 2 Nephi 25:9.
3. Helaman 12:2.
4. Helaman 4:12.
5. Helaman 4:11.
6. See Helaman 4:13.
7. See John 15:5: "Without me ye can do nothing."
8. See 1 Kings 9:4–5.
9. See 1 Kings 11:9–11.
10. See 1 Kings 11:28.
11. 1 Kings 11:38.
12. See 1 Kings 12:28–30; 13:33.
13. See 1 Kings 14:9.
14. See 1 Kings 15:29.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 87:6.
16. See Jonah 3:4–10.
17. See Moses 6:37–38.
18. Moses 7:17.
19. Moses 7:18.
20. 4 Nephi 1:16.
21. Mosiah 3:25.
22. Mosiah 2:41.
23. Matthew 22:37–40.
24. See Mosiah 18:9.
25. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 96; or *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 72.

The choir sang "I'm Trying to Be like Jesus."

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President Monson

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they've provided this morning. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Faust's remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President James E. Faust

The light in their eyes

My dear brothers, sisters, and friends all over the world, I humbly seek your understanding and the aid of our Father's Spirit as I speak to you this morning.

I greatly appreciated the brief prophetic message of President Hinckley at the beginning of this conference. I testify that President Hinckley is our prophet, who richly enjoys the guidance of the Head of this Church, who is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I recently recalled a historic meeting in Jerusalem about 17 years ago. It was regarding the lease for the land on which the Brigham Young University's Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies was later built. Before this lease could be signed, President Ezra Taft Benson and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, then president of Brigham Young University, agreed with the Israeli government on behalf of the Church and the university not to proselyte in Israel.

You might wonder why we agreed not to proselyte. We were required to do so in order to get the building permit to build that magnificent building which stands in the historic city of Jerusalem. To our knowledge, the Church and BYU have scrupulously and honorably kept that nonproselyting commitment. After the lease had been signed, one of our friends insightfully remarked, "Oh, we know that you are not going to proselyte, but what are you going to do about the light that is in their eyes?" He was referring to our students who were studying in Israel.

What was that light in their eyes which was so obvious to our friend? The Lord Himself gives the answer: "And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth *your eyes,* which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings."[1] Where did that light come from? Again the Lord gives the answer: "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."[2] The Lord is the true light, "and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit."[3] This light shows in our countenances as well as in our eyes.

Paul Harvey, a famous news commentator, visited one of our Church school campuses some years ago. Later he observed: "Each . . . young face mirrored a sort of . . . sublime assurance. These days many young eyes are prematurely old from [countless] compromises with conscience. But [these young people] have that enviable headstart which derives from discipline, dedication, and consecration."[4]

Gift of the Holy Ghost is a light to the eyes

Those who truly repent receive the Spirit of Christ and are baptized into this Church unto the remission of their sins. Hands are laid upon their heads, and through the priesthood of God they receive the Holy Ghost.[5] It is "the gift of

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God unto all those who diligently seek him."[6] As Elder Parley P. Pratt characterized it, the gift of the Holy Ghost is, "as it were, . . . joy to the heart, [and] light to the eyes."[7] The Holy Ghost is that Comforter promised by the Savior before He was crucified.[8] The Holy Ghost gives worthy Saints both spiritual guidance and protection. It increases our knowledge and our understanding of "all things."[9] This is of immense value at a time when spiritual blindness is increasing.

A yearning for the Spirit amid secularism

Secularism is expanding in much of the world today. Secularism is defined as "indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations."[10] Secularism does not accept many things as absolutes. Its principal objectives are pleasure and self-interest. Often those who embrace secularism have a different look about them. As Isaiah observed, "The show of their countenance doth witness against them."[11]

Yet with all the secularism in the world, many people hunger and yearn for the things of the Spirit and hearing the word of the Lord. As Amos prophesied:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."[12]

Where can we hear the words of the Lord? We can hear them from our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the other General Authorities. We can also hear them from our stake presidents and bishops. Missionaries can hear them from their mission presidents. We can read them in the scriptures. We can also hear the still, small voice which comes through the Holy Ghost. Hearing the words of the Lord lifts us out of spiritual blindness "into his marvellous light."[13]

Dedication to absolutes brings light

What are we doing to keep the light shining in our own eyes and countenances? Much of that light comes from our discipline, dedication, and consecration[14] to some important absolutes. The foremost of these absolutes is that there is a God who is the Father of our souls to whom we account for our actions. Second, that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Third, that the great plan of happiness requires obedience to God's commandments. Fourth, that the greatest gift of God is eternal life.[15]

Other blessings add further to the light in our eyes. They are the gifts of the Spirit that come from the Savior.[16] Joy, happiness, fulfillment, and peace are the gifts of the Spirit that flow from the power of the Holy Ghost.

In terms of happiness here and in the eternities, many of our beliefs are blockbusters. They are huge, and some of them are unique to our faith. These precious beliefs are based upon our faithfulness and include the following, not necessarily in order of importance:

1. God and His Son are glorified personages. God the Father is our living Creator, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. We have been created in God's image.[17] We know this because Joseph Smith saw Them, They talked to him, and he talked to Them.[18]

2. Temple blessings seal husband and wife together, not only for this life but for eternity. Children and posterity can be linked together by this sealing.

3. Every worthy male member of the Church can hold and exercise the priesthood of God. He can exercise this divine authority within his family and in the

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Church under call by one who has authority.

4. Additional holy scriptures include the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

5. Living apostles and prophets speak the word of God in our day, under the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who is the prophet, seer, and revelator, the source of continuous revelation in our time.

6. The gift of the Holy Ghost is available to all members. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was asked "wherein [the LDS Church] differed . . . from the other religions of the day," he replied that it was in "the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands . . . [and] that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost."[19]

7. The ennobling of womanhood. Women have full equality with men before the Lord. By nature, the roles of women differ from those of men. This knowledge has come to us with the Restoration of the gospel in the fulness of times, with an acknowledgment that women are endowed with the great responsibilities of motherhood and nurturing. More opportunities have come to women since 1842, when the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the name of God, turned the key in their behalf than from the beginning of humankind on the earth.[20]

Light in a young nurse's face

Some years ago, Constance, a student nurse, was assigned to try and help a woman who had injured her leg in an accident. The woman refused medical help because she had had a negative experience with someone at the hospital. She was afraid and had become something of a recluse. The first time Constance dropped by, the injured woman ordered her out. On the second try, she did let Constance in. By now the woman's leg was covered with large ulcers, and some of the flesh was rotting. But still she didn't want to be treated.

Constance made it a matter of prayer, and in a day or two the answer came. She took some foaming hydrogen peroxide with her for the next visit. As this was painless, the old woman let her use it on her leg. Then they talked about more serious treatment at the hospital. Constance assured her the hospital would make her stay as pleasant as possible. In a day or two the woman did get the courage to enter the hospital. When Constance visited her, the woman smiled as she said, "You convinced me." Then, quite unexpectedly, she asked Constance, "What church do you belong to?" Constance told her she was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The woman said, "I knew it. I knew you were sent to me from the first day that I saw you. There was a light in your face that I had noticed in others of your faith. I had to put my trust in you."

In three months' time that festering leg was completely healed. Members of the ward where the old woman lived remodeled her house and fixed up her yard. The missionaries met with her, and she was baptized soon after.[21] All of this because she noticed the light in that young student nurse's face.

Once when President Brigham Young was asked why we are sometimes left alone and often sad, his response was that man has to learn to "act as an independent being . . . to see what he will do . . . and try his independency—to be righteous in the dark."[22] That becomes easier to do when we see the "gospel glow . . . radiating from . . . illuminated individuals."[23]

Service brings light to our eyes

Service in this Church is a marvelous blessing and privilege that brings light to our eyes and our countenances. As the Savior recommended, "Let your light so

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shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."[24] Words cannot express the blessings that come to us through service in this Church. The Lord promises that if we magnify our callings, we will find happiness and joy.

A personal bond with God brings light

Alma asks if we have received His image in our countenances.[25] A sacred light comes to our eyes and countenances when we have a personal bond with our loving Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior and Redeemer. With this bond, our faces will mirror that "sublime assurance"[26] that He lives.

I bear my personal witness of the divinity of this holy work in which we are engaged. Testimonies come through revelation.[27] This testifying revelation came to my heart as a young boy. I do not recall any specific event that prompted this confirming revelation. It just seemed always to be part of my consciousness. I am grateful for this confirming knowledge that has made it possible to handle the vicissitudes of life which come to all of us.

We have been and will be stirred by the testifying messages of the Brethren and sisters in this conference. I believe this confirming experience should relate to you. You may very well receive an affirmation that what is said is true. Brigham Young taught, "Not only the Saints who are present, . . . but those of every nation, continent, or island who live the religion taught by our Savior and his Apostles, and also by Joseph Smith; . . . also bear the same testimony, their eyes have been quickened by the Spirit of God, and they see alike, their hearts have been quickened, and they feel and understand alike."[28]

I know with all my heart and soul that God lives. I believe He will enlighten our lives with His love for each of us if we strive to be worthy of that love, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 88:11; italics added.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.
4. News broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967, typescript, 1.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
6. 1 Nephi 10:17.
7. *Key to the Science of Theology: A Voice of Warning* (1978), 61.
8. See John 14:26.
9. John 14:26.
10. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 11th ed. (2003), "secularism," 1123.
11. 2 Nephi 13:9.
12. Amos 8:11–12.
13. 1 Peter 2:9.
14. See Paul Harvey, news broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.
17. See Genesis 1:26–27.
18. See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–18.
19. *History of the Church,* 4:42.
20. See George Albert Smith, "Address to Members of the Relief Society," *Relief Society Magazine,* Dec. 1945, 717; see also Relief Society Minutes, Apr. 28, 1842, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 40.
21. See Constance Polve, "A Battle Won," *New Era,* Apr. 1980, 44–45.
22. Brigham Young's Office Journal, Jan. 28, 1857, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
23. Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 97; or *Ensign,* Nov. 1982, 67.
24. 3 Nephi 12:16.
25. See Alma 5:14.
26. Paul Harvey, news broadcast, Dec. 8, 1967.
27. See Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young,* ed. John A. Widtsoe (1998), 35.
28. *Discourses of Brigham Young,* 31.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Darwin B. Christenson offered the benediction.

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SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

A choir of young women and young men from stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, provided the music. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

The choir will open these services by singing "Awake and Arise." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Awake and Arise."

Elder John H. Groberg offered the invocation.

President Faust

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance, who are participating by means of radio, television, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session is being furnished by a Young Women and Young Men choir from the stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will now sing "On a Golden Springtime." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for sustaining vote.

The choir sang "On a Golden Springtime."

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may so manifest.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell

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Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders John H. Groberg and David E. Sorensen as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. It is proposed that we release Elders F. Burton Howard, F. Melvin Hammond, and Harold G. Hillam as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We extend a release to Elders Darwin B. Christenson, Adhemar Damiani, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Stephen B. Oveson, Ned B. Roueché, and Dennis E. Simmons as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

We also extend a release to Jairo Mazzagardi as an Area Seventy. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Neil L. Andersen and Ronald A. Rasband as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Sione M. Fineanganofo as an Area Seventy to succeed Pita R. Vamanrav, who recently passed away. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your continued faith and prayers.

President Faust

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "High on the Mountain Top." Elders Benjamín De Hoyos, C. Scott Grow, and Paul K. Sybrowsky of the Seventy will then address us.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Misunderstandings about the priesthood

My subject is priesthood authority in the family and in the Church.

My father died when I was seven. I was the oldest of three small children our widowed mother struggled to raise. When I was ordained a deacon, she said how pleased she was to have a priesthood holder in the home. But Mother continued to direct the family, including calling on which one of us would pray when we knelt together each morning. I was puzzled. I had been taught that the priesthood presided in the family. There must be something I didn't know about how that principle worked.

About this same time we had a neighbor who dominated and sometimes abused his wife. He roared like a lion, and she cowered like a lamb. When they walked to church, she always walked a few steps behind him. That made my mother mad. She was a strong woman who would not accept

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such domination, and she was angry to see another woman abused in that way. I think of her reaction whenever I see men misusing their authority to gratify their pride or exercise control or compulsion upon their wives in any degree of unrighteousness (see D&C 121:37).

I have also seen some faithful women who misunderstand how priesthood authority functions. Mindful of their partnership relationship with their husband in the family, some wives have sought to extend that relationship to their husband's priesthood calling, such as bishop or mission president. In contrast, some single women who have been abused by men (such as in a divorce) mistakenly confuse the priesthood with male abuse and become suspicious of any priesthood authority. A person who has had a bad experience with a particular electrical appliance should not forego using the power of electricity.

Each of the circumstances I have described results from misunderstanding priesthood authority and the great principle that while this authority presides in both the family and the Church, the priesthood functions in a different way in each of them. This principle is understood and applied by the great Church and family leaders I have known, but it is rarely explained. Even the scriptures, which record various exercises of priesthood authority, seldom state expressly which principles apply only to the exercise of priesthood authority in the family or in the Church or which apply in both of them.

Relationship between family and Church

In our theology and in our practice, the family and the Church have a mutually reinforcing relationship. The family is dependent upon the Church for doctrine, ordinances, and priesthood keys. The Church provides the teachings, authority, and ordinances necessary to perpetuate family relationships to the eternities.

We have programs and activities in both the family and the Church. Each is so interrelated that service to one is service to the other. When children see their parents faithfully perform Church callings, it strengthens their family relationships. When families are strong, the Church is strong. The two run in parallel. Each is important and necessary, and each must be conducted with careful concern for the other. Church programs and activities should not be so all-encompassing that families cannot have everyone present for family time. And family activities should not be scheduled in conflict with sacrament meeting or other vital Church meetings.

We need both Church activities and family activities. If all families were complete and perfect, the Church could sponsor fewer activities. But in a world where many of our youth grow up in homes where one parent is missing, not a member, or otherwise inactive in gospel leadership, there is a special need for Church activities to fill in the gaps. Our widowed mother wisely saw that Church activities would provide her sons with experiences she could not provide because we had no male role model in the home. I remember her urging me to watch and try to be like the good men in our ward. She pushed me to participate in Scouting and other Church activities that would provide this opportunity.

In a church where there are many single members, who do not presently have the companionship the Lord intends for all of His sons and daughters, the Church and its families should also have special concern for the needs of single adults.

Priesthood authority in family and Church

Priesthood authority functions in both the family and the Church. The priesthood is the power of God used to bless all of His children, male and female. Some of our

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abbreviated expressions, like "the women and the priesthood," convey an erroneous idea. Men are not "the priesthood." Priesthood meeting is a meeting of those who hold and exercise the priesthood. The blessings of the priesthood, such as baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, the temple endowment, and eternal marriage, are available to men and women alike. The authority of the priesthood functions in the family and in the Church according to the principles the Lord has established.

When my father died, my mother presided over our family. She had no priesthood office, but as the surviving parent in her marriage she had become the governing officer in her family. At the same time, she was always totally respectful of the priesthood authority of our bishop and other Church leaders. She presided over her family, but they presided over the Church.

Distinct uses in the family and the Church

There are many similarities and some differences in the way priesthood authority functions in the family and in the Church. If we fail to recognize and honor the differences, we encounter difficulties.

Keys. One important difference between its function in the Church and in the family is the fact that all priesthood authority *in the Church* functions under the direction of the one who holds the appropriate priesthood keys. In contrast, the authority that presides *in the family*—whether father or single-parent mother—functions in family matters without the need to get authorization from anyone holding priesthood keys. This family authority includes directing the activities of the family, family meetings like family home evenings, family prayer, teaching the gospel, and counseling and disciplining family members. It also includes ordained fathers giving priesthood blessings.

However, priesthood keys are necessary to authorize the ordaining or setting apart of family members. This is because the organization the Lord has made responsible for the performance and recording of priesthood ordinances is the Church, not the family.

Boundaries. Church organizations like wards, quorums, or auxiliaries always have geographic boundaries that limit the responsibility and authority of the callings associated with them. In contrast, family relationships and responsibilities are not dependent upon where different family members reside.

Duration. Church callings are always temporary, but family relationships are permanent.

Call and release. Another contrast concerns the initiation and termination of positions. In the Church, a priesthood leader who holds the necessary keys has the authority to call or release persons serving under his direction. He can even cause that they lose their membership and have their names "blotted out" (see Mosiah 26:34–38; Alma 5:56–62). In contrast, family relationships are so important that the head of the family lacks the authority to make changes in family membership. That can be done only by someone authorized to adjust family relationships under the laws of man or the laws of God. Thus, while a bishop can *release* a Relief Society president, he cannot sever his relationship with his wife without a *divorce* under the laws of man. Again, his sealing for eternity cannot be ended without a cancellation procedure under the laws of God. Similarly, a youth serving in a class or quorum presidency can be *released* by priesthood authority in the ward, but parents cannot *divorce* a child whose life choices are offensive to them. Family relationships are more enduring than Church relationships.

Partnership. A most important difference in the functioning of priesthood authority in the family and in the Church results from the fact that the government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the

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government of the Church is hierarchical. The concept of partnership functions differently in the family than in the Church.

The family proclamation gives this beautiful explanation of the relationship between a husband and a wife: While they have separate responsibilities, "in these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to *help one another as equal partners*" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102; italics added).

President Spencer W. Kimball said this: "When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a *full* partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball,* ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 315).

President Kimball also declared, "We have heard of men who have said to their wives, 'I hold the priesthood and you've got to do what I say.' " He decisively rejected that abuse of priesthood authority in a marriage, declaring that such a man "should not be honored in his priesthood" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball,* 316).

Righteous use of priesthood authority

There are cultures or traditions in some parts of the world that allow men to oppress women, but those abuses must not be carried into the families of the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember how Jesus taught: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you . . ." (Matthew 5:27–28). For example, the Savior contradicted the prevailing culture in His considerate treatment of women. Our guide must be the gospel culture He taught.

If men desire the Lord's blessings in their family leadership, they must exercise their priesthood authority according to the Lord's principles for its use:

"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" (D&C 121:41–42).

When priesthood authority is exercised in that way in the patriarchal family, we achieve the "full partnership" President Kimball taught. As declared in the family proclamation:

"Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, [and] compassion" (*Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102).

Church callings are performed according to the principles that govern all of us in working under priesthood authority in the Church. These principles include the persuasion and gentleness taught in the 121st section, which are especially necessary in the hierarchal organization of the Church.

The principles I have identified for the exercise of priesthood authority are more understandable and more comfortable for a married woman than for a single woman, especially a single woman who has never been married. She does not now experience priesthood authority in the partnership relationship of marriage. Her experiences with priesthood authority are in the hierarchical relationships of the Church, and some single women feel they have no voice in those relationships. It is, therefore, imperative to have an effective ward council, where male and female ward officers sit down together regularly to counsel under the presiding authority of the bishop.

Our theology centers on the family

I conclude with some general comments and a personal experience.

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The theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints centers on the family. Our relationship to God and the purpose of earth life are explained in terms of the family. We are the spirit children of heavenly parents. The gospel plan is implemented through earthly families, and our highest aspiration is to perpetuate those family relationships throughout eternity. The ultimate mission of our Savior's Church is to help us achieve exaltation in the celestial kingdom, and that can be accomplished only in a family relationship.

No wonder our Church is known as a family-centered church. No wonder we are distressed at the current legal and cultural deteriorations in the position of marriage and childbearing. At a time when the world seems to be losing its understanding of the purpose of marriage and the value of childbearing, it is vital that Latter-day Saints have no confusion about these matters.

Tribute to Elder Oaks's widowed mother

The faithful widowed mother who raised us had no confusion about the eternal nature of the family. She always honored the position of our deceased father. She made him a presence in our home. She spoke of the eternal duration of their temple marriage. She often reminded us of what our father would like us to do so we could realize the Savior's promise that we could be a family forever.

I recall an experience that shows the effect of her teachings. Just before Christmas one year, our bishop asked me, as a deacon, to help him deliver Christmas baskets to the widows of the ward. I carried a basket to each door with his greetings. When he drove me home, there was one basket remaining. He handed it to me and said it was for my mother. As he drove away, I stood in the falling snow wondering why there was a basket for my mother. She never referred to herself as a widow, and it had never occurred to me that she was. To a 12-year-old boy, she wasn't a widow. She had a husband, and we had a father. He was just away for a while.

I anticipate that glorious future day when the separated will be reunited and all of us will be made complete as the Lord has promised. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, whose priesthood authority and whose Atonement and Resurrection make it all possible, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Praise and love for young women

Father Time played a rude trick on me just a few months ago. I arose one morning all bright eyed and bushy tailed, greeted the dawn with a smile—only to realize suddenly that with the birthday to be celebrated that day I now had a teenage grandchild. I thought about it for a minute and then did what any responsible, dignified adult would do. I got back in bed and pulled the covers over my head.

Traditional joking aside about the harrowing experience of raising teenagers, I want to say to my own granddaughter and the vast majority of the youth of the Church whom I meet around the world how extraordinarily proud we are of you. Moral and physical danger exists almost everywhere around you and temptations of a dozen kinds present themselves daily, yet most of you strive to do what is right.

This afternoon I wish to raise my voice in praise of you, to express my love, my en-

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couragement, and my admiration for you. Because this precious eldest grandchild of whom I spoke is a young woman, I am going to address my remarks to the young women of the Church, but I hope the spirit of what I say can apply to women and men of all ages. However, today, as Maurice Chevalier used to sing, I want to "thank heaven for little girls."

You are literally a daughter of God

First of all, I want you to be proud you are a woman. I want you to feel the reality of what that means, to know who you truly are. You are literally a spirit daughter of heavenly parents with a divine nature and an eternal destiny.[1] That surpassing truth should be fixed deep in your soul and be fundamental to every decision you make as you grow into mature womanhood. There could never be a greater authentication of your dignity, your worth, your privileges, and your promise. Your Father in Heaven knows your name and knows your circumstance. He hears your prayers. He knows your hopes and dreams, including your fears and frustrations. And He knows what you can become through faith in Him. Because of this divine heritage, you, along with all of your spiritual sisters and brothers, have full equality in His sight and are empowered through obedience to become a rightful heir in His eternal kingdom, an "[heir] of God, and joint-[heir] with Christ."[2] Seek to comprehend the significance of these doctrines. Everything Christ taught He taught to women as well as men. Indeed, in the restored light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a woman, including a young woman, occupies a majesty all her own in the divine design of the Creator. You are, as Elder James E. Talmage once phrased it, "a sanctified investiture which none shall dare profane."[3]

Be a woman of Christ. Cherish your esteemed place in the sight of God. He needs you. This Church needs you. The world needs you. A woman's abiding trust in God and unfailing devotion to things of the Spirit have always been an anchor when the wind and the waves of life were fiercest.[4] I say to you what the Prophet Joseph said more than 150 years ago: "If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates."[5]

All of this is to try to tell you how your Father in Heaven feels about you and what He has designed for you to become. And if for a time any of you are less visionary than this or seem bent on living beneath your privilege, then we express even greater love for you and plead with you to make your teenage years a triumph, not a tragedy. Fathers and mothers, prophets and apostles have no motive except to bless your life and to spare you every possible heartache we can spare you.

Wear modest clothing

For you to fully claim Heavenly Father's blessings and protection, we ask you to stay true to the standards of the gospel of Jesus Christ and *not* slavishly follow the whims of fads and fashions. The Church will never deny your moral agency regarding what you should wear and exactly how you should look. But the Church will always declare standards and will always teach principles. As Sister Susan Tanner taught this morning, one of those principles is modesty. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, modesty in appearance is *always* in fashion. Our standards are *not* socially negotiable.

The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is very clear in its call for young women to avoid clothing that is too tight, too short, or improperly revealing in any manner, including bare midriffs.[6] Parents, please review this booklet with your children. Second only to your love, they need your limits. Young women, choose your clothing the way you would choose your

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friends—in both cases choose that which improves you and would give you confidence standing in the presence of God.[7] Good friends would never embarrass you, demean you, or exploit you. Neither should your clothing.

I make a special appeal regarding how young women might dress for Church services and Sabbath worship. We used to speak of "best dress" or "Sunday dress," and maybe we should do so again. In any case, from ancient times to modern we have always been invited to present our best selves inside and out when entering the house of the Lord—and a dedicated LDS chapel is a "house of the Lord." Our clothing or footwear need never be expensive, indeed should *not* be expensive, but neither should it appear that we are on our way to the beach. When we come to worship the God and Father of us all and to partake of the sacrament symbolizing the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we should be as comely and respectful, as dignified and appropriate as we can be. We should be recognizable in appearance as well as in behavior that we truly are disciples of Christ, that in a spirit of worship we are meek and lowly of heart, that we truly desire the Savior's Spirit to be with us always.

Be more accepting of your bodies

In this same vein may I address an even more sensitive subject. I plead with you young women to please be more accepting of yourselves, including your body shape and style, with a little less longing to look like someone else. We are all different. Some are tall, and some are short. Some are round, and some are thin. And almost everyone at some time or other wants to be something they are not! But as one adviser to teenage girls said: "You can't live your life worrying that the world is staring at you. When you let people's opinions make you self-conscious, you give away your power. . . . The key to feeling [confident] is to always listen to your inner self—[the *real* you.]"[8] And in the kingdom of God, the real you is "more precious than rubies."[9] Every young woman is a child of destiny and every adult woman a powerful force for good. I mention adult women because, sisters, you are our greatest examples and resource for these young women. And if you are obsessing over being a size 2, you won't be very surprised when your daughter or the Mia Maid in your class does the same and makes herself physically ill trying to accomplish it. We should all be as fit as we can be—that's good Word of Wisdom doctrine. That means eating right and exercising and helping our bodies function at their optimum strength. We could probably all do better in that regard. But I speak here of optimum health; there is no universal optimum size.

Frankly, the world has been brutal with you in this regard. You are bombarded in movies, television, fashion magazines, and advertisements with the message that looks are everything! The pitch is, "If your looks are good enough, your life will be glamorous and you will be happy and popular." That kind of pressure is immense in the teenage years, to say nothing of later womanhood. In too many cases too much is being done to the human body to meet just such a fictional (to say nothing of superficial) standard. As one Hollywood actress is reported to have said recently:

"We've become obsessed with beauty and the fountain of youth. . . . I'm really saddened by the way women mutilate [themselves] in search of that. I see women [including young women] . . . pulling this up and tucking that back. It's like a slippery slope. [You can't get off of it.] . . . It's really insane . . . what society is doing to women."[10]

Don't be preoccupied with the physical

In terms of preoccupation with self and a fixation on the physical, this is more than social insanity; it is spiritually destructive, and it accounts for much of the unhappi-

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ness women, including young women, face in the modern world. And if adults are preoccupied with appearance—tucking and nipping and implanting and remodeling everything that can be remodeled—those pressures and anxieties will certainly seep through to children. At some point the problem becomes what the Book of Mormon called "vain imaginations."[11] And in secular society, both vanity *and* imagination run wild. One would truly need a great and spacious makeup kit to compete with beauty as portrayed in media all around us. Yet at the end of the day there would still be those "in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers" as Lehi saw,[12] because however much one tries in the world of glamour and fashion, it will never be glamorous enough.

Universal qualities of loveliness

A woman not of our faith once wrote something to the effect that in her years of working with beautiful women, she had seen several things they all had in common, and not one of them had anything to do with sizes and shapes. She said the loveliest women she had known had a glow of health, a warm personality, a love of learning, stability of character, and integrity. If we may add the sweet and gentle Spirit of the Lord carried by such a woman, then this describes the loveliness of women in any age or time, *every* element of which is emphasized in and attainable through the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel will lift and bless you

May I conclude. Much has been said lately in entertainment media about the current craze for "reality shows." I am not sure what those are, but from the bottom of my heart I share this gospel reality with the beautiful generation of young women growing up in this Church.

My solemn declaration to you is that the Father and the Son did *in very fact* appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith, himself a young man called by God from your very age group. I testify that these divine beings spoke to him, that he heard Their eternal voices, and he saw Their glorified bodies.[13] That experience was as real in its own setting as the Apostle Thomas's was when the Savior said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: . . . be not faithless, but [be] believing."[14]

To my granddaughter and to every other young person in this Church I bear my personal witness that God is *in reality* our Father and Jesus Christ is *in reality* His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. I testify that this *really* is the Church and kingdom of God on earth, that true prophets have led this people in the past and a true prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, leads it now. May you know the unending love the leaders of the Church have for you, and may you let the eternal realities of the gospel of Jesus Christ lift you above temporal concerns and teenage anxieties, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102.
2. Romans 8:17.
3. James E. Talmage, "The Eternity of Sex," *Young Woman's Journal,* Oct. 1914, 602.
4. See J. Reuben Clark, in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 21, for a lengthy tribute to women of the Church.
5. *History of the Church,* 4:605.
6. *For the Strength of Youth* (pamphlet, 2001), 15.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
8. Julia DeVillers, *Teen People,* Sept. 2005, 104.
9. Proverbs 3:15.
10. Halle Berry, quoted in "Halle Slams 'Insane' Plastic Surgery," *This Is London,* Aug. 2, 2004, www.thisislondon.com/showbiz/articles/12312096?source=PA.
11. 1 Nephi 12:18.
12. See 1 Nephi 8:27. See Douglas Bassett, "Faces of Worldly Pride in the Book of

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Mormon," *Ensign,* Oct. 2000, 51, for an excellent discussion of this issue.
13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25.
14. John 20:27.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Benjamín De Hoyos

Happiness is the purpose of the gospel

"Life is good, if we live in such a way to make it so." This was a part of an inspirational message I read many years ago. What the message calls "a good life" comes as a result of the way we do things, of the words we choose to say, and even of the kind of thoughts we choose to have.

No one needs to feel alone on the road of life, for we are all invited to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him. Happiness is the purpose of the gospel and the purpose of the redeeming Atonement for all men.

The account in the book of Helaman expressed it in a concise way:

"Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful *unto all* who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.

"Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open *unto all,* even *to those who will* believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

"Yea, we see that *whosoever will* may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall . . . lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course . . . and land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven."[1]

Happiness comes from obedience

My beloved brothers and sisters, we need to recognize that "wanting to" is the determining factor which leads us to lay hold upon the word of God and be happy. Perseverance in making correct decisions is what leads us to happiness.

Happiness comes as a result of our obedience and our courage in always doing the will of God, even in the most difficult circumstances. When the prophet Lehi warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they mocked him, and, as with other ancient prophets, they sought to take away his life. I quote the prophet Nephi:

"I . . . will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are *over all those* whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance."[2]

Quitting a cigarette factory job

When I was serving as a missionary in northern Mexico, a few days after the baptismal service of the Valdez family we received a telephone call from Brother Valdez asking us to come to his house. He had an important question for us. Now that he knew the will of the Lord regarding the Word of Wisdom, and even though it would be difficult to find a new job, he wondered if he should continue to work for the cigarette company where he had worked for many years. Only a few days later Brother Valdez again asked us to come by and visit him. He had decided to quit his job because he was not willing to go against his convictions. Then with a smile and emotion in his voice, he told us that the very day he quit his old job, another company had called to offer him a much better position.

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Yes, we find happiness in the midst of the trial of our faith. The Lord manifests Himself to us through His tender mercies, which we find along the road of happiness. We see with increased clarity His hand in our lives.

Joyful reunion with a missionary

Happiness is a condition of the soul. This joyous state comes as a result of righteous living.[3]

Some years ago while I was serving as a mission president, my wife, Evelia, witnessed a touching scene of happiness when she saw a faithful family enter the chapel. This mother and her two small children had walked from their humble home under oppressive heat to church that day. They never imagined they would find Elder Cruz, the dedicated missionary who, the year before, had shared the message of the restored gospel with them. This wonderful surprise was key in their recognizing the great happiness the gospel had brought into their lives. The children ran to embrace him, and while tears of joy ran down the cheeks of Elder Cruz, the mother clasped his hands in hers and profoundly thanked him for all he had done to bless their family. Surely they found that happiness which is prepared and reserved for the Saints.[4]

True happiness is a conscious decision

The Prophet Joseph stated, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."[5]

After the struggles of the long journey to the promised land and after 30 years of faithful efforts to keep the commandments of God,[6] the untiring prophet Nephi of the Book of Mormon summarized the history of his people by saying, "And it came to pass that we lived after the manner of happiness."[7]

Happiness is defined in the Book of Mormon by the prophet-king Benjamin as "the blessed and happy state of those [who] keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual."[8]

Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, life is good if we live in such a way to make it so. Believing, desiring, deciding, and choosing correctly are the simple actions that define an increase in happiness and an increase in the inner assurance that transcends this life.

Let us remember that the Lord Himself still calls to us saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[9] I know that He lives and that He continually calls at our door. He has restored His Church and the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Even today He directs His Church and kingdom through our beloved prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

I leave with you my love and my humble testimony, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Helaman 3:27–30; italics added.
2. 1 Nephi 1:20; italics added.
3. See Guide to the Scriptures, "Joy," 137.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:43.
5. *History of the Church,* 5:134–35.
6. See 2 Nephi 5:10.
7. 2 Nephi 5:27.
8. Mosiah 2:41.
9. Matthew 11:28.

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Elder C. Scott Grow

Growth in Mexico fulfills prophecy

Thirty-six years ago I served a mission in southeast Mexico. At that time there were no stakes, with the largest cities in the mission having only two branches. There were limited opportunities for education and much poverty. With two or three exceptions, all the missionaries were from the United States.

I remember the people of the Nealtican Branch. All buildings in the town were made of adobe, except the Catholic cathedral and the LDS chapel. I remember standing in the small adobe house of the branch president. It had a dirt floor, windows with no glass, and a rug hanging over the entryway. There was no furniture in the house. His family had no shoes.

But they were a happy people. He told me that they had sold everything they had to buy bus tickets to the Mesa temple, where they were sealed for time and all eternity. Many of the branch members had done the same thing.

A month ago I returned to Mexico to serve in the Mexico North Area Presidency. The Mexico of today is much different from that of 36 years ago. Nealtican is the center of a thriving stake of Zion. Mexico has 200 stakes and a million members of the Church. Many stake and ward leaders are highly educated and financially secure. Thousands of young men and women from Mexico are serving full-time missions.

Truly the vision seen by Lehi and interpreted by Nephi is coming to pass. "And at that day shall the remnant of *our seed* know that they are of the *house of Israel,* and that *they* are the *covenant* people of the Lord; and then shall they *know* and come to the knowledge of their *forefathers*, and also to the knowledge of the *gospel* of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their *fathers by him;* wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their *Redeemer.*"[1]

The Book of Mormon blesses all nations

Truly the people of Mexico and other Latin American countries are among the descendants of prophets. The Book of Mormon is their inheritance. Jesus Christ did minister unto their fathers.

After His resurrection, Jesus Christ descended out of heaven, clothed in a white robe, and stood in the midst of their ancestors here in the Americas. He stretched forth His hand and said:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

". . . I am the light and the life of the world."[2]

"Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up."[3]

To the Church in our day, the Savior repeated that counsel when He said, "Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations."[4] Jesus Christ is the light that we hold up as a standard to all nations. We offer the additional light of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

President Hinckley has challenged us to read or reread the Book of Mormon before year-end in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. By so doing, we honor Joseph Smith, who translated the Book of Mormon "by the gift and power of God."[5]

When the ancient prophet Moroni appeared to Joseph, he told him "that God had a work for [him] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people."[6]

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That prophecy has come to pass. The name of Joseph Smith is known and revered throughout the world, even in the remote village of Nealtican, Mexico.

A young man in Mexico finds the Church

Recently a member in Monterrey, Mexico, told me how the Book of Mormon changed his life. As a teenager, Jesús Santos was impressed by the LDS missionaries he saw walking down the dusty streets. He wanted to talk to them about their church but was told by a friend that you have to wait for them to contact you.

Many times he would go to the church building and look through the iron fence at the missionaries and the Mutual youth playing games. They seemed so wholesome, and he wanted to be part of them. He would lean his chin on the fence, hoping that they would notice him and invite him to participate with them. It never happened.

As Jesús recounted his story to me, he said, "It is sad. I was a young man and could have served a full-time mission."

He moved to Monterrey, Mexico. *Nine* years later he was visiting a friend across town when the missionaries knocked at the door. His friend wanted to send them away. Jesús begged him to let the missionaries talk to them for just two minutes. His friend consented.

The missionaries talked about the Book of Mormon, how Lehi's family traveled from Jerusalem to the Americas, and how the resurrected Jesus Christ visited Lehi's descendants in America.

Jesús wanted to know more. He was especially intrigued by the picture depicting Christ's appearance in America. He gave the missionaries his address. He waited for months, but they never made contact with him.

Three more years passed. Some friends invited his family to a family home evening. They gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon.

As soon as he began to read it, he knew the Book of Mormon was true. Finally, 12 years after he first became aware of the Church, he and his wife were baptized. So many years had been lost. If missionaries had just talked to him, if the Mutual youth had just noticed a lonely teenager looking over the fence, if the missionaries in Monterrey had found him at home, his life would have been different during those 12 years. Gratefully, member neighbors invited him for a family home evening and shared with him that book which has such great converting power, the Book of Mormon.

Today Jesús Santos serves as the president of the Monterrey Mexico Temple.

Invite others to read the Book of Mormon

Jesus Christ gave us the Book of Mormon as the instrument to gather scattered Israel. At the time of His appearance in America, He told the people, "And when these things come to pass that thy *seed* shall begin to *know* these things—it shall be a *sign* unto them, that they may *know* that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the *covenant* which he hath made unto the people who are of the *house of Israel.*"[7]

The Book of Mormon is *its own witness* to the people of Latin America and of all nations. Its very coming forth in these latter days bears witness that God has once again begun to *gather scattered Israel.*

In my mind's eye I can still see Jesús Santos as a ragged 18-year-old boy looking over the fence at the chapel. Can you see him? Can you invite him and others like him to be one with us? Whom do you know that would respond to your invitation to read the Book of Mormon? Will you invite them? Don't wait.

The instrument to gather scattered Israel

I testify that Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. The Book of

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Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the means whereby people from all nations shall be gathered into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This Church is founded upon apostles and prophets, just as it was in ancient days. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's anointed prophet on the earth today. Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer. This is His Church and His kingdom. He is our King Immanuel. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 15:14; italics added.
2. 3 Nephi 11:10–11.
3. 3 Nephi 18:24.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 115:5.
5. Book of Mormon introduction.
6. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
7. 3 Nephi 21:7; italics added.

Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky

Seeking after the one who is lost

Many years ago, when our oldest children were six, four, and two, my wife and I sprang a pop quiz on them. We had been reading daily as a family from the Book of Mormon.

"Who was the man," my wife inquired, "who went into the forests to hunt, but, instead, prayed all day and into the night?"

After a few moments of silence, she ventured to help: "His name starts with an E . . . e . . . e . . . e."

From the corner of the room, our two-year-old called out, "Nos!"

This child was the one who was playing in the corner—the one we had thought was too little to understand. Enos! It was Enos who had gone into the forests to hunt but hungered for his own soul. Though his record does not say that he was lost in that forest, the story of Enos teaches us that he came out found—and then feeling a desire for the welfare of his brothers.

In the New Testament our Savior, Jesus Christ, teaches us the importance of seeking after the one who is lost:

"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" (Luke 15:4–5).

Being found by friends and leaders

Since the Fall of Adam, all mankind are in a lost and fallen state. Like many of you, my being "found" started with two faithful missionaries. In the year 1913, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Elders C. Earl Anhder and Robert H. Sorenson taught my grandparents the gospel of Jesus Christ and baptized them. My parents taught me the importance of hard work, honesty, and integrity. However, in one short generation we became lost to activity in the Church and a knowledge of the gospel. Looking back, I recall at a very young age my playmates inviting me to Primary. My first Church experience was built around Primary friendships.

As a boy several months shy of my 12th birthday, one Saturday afternoon I answered a knock at my front door. Several of my friends—deacons dressed in white shirts and ties—sought me out to come to my very first priesthood meeting. Our leader walked beside me as we made our way down the hill to the Tabernacle on Temple Square. That was the April general conference priesthood session.

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Lloyd Bennett was my Scoutmaster. Very often on a Saturday afternoon he would pick me up and take me to the Scout office to buy needed badges and supplies. As we rode, we talked. He became a trusted friend. Lloyd Bennett, like so many, took time for the one.

These wonderful friends and leaders understood Elder M. Russell Ballard's recent counsel to "find . . . *one more*" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 72; or *Ensign,* May 2005, 71), and they understood what that entailed. Sometimes it's the one in the corner whom we hadn't considered.

A personal "Enos" experience

My own Enos experience came at 18 years of age as I knelt in my army barracks in Fort Ord, California. After the lights were out and I knelt on a hard floor, like Enos I came away found. I was to serve a full-time mission. My heart is filled with gratitude for the many who assisted in helping me to come to know who I am and to know of Christ and His gospel. I came to understand that my way home is through our Savior Jesus Christ.

"And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else" (Alma 11:40).

The Lord will use us to find the one

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah, in seeing our day when the gospel would be fully restored, declared:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders" (Isaiah 49:22).

As we care for the one, brothers and sisters, we see the fulfillment of that prophecy. Can you see how you have been carried in arms and on shoulders—carried to safety?

What would our Savior do with the opportunities that we have to affect the one? As we apply that principle—*If Christ had my opportunities, what would He do?*—our decisions in life will be Christ-centered.

I know personally that our beloved Elder Neal A. Maxwell always sought to find the one. For, as Nephi, he labored "diligently to write, to persuade [all of us] to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God" (2 Nephi 25:23). I know that Elder Maxwell made more than one call to those, even to the one, whom he was trying to bring unto Christ.

Whether we are a Primary teacher, Young Men or Young Women leader, Scoutmaster, home teacher, visiting teacher, or friend, the Lord will use us, if we will listen, to seek out and find the one.

Missionaries seek after the one

How grateful I am for the decision to serve a full-time mission, which became a great turning point in my life. Young men, you have the privilege of serving, even to labor diligently. Stay worthy; prepare to preach the gospel; do not delay—go and serve! Young women, you can do so much to build the kingdom. Dear seniors, we need you!

Our family had the privilege of serving in Canada with wonderful, dedicated elders, sisters, and senior missionaries. With heart to heart, with spirit to spirit, and in the strength of the Lord, they sought after the one and found him or her, as dedicated missionaries do the world over.

"And thus they were instruments in the hands of God in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to the knowledge of their Redeemer" (Mosiah 27:36).

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Act upon promptings to find the one

Each one of us can make a difference in someone's life, even his or her eternal life, but we must act; we must do; we must labor diligently. Perhaps you have received an impression to invite someone to return to church or to hear the message of the restored gospel for the first time. Go ahead, follow that impression. Why don't we all invite someone to come tomorrow and listen to a prophet's voice? Would you do that? Will you make that invitation today? With faith and a willing heart (even desire), we must trust that the Spirit will give us "in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what [we] shall say" (D&C 100:6). I know that to be so.

How grateful I am for this call to serve once again, this time in Australia. I express my eternal love and appreciation to my wife and our nine missionary-minded children for their love and support. I bear solemn witness that the fulness of the gospel is restored upon the earth, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Today we are led by a living prophet, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know that God lives, and I know that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. It is in the Shepherd's loving arms and on His shoulders that we are carried home. Like Enos, may I humbly say: "I must preach . . . unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have . . . rejoiced in it above that of the world" (Enos 1:26). To these truths I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We remind the brethren of general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank the Young Women and Young Men choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Henry B. Eyring and M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then close this session by singing "On This Day of Joy and Gladness." At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Spiritual preparation for life's storms

Most of us have thought about how to prepare for storms. We have seen and felt the suffering of women, men, and children, and of the aged and the weak, caught in hurricanes, tsunamis, wars, and droughts. One reaction is to ask, "How can I be prepared?" And there is a rush to buy and put away whatever people think they might need for the day they might face such calamities.

But there is another even more important preparation we must make for tests that are certain to come to each of us. That preparation must be started far in advance because it takes time. What we will need then can't be bought. It can't be borrowed. It doesn't store well. And it has to have been used regularly and recently.

What we will need in our day of testing is a spiritual preparation. It is to have developed faith in Jesus Christ so powerful that we can pass the test of life upon which

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everything for us in eternity depends. That test is part of the purpose God had for us in the Creation.

Our test is to see if we will obey

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us the Lord's description of the test we face. Our Heavenly Father created the world with His Son, Jesus Christ. We have these words to tell us about the purpose of the Creation:

"We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."[1]

So, the great test of life is to see if we will hearken to and obey God's commands in the midst of the storms of life. It is not to endure storms, but to choose the right while they rage. And the tragedy of life is to fail in that test and so fail to qualify to return in glory to our heavenly home.

We are the spirit children of a Heavenly Father. He loved us and He taught us before we were born into this world. He told us that He wished to give us all that He had. To qualify for that gift we had to receive mortal bodies and be tested. Because of those mortal bodies, we would face pain, sickness, and death.

We would be subject to temptations through the desires and weaknesses that came with our mortal bodies. Subtle and powerful forces of evil would tempt us to surrender to those temptations. Life would have storms in which we would have to make choices using faith in things we could not see with our natural eyes.

Passing the test requires unshakable faith

We were promised that we would have Jehovah, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Redeemer. He would assure that we would all be resurrected. And He would make it possible for us to pass the test of life if we exercised faith in Him by being obedient. We shouted for joy at the good news.

A passage from the Book of Mormon, another witness of Jesus Christ, describes how hard the test is and what it will take to pass it:

"Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.

"Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen."[2]

It will take unshakable faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to choose the way to eternal life. It is by using that faith we can know the will of God. It is by acting on that faith we build the strength to do the will of God. And it is by exercising that faith in Jesus Christ that we can resist temptation and gain forgiveness through the Atonement.

We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us, as he will, with doubts and appeals to our carnal desires and with lying voices saying that good is bad and that there is no sin. Those spiritual storms are already raging. We can expect that they will worsen until the Savior returns.

Start early and be steady

However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to

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be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. Procrastination and inconsistency are its mortal enemies.

Let me suggest to you four settings in which to practice quick and steady obedience. One is the command to feast upon the word of God. A second is to pray always. A third is the commandment to be a full-tithe payer. And the fourth is to escape from sin and its terrible effects. Each takes faith to start and then to persevere. And all can strengthen your capacity to know and obey the Lord's commands.

Feast upon the word of God

You already have had the Lord's help to get started. In August you received this promise from President Gordon B. Hinckley if you would read the Book of Mormon through by the end of the year:

"Without reservation I promise you that if each of you will observe this simple program, regardless of how many times you previously may have read the Book of Mormon, there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."[3]

That is the very promise of increased faith we need to be spiritually prepared. But if we delayed the start of our obedience to that inspired invitation, the number of pages we had to read each day grew larger. If we then missed reading for even a few days, the chance of failure grew. That's why I chose to read ahead of my daily plan to be sure I will qualify for the promised blessings of the spirit of resolution and testimony of Jesus Christ. When December ends, I will have learned about starting at the moment a command from God comes and being steady in obedience.

More than that, as I read in the Book of Mormon, I will pray that the Holy Ghost will help me know what God would have me do. There is a promise of that plea being answered in the book itself: "Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."[4]

I will act quickly on what the Holy Ghost tells me I should do as I read and ponder the Book of Mormon. When I complete the project in December, I will have had many experiences of stretching my faith to be obedient. And so my faith will be strengthened. And I will know from my own experience what comes from going to the scriptures early and consistently to know what God wants me to do and then doing it. If we do that, we will be better prepared for the greater storms when they come.

We will then have a choice of what to do after January 1. We can choose to sigh with relief and say to ourselves, "I have built a great reservoir of faith by starting early and being steady in obedience. I will store it away against the times when I will be tested in storms." There is a better way to prepare, because great faith has a short shelf life. We could decide to persist in studying the words of Christ in the scriptures and the teachings of living prophets. This is what I will do. I will go back to the Book of Mormon and drink deeply and often. And then I will be grateful for what the prophet's challenge and promise did to teach me how to gain greater faith and maintain it.

Pray always

Personal prayer can also build our faith to do what God commands. We are commanded to pray *always* that we will not be overcome. Some of the protection we need will be direct intervention of God. But more of it will come from building our faith to obey. We can pray every day to know what God would have us do. We can commit to start to do it quickly when the

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answer comes. My experience is that He always answers such petitions. Then we can choose to obey. As we do, we will build faith enough that we will not be overcome. And we will gain the faith to go back again and again for further instruction. When the storms come, we will be ready to go and do what the Lord commands.

The Savior showed us a great example of such a prayer of submission. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane as He worked out the Atonement that His Father's will would be done. He knew that His Father's will would be for Him to do what was so painful and so terrible that we cannot comprehend it. He prayed not simply to accept the Father's will but to do it. He showed us the way to pray in perfect and determined submission.

Commit to pay a full tithe

The principle of exercising faith early and steadily applies as well to the commandment to pay tithing. We should not wait until the annual tithing settlement to decide to be a full-tithe payer. We can decide now. It takes time to learn to control our spending with faith that what we have comes from God. It takes faith to pay our tithing promptly and without procrastination.

If we decide now to be a full-tithe payer and if we are steady in paying it, blessings will flow throughout the year, as well as at the time of tithing settlement. By our decision now to be a full-tithe payer and our steady efforts to obey, we will be strengthened in our faith and, in time, our hearts will be softened. It is that change in our hearts through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, beyond the offering of our money or goods, that makes it possible for the Lord to promise full-tithe payers protection in the last days.[5] We can have confidence that we will qualify for that blessing of protection if we commit now to pay a full tithe and are steady in doing it.

Repent now

The same power of an early choice to exercise faith and to be persistent in obedience applies to gaining the faith to resist temptation and to gain forgiveness. The best time to resist temptation is early. The best time to repent is now. The enemy of our souls will place thoughts in our minds to tempt us. We can decide early to exercise faith, to cast out evil thoughts before we act on them. And we can choose quickly to repent when we do sin, before Satan can weaken our faith and bind us. Seeking forgiveness is always better now than later.

As my father lay in his bed near death, I asked him if he didn't think it was a time to repent and pray for forgiveness for any sins that were not yet resolved with God. He probably heard a little hint in my voice that he might fear death and the Judgment. He just chuckled quietly, smiled up at me, and said, "Oh, no, Hal, I've been repenting as I went along."

Decide to obey quickly and always

Decisions now to exercise faith and be steady in obedience will in time produce great faith and assurance. That is the spiritual preparedness we all will need. And it will qualify us in the moments of crisis to receive the Lord's promise that "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear."[6]

That will be true when we face the storms of life and the prospect of death. A loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son have given us all the help They can to pass the test of life set before us. But we must decide to obey and then do it. We build the faith to pass the tests of obedience over time and through our daily choices. We can decide now to do quickly whatever God asks of us. And we can decide to be steady in the small tests of obedience which build the faith to carry us through the great tests, which will surely come.

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I know that you and I are children of a loving Heavenly Father. I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and that He is our Savior and that He paid the price of all of our sins. He was resurrected, and He and Heavenly Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith. I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated through the gift and power of God. I know that this is the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I know that through the Holy Ghost we can learn what God would have us do. I testify that He can give us the power to do what He asks of us, whatever it is and whatever trials may come.

I pray that we will choose to obey the Lord quickly, always, in quiet times and in storms. As we do, our faith will be strengthened, we will find peace in this life, and we will gain the assurance that we and our families can qualify for eternal life in the world to come. I so promise you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Abraham 3:24–25.
2. 2 Nephi 10:23–25.
3. "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign,* Aug. 2005, 6.
4. 2 Nephi 32:3.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Families matter most

Several of the Brethren and I recently visited a few of the refugee centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas where devastated and displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina were staying as they began to try to put their lives back together. Their stories and situations are tragic and poignant in many ways, but in all that I heard, what touched me the most was the crying out for family: "Where is my mother?" "I can't find my son." "I've lost a sister." These were hungry, frightened people who had lost everything and needed food, medical attention, and help of all kinds, but what they wanted and needed most was their families.

Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! It will be even more so when we leave this life and enter into the spirit world. Surely the first people we will seek to find there will be father, mother, spouse, children, and siblings.

I believe the mission statement for mortality might be "to build an eternal family." Here on this earth we strive to become part of extended families with the ability to create and form our own part of those families. That is one of the reasons our Heavenly Father sent us here. Not everyone will find a companion and have a family in mortality, but everyone, regardless of individual circumstances, is a precious member of God's family.

Hold fast to the family proclamation

Brothers and sisters, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the proclamation to the world on the family, which was issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1995 (see "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102). It was then and is now a clarion call to protect and strengthen families and a stern warning in a world where declining values and misplaced priorities threaten to destroy society by undermining its basic unit.

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The proclamation is a prophetic document, not only because it was issued by prophets but because it was ahead of its time. It warns against many of the very things that have threatened and undermined families during the last decade and calls for the priority and the emphasis families need if they are to survive in an environment that seems ever more toxic to traditional marriage and to parent-child relationships.

The proclamation's clear and simple language stands in stark contrast to the confused and convoluted notions of a society that cannot even agree on a definition of family, let alone supply the help and support parents and families need. You are familiar with such words from the proclamation as these:

• "Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God."

• "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."

• "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."

• "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."

• "The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."

And the last words of the proclamation express the simple truth that the family is "the fundamental unit of society."

Today I call upon members of the Church and on committed parents, grandparents, and extended family members everywhere to hold fast to this great proclamation, to make it a banner not unlike General Moroni's "title of liberty," and to commit ourselves to live by its precepts. As we are all part of a family, the proclamation applies to everyone.

Incorrect ideas about the family

Public opinion surveys indicate that people everywhere in the world generally consider the family as the highest priority; yet in recent years the broader culture seems to ignore or misdefine the family. Consider some of the changes of the past decade:

• Many larger national and international institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.

• In the name of "tolerance," the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition to the point that "family" can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.

• Rampant materialism and selfishness delude many into thinking that families, and especially children, are a burden and a financial millstone that will hold them back rather than a sacred privilege that will teach them to become more like God.

The world needs the Church's teachings

And yet most parents throughout the world continue to know both the importance and the joy that are attached to natural families. Friends of mine who just returned from speaking to families and parents on several continents reported to me that the hopes and concerns of parents are remarkably similar throughout the earth.

In India a concerned Hindu mother said, "All I want is to be a bigger influence on my children than the media and the peer group." And a Buddhist mother in Malaysia said, "I'd like my boys to be able to operate in the world, but I don't want them to be of the world." Parents from all different cultures and faiths are saying and

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feeling the same things we are as parents in the Church.

The world needs to know what the proclamation teaches, because the family is the basic unit of society, of the economy, of our culture, and of our government. And as Latter-day Saints know, the family will also be the basic unit in the celestial kingdom.

In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death.

If we live and act upon this knowledge, we will attract the world to us. Parents who place a high priority on their families will gravitate to the Church because it offers the family structure, values, doctrine, and eternal perspective that they seek and cannot find elsewhere.

Love in families is critical to happiness

Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of the Church as a crucial "scaffolding" that helps build the individual and the family (see Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 107). The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, but in the kingdom of heaven, families will be both the source of our eternal progress and joy and the order of our Heavenly Father. As we are often reminded, we will be released one day from our Church callings, but if we are worthy we will never be released from our family relationships.

Joseph F. Smith said: "There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from the home, and every effort made to sanctify and preserve its influence is uplifting to those who toil and sacrifice for its establishment. Men and women often seek to substitute some other life for that of the home; they would make themselves believe that the home means restraint; that the highest liberty is the fullest opportunity to move about at will. There is no happiness without service, and there is no service greater than that which converts the home into a divine institution, and which promotes and preserves family life" (*Gospel Doctrine,* 5th ed. [1939], 300).

Ways to strengthen our homes

Now, one may ask, how do we protect and preserve and strengthen our homes and families in a world pulling so hard in opposite directions? Let me make three simple suggestions:

1. Be consistent in holding daily family prayer and weekly family home evenings. Both of these invite the Lord's Spirit, which provides the help and power we need as parents and family leaders. The Church curriculum and magazines have many good ideas for family home evening. Also consider holding a family testimony meeting where parents and children can express their beliefs and feelings to each other in a private and personal setting.

2. Teach the gospel and basic values in your home. Establish a love for reading the scriptures together. Too many of our parents are abdicating this responsibility to the Church. While seminary, auxiliaries, and priesthood quorums are important as a supplement to parental gospel instruction, the main responsibility rests in the home. You might want to choose one gospel subject or a family value and then watch for opportunities to teach it. Be wise and do not involve children or yourselves

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in so many activities out of the home that you are so busy that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be recognized or felt in giving you the promised guidance for yourself and your family.

3. Create meaningful family bonds that give your children an identity stronger than what they can find with their peer group or at school or anyplace else. This can be done through family traditions for birthdays, for holidays, for dinnertime, and for Sundays. It can also be done through family policies and rules with natural and well-understood consequences. Have a simple family economy where children have specific chores or household duties and receive praise or other rewards commensurate to how well they do. Teach them the importance of avoiding debt and of earning, saving, and wisely spending money. Help them learn responsibility for their own temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

In today's world, where Satan's aggression against the family is so prevalent, parents must do all they can to fortify and defend their families. But their efforts may not be enough. Our most basic institution of family desperately needs help and support from the extended family and the public institutions that surround us. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins can make a powerful difference in the lives of children. Remember that the expression of love and encouragement from an extended family member will often provide the right influence and help a child at a critical time.

Call for society to support the family

The Church itself will continue to be the first and foremost institution—the "scaffolding," as it were—to help build strong families. I can assure you that those who lead the Church have great concern about the well-being of your families, and thus you will see increasing efforts to prioritize and to focus on family needs. But as your leaders, we call upon members of the Church everywhere to put family first and to identify specific ways to strengthen their individual families.

Further, we call upon all public institutions to examine themselves and to do less that might harm families and more that will help them.

We call upon the media to offer more that promotes traditional family values and is uplifting and supportive of families and less that popularizes immorality and materialism.

We call upon government and political leaders to put the needs of children and parents first and to think in terms of family impact in all legislation and policy making.

We call upon Internet providers and Web-site creators to become more responsible regarding their potential for influence and to adopt the conscious objective of protecting children from violence, pornography, filth, and sleaze.

We call upon educational entities to teach universal values and family and parenting skills, supporting parents in their responsibility to raise children to become the leaders of families in generations yet to come.

We call upon our own Church members to reach out in love to neighbors and friends of other faiths and include them in the use of the many resources the Church has to help families. Our communities and neighborhoods will be safer and stronger as people of all faiths work together to strengthen families.

It is important to remember that all larger units of society depend on the smallest and most fundamental unit—the family. No matter who or what we are, we help ourselves when we help families.

Brothers and sisters, as we hold up like a banner the proclamation to the world on the family and as we live and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will fulfill the measure of our creation here on earth.

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We will find peace and happiness here and in the world to come. We should not need a hurricane or other crisis to remind us of what matters most. The gospel and the Lord's plan of happiness and salvation should remind us. What matters most is what lasts longest, and our families are for eternity. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "On This Day of Joy and Gladness."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir of fathers and sons from stakes in the Orem, Utah, area. Donald Ripplinger directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this priesthood session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

We note that joining with us this evening via satellite are some 4,100 brethren from various stakes across the southeastern United States who are devoting this weekend to providing relief to victims of the recent hurricanes in the Gulf states.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a father-and-son priesthood choir from stakes in the Orem, Utah, area, under the direction of Donald Ripplinger, with John Longhurst at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Truth Restored." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Truth Restored."

Elder Stephen B. Oveson offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." At the conclusion of the singing, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. He will be followed by Elder Charles Didier of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go."

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Elder David A. Bednar

We should be missionaries at all times

All of us who have received the holy priesthood bear the sacred obligation to bless the nations and families of the earth by proclaiming the gospel and inviting all to receive by proper authority the ordinances of salvation. Many of us have served as full-time missionaries, some of us presently are serving as full-time missionaries, and all of us now are serving and will continue to serve as lifelong missionaries. We are missionaries every day in our families, in our schools, in our places of employment, and in our communities. Regardless of our age, experience, or station in life, we are all missionaries.

Proclaiming the gospel is not an activity in which we periodically and temporarily engage. And our labors as missionaries certainly are not confined to the short period of time devoted to full-time missionary service in our youth or in our mature years. Rather, the obligation to proclaim the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is inherent in the oath and covenant of the priesthood into which we enter. Missionary work essentially is a priesthood responsibility, and all of us who hold the priesthood are the Lord's authorized servants on the earth and are missionaries at all times and in all places—and we always will be. Our very identity as holders of the priesthood and the seed of Abraham is in large measure defined by the responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

My message tonight is applicable to all of us in our priesthood duty to proclaim the gospel. My specific purpose in this priesthood meeting, however, is to talk candidly with the young men of the Church who are preparing for the call to serve as missionaries. The principles I will discuss with you are both simple and spiritually significant, and they should cause us to ponder, to evaluate, and to improve. I pray for the companionship of the Holy Ghost for me and for you as we consider together this important subject.

A frequently asked question

In meetings with young members of the Church around the world, I often invite those in attendance to ask questions. One of the questions I am asked most frequently by young men is this: "What can I do to prepare most effectively to serve as a full-time missionary?" Such a sincere question deserves a serious response.

My dear young brethren, the single most important thing you can do to prepare for a call to serve is to *become* a missionary long before you *go* on a mission. Please notice that in my answer I emphasized *becoming* rather than *going.* Let me explain what I mean.

In our customary Church vocabulary, we often speak of *going* to church, *going* to the temple, and *going* on a mission. Let me be so bold as to suggest that our rather routine emphasis on *going* misses the mark.

The issue is not going to church; rather, the issue is worshipping and renewing covenants as we attend church. The issue is not going to or through the temple; rather, the issue is having in our hearts the spirit, the covenants, and the ordinances of the Lord's house. The issue is not going on a mission; rather, the issue is becoming a missionary and serving throughout our entire life with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is possible for a young man to *go* on a mission and not *become* a missionary, and this is not what the Lord requires or what the Church needs.

My earnest hope for each of you young men is that you will not simply go on a mission—but that you will become missionaries long before you submit your mission

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papers, long before you receive a call to serve, long before you are set apart by your stake president, and long before you enter the MTC.

The principle of becoming

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught us most effectively about the challenge to become something instead of just doing expected things or performing certain actions:

"The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something. . . .

". . . It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 40–41; or *Ensign,* Nov. 2000, 32).

Brethren, the challenge to become applies precisely and perfectly to missionary preparation. Obviously the process of becoming a missionary does not require a young man to wear a white shirt and tie to school every day or to follow the missionary guidelines for going to bed and getting up, although most parents certainly would support that idea. But you can increase in your desire to serve God (see D&C 4:3), and you can begin to think as missionaries think, to read what missionaries read, to pray as missionaries pray, and to feel what missionaries feel. You can avoid the worldly influences that cause the Holy Ghost to withdraw, and you can grow in confidence in recognizing and responding to spiritual promptings. Line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, you can gradually become the missionary you hope to be and the missionary the Savior expects.

Becoming a missionary before the MTC

You will not suddenly or magically be transformed into a prepared and obedient missionary on the day you walk through the front door of the Missionary Training Center. What you have become in the days and months and years prior to your missionary service is what you will be in the MTC. In fact, the nature of the transition through which you will pass in the MTC will be a strong indicator of your progress in becoming a missionary.

As you enter the MTC, you obviously will miss your family, and many aspects of your daily schedule will be new and challenging. But for a young man well on his way to becoming a missionary, the basic adjustment to the rigors of missionary work and lifestyle will not be overwhelming, burdensome, or constraining. Thus, a key element of raising the bar includes working to become a missionary before going on a mission.

Fathers, do you understand your role in helping your sons become missionaries before they go on missions? You and your wife are key in the process of their becoming missionaries. Priesthood and auxiliary leaders, do you recognize your responsibility to assist parents and to help every young man become a missionary before he goes on a mission? The bar also has been raised for parents and for all members of the Church. Prayerful pondering of the principle of becoming will invite inspiration tailored to the specific needs of your son or to the young men whom you serve.

The preparation I am describing is not oriented only toward your missionary service as a 19- or 20- or 21-year-old young

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man. Brethren, you are preparing for a lifetime of missionary work. As holders of the priesthood, we are missionaries always. If you truly progress in the process of becoming a missionary, both before going on a mission and in the mission field, then when the day arrives for your honorable release as a full-time missionary, you will depart from your field of labor and return to your family—but you will never cease your missionary service. A priesthood holder is a missionary at all times and in all places. A missionary is who and what we are as bearers of the priesthood and as the seed of Abraham.

The seed of Abraham

The heirs of all the promises and covenants made by God to Abraham are referred to as *the seed of Abraham* (see Bible Dictionary, "Seed of Abraham," 771). These blessings are obtained only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Brethren, the process of becoming a missionary is directly related to understanding who we are as the seed of Abraham.

Abraham was a great prophet who desired righteousness and was obedient to all of the commandments he received from God, including the command to offer as a sacrifice his precious son Isaac. Because of his steadfastness and obedience, Abraham is often referred to as the father of the faithful, and Heavenly Father established a covenant with and promised great blessings to Abraham and his posterity:

"Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:16–18).

Thus, Abraham was promised a great posterity and that the nations of the earth would be blessed through that posterity.

How are the nations of the earth blessed through the seed of Abraham? The answer to this important question is found in the book of Abraham:

"And I will make of thee [Abraham] a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

"And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father" (Abraham 2:9–10).

We learn in these verses that Abraham's faithful heirs would have the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of the priesthood. Thus, the phrase "bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations" refers to the responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to invite all to receive by proper priesthood authority the ordinances of salvation. Truly, great responsibility rests upon the seed of Abraham in these latter days.

How do these promises and blessings relate to us today? Either by literal lineage or adoption, every man and boy within the sound of my voice tonight is a rightful heir to the promises made by God to Abraham. We are the seed of Abraham. One of the primary reasons we receive a patriarchal blessing is to help us more fully understand who we are as the posterity of Abraham and to recognize the responsibility that rests upon us.

Be missionaries today and always

My beloved brethren, you and I, today and always, are to bless all peoples in all the nations of the earth. You and I, to-

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day and always, are to bear witness of Jesus Christ and declare the message of the Restoration. You and I, today and always, are to invite all to receive the ordinances of salvation. Proclaiming the gospel is not a part-time priesthood obligation. It is not simply an activity in which we engage for a limited time or an assignment we must complete as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Rather, missionary work is a manifestation of our spiritual identity and heritage. We were foreordained in the premortal existence and born into mortality to fulfill the covenant and promise God made to Abraham. We are here upon the earth at this time to magnify the priesthood and to preach the gospel. That is who we are, and that is why we are here—today and always.

You may enjoy music, athletics, or be mechanically inclined, and someday you may work in a trade or a profession or in the arts. As important as such activities and occupations can be, they do not define who we are. First and foremost, we are spiritual beings. We are sons of God and the seed of Abraham:

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

"They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God" (D&C 84:33–34).

My dear brethren, we have been given much, and much is required of us. May you young men more fully understand who you are as the seed of Abraham and become missionaries long before you go on a mission. After coming back to your homes and families, may you returned missionaries always be missionaries. And may all of us rise up as men of God and bless the nations of the earth with greater testimony and spiritual power than we ever have before.

I declare my witness that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that He lives! And I witness that we, as holders of the priesthood, are His representatives in the glorious work of proclaiming His gospel, today and always. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Charles Didier

Man's search for divine truth

Among this vast audience tonight are three special guests—three dear old school friends. They made a long trip from Belgium, my native country, to be here to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our high school graduation and to attend this conference. To them, to you priesthood holders, and especially to you young men preparing to become missionaries, I dedicate this message. It is about man's search for divine truth. Once found, it is to be applied in this world of increased religious confusion and moral decadence. It must become the personal spiritual foundation that leads us to live according to the principles of righteousness. As the Lord said, "In righteousness shalt thou be established" (3 Nephi 22:14).

Hear and heed the voice of the Lord

Where is divine truth to be found? It is to "hear the voice of the Lord, . . . [hear] the voice of His servants, [and] give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles" (D&C 1:14). Hear and heed. To hear is relatively simple. To heed and apply what is heard becomes life's perpetual challenge.

First, hear the voice of the Lord. Communication from the Lord about divine truth or spiritual knowledge is found in the

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scriptures. It is called revelation—literally, "to make known or uncover" (Bible Dictionary, "Revelation," 762). It is given to "know how to worship, and know what you worship" (D&C 93:19). Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "Only with revelation can we do the Lord's work according to His will in His way and according to His timing" ("Revelation," *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting,* Jan. 2003, 5). "Without revelation, all would be guesswork, darkness, and confusion" (Bible Dictionary, 762).

Second, hear the voice of His servants. Revelation, or divine truth, is given by the will of the Lord to His servants in different ways and times and is also found in the scriptures. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

Third, give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles. To give heed is to pay special attention. It is to listen to those who have been called by God to be the especial living witnesses of Jesus Christ for our time. It implies that they are recognized in this role, that a response is given to their invitation to receive a personal spiritual confirmation that their teachings are true, and that a commitment to follow them will be made.

In summary, the Lord has a pattern of sharing divine truth with prophets to guide and bless us through the challenges and evils of life: hear and heed. Our personal spiritual foundation needs to be built upon this pattern if we want to enjoy the blessings of the Lord. So it is not enough to search the scriptures to know the mind of the Lord. It must be followed by an act of faith, accepting to do the will of the Lord by obeying His commandments, before we can enjoy the blessings of the Lord. A personal spiritual confirmation of this process by asking and believing that we will receive becomes, then, the prayer of our lifetime.

We must be prepared to hear

In reality, the communication or hearing about divine truth can be summarized in three words: revelation, commandments, blessings. However, it is going to be a lifetime challenge to first hear and then heed the voice of the Lord and His servants. Why? "For the natural man is an enemy to God . . . and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19). Spiritual preparation is a prerequisite to receive a personal spiritual impression. The rest of the verse reads that we must become "a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" and also become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to" the will of the Lord, meaning His commandments. Then says the Lord, "When we obtain any blessing . . . , it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:21).

Building a personal spiritual foundation

Let us now understand this pattern with a recent example of hearing and then giving heed to the words of the prophets and apostles of our time. The First Presidency recently extended an invitation to all members of the Church to read the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ before the end of the year. The challenge ended with a promise:

"[You] will be blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God" (First Presidency letter, July 25, 2005).

Why would we need to grow a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God as found in the Book of Mormon? Today there is much confusion in the Christian world about the doctrine of Christ—not only about His divine nature but even

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about His Atonement and Resurrection, His gospel, and especially the commandments related to it. The result is a belief in a self-made-man Christ, a popular Christ, and a silent, crucified Christ. Wrong religious beliefs lead to wrong religious behaviors.

A personal spiritual foundation can and must rely on a personal spiritual confirmation by the Holy Ghost of the living reality of Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the scriptures containing the revelations of the Lord. More specifically, the living reality of Christ is associated with the Restoration of His gospel and its message "that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth" (Book of Mormon introduction).

This spiritual confirmation by the power of the Holy Ghost is given on the Lord's conditions to anyone who is willing to ask in faith, believing that an answer can come by that power. It starts by listening to the voice of the Lord, His servants, His prophets and apostles, and it continues by giving heed to their words. Spiritual knowledge of the Restoration is a matter of faith.

Personal conversion experience

May I share my personal spiritual experience as a convert, as an example of this spiritual process. When the missionaries came to our home, I had the desire to listen to the message of the Restoration of the gospel. My motivation was mainly curiosity. Attending church, I heard more new spiritual knowledge. It was interesting and I liked it, but I was missing the essential: giving heed. I had to build a personal spiritual foundation upon the living reality of Christ and the confirmation that Joseph Smith was the prophet of the Restoration. That confirmation came only when I gave heed and tested my beginning faith in the Book of Mormon, the physical evidence of modern revelation.

However, acquiring that knowledge was not enough; it had to be followed by a commitment to transform my faith into certainty that the Book of Mormon was true and so was Joseph Smith as a prophet. My faith in Christ had never been in question. I trusted the Lord and His promises. Peace in my mind, inner peace, was the answer—no more questions. The spiritual foundation was set and followed by a commitment in my heart to accept the covenant of baptism. Then came the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide me and help me make righteous decisions to endure to the end. I knew from then on what to do with my future in this mortal life.

Test the power of God's word

Test divine revelation. Hear the voice of the Lord. It is real; it is personal; it is true. Reason does not and cannot replace revelation. Quoting President James E. Faust, "Do not let [your] private doubts separate you from the divine source of knowledge" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 22; or *Ensign,* Nov. 2003, 22).

Test and feel the powerful effect of the word of God upon your mind as given by the Lord's servants (see Alma 31:5).

Test, ask and receive in faith, then give heed to the words of prophets and apostles, and you will "receive a crown of eternal life" (D&C 20:14).

Now, just remember, in conclusion, that following the Lord's pattern to hear and give heed to divine truth will help you build a personal spiritual foundation and determine what you will become in this life and in the life hereafter.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Elder Paul V. Johnson

Counsel to Aaronic Priesthood holders

It is a sacred responsibility to address you in this general priesthood meeting. I always look forward to attending these priesthood sessions with my sons. I have great memories of sitting by them in our stake center as we listened to the teachings of the General Authorities. These meetings made a difference in my life when I was a young man, and they continue to make a difference in my life now. I know they have been an influence on my sons and on millions of Aaronic Priesthood holders around the world.

I speak to you Aaronic Priesthood holders tonight. We live in an exciting and wonderful time. The fulness of the gospel has been restored and is spreading across the earth. The keys of the priesthood are on the earth, and saving ordinances are available to those worthy of them. There are millions of good people on the earth striving to do what is right in their lives and in their families and in their communities.

This wonderful time in which we live is also filled with peril. You live in challenging times where many temptations and dangers await you. You have already been exposed to some of those temptations and dangers. You may have even seen individuals whose lives have been damaged by succumbing to some of the evils so prevalent in the world.

How can you, as an Aaronic Priesthood holder, be safe in these challenging times so you can fully do your part in this great work and find true happiness in this life and the life to come?

Guidance from general conference

It is not surprising that in the face of tremendous evil and temptation the Lord does not leave us to find our way on our own. In fact, there is more than enough guidance available to each of us if we will listen. You have received the gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and inspire you. You have the scriptures, parents, Church leaders and teachers. You also have the words of the prophets, seers, and revelators who live in our day. There is so much guidance and direction available that you won't make major mistakes in your life unless you consciously ignore the guidance you receive.

Tonight I would like to focus on one of these sources of guidance—the living prophets, seers, and revelators whom we sustained today. In fact, I would like to focus on one of the main ways we get direction from them—general conference.

Conferences have been part of the Church since the beginning of this dispensation. The first conference was held just two months after the Church was organized. We meet twice a year to be instructed by the General Authorities and general officers of the Church. The proceedings of these conferences are available through various means, both print and electronic.

Mother's love for general conference

My mother loved general conference. She always tuned in the radio and TV and turned the volume loud enough that it was difficult to find a place in the house where conference couldn't be heard. She wanted her children to listen to the talks and would ask us from time to time what we remembered. Once in a while I went outside with one of my brothers to play ball during a Saturday conference session. We would take a radio with us because we knew our mother might quiz us later. We would play ball and occasionally take a break to listen carefully so we could report to Mom. I doubt my mother was fooled

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when we both happened to remember the same thing from an entire session.

That is no way to listen to conference. I have since repented. I have grown to love general conference, I'm sure partly because of my mother's love for the words of the living prophets. I remember listening to the sessions of a particular conference all alone in an apartment while I was in college. The Holy Ghost witnessed to my soul that Harold B. Lee, the President of the Church at that time, was truly a prophet of God. This happened before I went into the mission field, and I was excited to testify of a living prophet because I had come to know for myself. I have had that same witness about each of the prophets since that time.

When I was in the mission field, the Church didn't have the satellite system, and the country where I served did not have broadcasts of general conference. My mother sent me audiotapes of the sessions, and I listened to them over and over again. I grew to love the voices and the words of the prophets and apostles.

A powerful conference in 1883

Recently I was reading the journal of my great-grandfather Nathaniel Hodges, who was called on a mission to England in 1883. He told of coming to Salt Lake City to be set apart for his mission and attending conference while he was there. Listen to his description of that conference:

"Went to meetings in large Tabernacle all day. There were splendid instructions given. The remarks of Joseph F. Smith and George Q. Cannon and President John Taylor were particularly powerful. I heard some of the oldest inhabitants say they never attended a more powerful and spiritual conference."[1]

I think the members of the Church have similar feelings about each general conference. It seems that each is more powerful and spiritual than the last.

Blessings from following leaders' counsel

In order for the messages of general conference to change our lives, we need to be willing to follow the counsel we hear. The Lord explained in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith "that when ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other, that ye may know . . . how to act upon the points of my law and commandments."[2] But knowing "how to act" isn't enough. The Lord in the next verse said, "Ye shall bind yourselves to act in all holiness before me."[3] This willingness to take action on what we have learned opens the doors for marvelous blessings.

A year ago in the priesthood session of conference President Hinckley spoke about the dangers of pornography. I don't think I've heard a more direct prophetic warning to members of the priesthood. You young brothers who listened and heeded his words have already been blessed and will be blessed more than you can now understand. Your future family will reap great blessings because of your obedience. Imagine how the world would be impacted if every priesthood holder blocked pornography from his life in response to the prophet's counsel.

Every time we are obedient to the words of the prophets and apostles we reap great blessings. We receive more blessings than we can understand at the time, and we continue to receive blessings long after our initial decision to be obedient.

On the day the Church was organized, Joseph Smith received a revelation that included an important principle for all Church members. Speaking to the Church about Joseph Smith the Lord said, "Thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you . . . for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth."[4]

Now listen to the blessings promised to those who heed: "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail

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against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good."[5]

Those are powerful promises that can keep us safe in these treacherous times. We need them, and the Lord will give them to each of us if we are willing to follow the prophets, seers, and revelators.

Make general conference a priority

Decide now to make general conference a priority in your life. Decide to listen carefully and follow the teachings that are given. Listen to or read the talks more than once to better understand and follow the counsel. As you do these things, the gates of hell will not prevail against you, the powers of darkness will be dispersed from before you, and the heavens will shake for your good.

I know that our Heavenly Father loves us and has a perfect plan for His children. I know that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives. I testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth. We have true prophets, seers, and revelators on the earth today who have "the words of eternal life."[6] To this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Journal of Nathaniel Morris Hodges, vol. 1, Apr. 8, 1883, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, typescript, 1–2.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
6. John 6:68.

President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing "Ye Elders of Israel," and following the singing I have been asked to address you.

President James E. Faust

The wisdom and unity of the Brethren

My dear brethren of the priesthood, please accept our appreciation for all you do to carry forward the Lord's work worldwide. I desire to speak about the sacred offices of those priesthood leaders who have been "called and chosen"[1] to guide the Church in this day. This is a special year for at least two reasons: first, we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith this December, and second, President Gordon B. Hinckley celebrated his 95th birthday this past June. I testify that the Prophet Joseph Smith was called and chosen as the first prophet of this dispensation and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the present prophet, seer, and revelator of this Church.

When Mike Wallace interviewed President Hinckley some years ago for the television program *60 Minutes,* he said, "[People will say] this is a church run by old men." To this, President Hinckley replied, "Isn't it wonderful to have a man of maturity at the head—a man of judgment who isn't blown about by every wind of doctrine?"[2] So if any of you think the present leadership is too old to lead the Church, President Hinckley may need to give you some further counsel about the wisdom that comes with age!

Of the 102 Apostles called in this dispensation, only 13 have served longer than President Hinckley. He has served longer as an Apostle than Brigham Young, President Hunter, President Lee, President Kimball, and many others. It is wonder-

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ful to have his inspired leadership. Please forgive me for saying that I myself feel at times that I am standing on the edge of eternity. At age 85, I am the third oldest of all the living General Authorities. I have not sought this honor. I have just lived for it.

I believe that never before in the history of the Church has there been more unity than exists among my Brethren of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the other General Authorities of the Church, who have been called and chosen and who are now guiding the Church. I believe there is ample evidence of this. The present leadership of God's earthly kingdom has enjoyed the Savior's guiding inspiration longer than any other group. We are the oldest group ever to lead the Church.

My association with some of these men for almost half a century qualifies me, I think, to state with confidence that my Brethren, without exception, are good, honorable, and trustworthy men. I know their hearts. They are the servants of the Lord. Their only desire is to labor in their great callings and build up the kingdom of God on earth. Our Brethren who are serving in this day and time are proven, tried, and true. Some are not as physically strong as they used to be, but their hearts are so pure, their experience so great, their minds so sharp, and their spiritual wisdom so deep that it is a comfort just to be in their presence.

Always be in harmony with the Brethren

I was humbled and overwhelmed to be called as an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles 33 years ago. A few days later President Hugh B. Brown counseled me that the most important thing I should do is to always be in harmony with my Brethren. President Brown did not elaborate. He just said, "Stick with the Brethren." I interpreted that to mean that I should follow the counsel and direction of the President of the Church, the First Presidency, and Quorum of the Twelve. That resonated as something I wanted to do with all my heart.

Others may not agree with that counsel, but it warrants some consideration. I have concluded that spiritual guidance in large measure depends upon being in harmony with the President of the Church, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve—all of whom are sustained, as they were today, as prophets, seers, and revelators. I do not know how we can expect to be in full harmony with the Spirit of the Lord if we are not in harmony with the President of the Church and the other prophets, seers, and revelators.

When I was a deacon, my father took me and my older brother to general priesthood meeting in the Tabernacle. I remember how thrilled I was to be in the presence, for the first time, of the prophet of God, President Heber J. Grant, and the other prophets and apostles. I listened intently to their messages and took the things they said into my heart. Over the years their subjects have been repeated many times. I expect that some of them will be repeated yet again in this conference. They are essential for our salvation, and we need the repetition.

Disharmony leads to spiritual darkness

Since the beginning of the world, history has recorded many examples of those who have not been in harmony with the prophets. In the early days of our dispensation, several of the Twelve, to their regret, did not stay loyal to the Prophet Joseph Smith. One of these was Lyman E. Johnson, a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve who was excommunicated for unrighteous conduct. He later lamented his spiritual downfall. He said: "I would suffer my right hand to be cut off, if I could believe it again. Then I was full of joy and gladness. My dreams were pleasant. When I awoke in the morning my spirit was

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cheerful. I was happy by day and by night, full of peace and joy and thanksgiving. But now it is darkness, pain, sorrow, misery in the extreme. I have never since seen a happy moment."[3] He died in a sleighing accident in 1856 at the age of 45.

Luke S. Johnson was also called to the original Quorum of the Twelve in 1835. His spiritual resolve weakened over some financial speculation in 1837. Looking back later he said: "My mind became darkened, and I was left to pursue my own course. I lost the Spirit of God, and neglected my duty; the consequence was, that at a Conference held in Kirtland, September 3, 1837, . . . I was cut off from the Church."

By December 1837 he joined the apostates in publicly denouncing the Church, and he was excommunicated for apostasy in 1838. For eight years he had a medical practice in Kirtland. Then in 1846 he and his family returned to the fellowship of the Saints. Said he: "I have stopped by the wayside and stood aloof from the work of the Lord. But my heart is with this people. I want to be associated with the saints; go with them into the wilderness and continue with them to the end." He was rebaptized in March 1846 and came west with the original company of pioneers in 1847. He died in Salt Lake City in 1861 in full fellowship at the age of 54.[4]

Support general and local Church leaders

My counsel to the members of the Church is to support the President of the Church, the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities with our whole hearts and souls. If we do, we will be in a safe harbor.

President Brigham Young said that the Prophet Joseph Smith "had to pray all the time, exercise faith, live his religion, and magnify his calling, to obtain the manifestations of the Lord, and to keep him steadfast in the faith."[5] All of us may expect some challenges to our faith. These challenges may come in different ways. You may not always like the counsel that the Church leaders give to you. They are not trying to be popular. They are trying to help us avoid the calamities and disappointments that come through disobedience to God's laws.

We also need to support and sustain our local leaders, because they also have been "called and chosen." Every member of this Church may receive counsel from a bishop or a branch president, a stake or a mission president, and the President of the Church and his associates. None of these brethren asked for his calling. None is perfect. Yet they are the servants of the Lord, called by Him through those entitled to inspiration. Those called, sustained, and set apart are entitled to our sustaining support.

I have admired and respected every bishop I have ever had. I have tried not to question their guidance and have felt that in sustaining and following their counsel I was protected against the "sleight of men, and cunning craftiness."[6] This was because each of these called and chosen leaders was entitled to the divine revelation that comes with the calling. Disrespect for ecclesiastical leaders has caused many to suffer spiritual weakening and downfall. We should look past any perceived imperfections, warts, or spots of the men called to preside over us and uphold the office which they hold.

A bishop on a dunking machine

Many years ago we used to have money-raising events in our wards to pay for the utilities and other local expenses and activities now paid by the general Church funds and the local unit budget allowance. We used to have bazaars, fairs, dinners, and other fund-raising activities. At that time my ward had a wonderful, devoted, committed bishop.

A member of a neighboring ward found that a dunking machine was a suc-

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cessful money-raising activity. Participants would pay to throw baseballs at a marked mechanical arm. Hitting the bull's-eye would trigger a release, plunging the person sitting on the seat of the machine into a big basin of cold water. Our ward decided to use this machine, and someone suggested that more people would pay for balls to throw if the bishop would be willing to sit on the dunking seat. Our bishop was a good sport, and because he was responsible for raising the money, he willingly consented to sit on the dunking seat. Soon some began to buy balls and to throw them at the target. Several hit the mark, and the bishop was drenched. After half an hour of this, he began to shake with the cold.

While some of the people thought this was great fun, my father was very offended that the office of the bishop had been so belittled and held up to ridicule or even contempt. Even though the money raised was intended for a good cause, I can still remember feeling ashamed that some of our people did not show more respect for both the office and the man who had by night and day served us so well as our good shepherd. As holders of the priesthood of God, we should set the example of sustaining the leadership of the Church to our families, our friends, and our associates.

A safety net of counsel and guidance

The holy scriptures as well as the local and General Authorities of the Church provide a safety net of counsel and guidance for the people of the Church. For example, all my life the Brethren have from this and other pulpits urged our people to live within their incomes, stay out of debt, and save a little for a rainy day, for rainy days always come. I have lived through times of great economic difficulty, such as the Great Depression and World War II. What I have experienced makes me afraid not to do what I can to protect myself and my family against the consequences of such catastrophes. I am grateful to the Brethren for this wise counsel.

The President of the Church will not lead the people of the Church astray. It will never happen. President Hinckley's counselors sustain him fully, as do the Quorum of the Twelve, the Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. As a result, as I have said before, a special love and harmony exist in the presiding councils of the Church for our President and for each other.

Leaders have been called and chosen

The priesthood of God is a shield. It is a shield against the evils of the world. That shield needs to be kept clean; otherwise, our vision of our purpose and the dangers around us will be limited. The cleansing agent is personal righteousness, but not all will pay the price to keep their shields clean. The Lord said, "For many are called, but few are chosen."[7] We are called when hands are laid upon our heads and we are given the priesthood, but we are not chosen until we have demonstrated to God our righteousness, our faithfulness, and our commitment.

Brethren, this work is true. Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son, and he heard and followed Their instruction. That was the beginning of this great work, the responsibility for which now rests upon us. I bear solemn witness of its divinity, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 55:1.
2. *Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, Volume 1: 1995–1999* (2005), 509.
3. In Brigham Young, *Deseret News,* Aug. 15, 1877, 484.
4. See Susan Easton Black, *Who's Who in the Doctrine & Covenants* (1997), 156–57.
5. *Discourses of Brigham Young,* sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 469.
6. Ephesians 4:14.
7. Matthew 22:14.

The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

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President Thomas S. Monson

Brethren of the priesthood, assembled here in the Conference Center and worldwide, I am humbled by the responsibility which is mine to address a few remarks to you. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to attend me as I do so.

I am aware that our audience this evening ranges from the most recently ordained deacon to the eldest high priest. To each, the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist and the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James, and John are sacred and treasured events.

Deacons serve a brother with palsy

To you deacons, may I say that I recall the time when I was ordained a deacon. Our bishopric stressed the sacred responsibility which was ours to pass the sacrament. Emphasized were proper dress, a dignified bearing, and the importance of being clean inside and out. As we were taught the procedure in passing the sacrament, we were told how we should assist Louis McDonald, a particular brother in our ward who was afflicted with a palsied condition, that he might have the opportunity to partake of the sacred emblems.

How I remember being assigned to pass the sacrament to the row where Brother McDonald sat. I was fearful and hesitant as I approached this wonderful brother, and then I saw his smile and the eager expression of gratitude that showed his desire to partake. Holding the tray in my left hand, I took a small piece of bread and pressed it to his lips. The water was later served in the same way. I felt I was on holy ground. And indeed I was. The privilege to pass the sacrament to Brother McDonald made better deacons of us all.

Deacons serve the sacrament to 5,000

Just two months ago, on Sunday, July 31, I was at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, attending an LDS sacrament meeting held during the National Scout Jamboree. My purpose in being there was to speak to the 5,000 Latter-day Saint young men and their leaders who had spent the previous week participating in the activities of the jamboree. They sat reverently in a natural amphitheater as an impressive 400-voice Aaronic Priesthood chorus sang:

A Mormon boy, a Mormon boy,
I am a Mormon boy.
I might be envied by a king,
For I am a Mormon boy.[1]

The sacrament was blessed, with 65 priests officiating at the many large sacrament tables which had been placed throughout the assembled group. Approximately 180 deacons then passed the sacrament. Within the time it would take to handle the passing of the sacrament in a crowded ward chapel, this large gathering was served. What an awe-inspiring sight I witnessed that morning as these Aaronic Priesthood young men participated in this holy ordinance.

Young men visit Welfare Square

It is important for each deacon to be guided to a spiritual awareness of the sacredness of his ordained calling. In one ward the lesson was effectively taught pertaining to the collection of fast offerings.

On fast day the ward members were visited by deacons and teachers so that each family could make a contribution. The deacons were a bit disgruntled, having to arise earlier than usual to fulfill this assignment.

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The inspiration came for the bishopric to take a busload of the deacons and teachers to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City. Here they saw needy children receiving new shoes and other items of clothing. Here they witnessed empty baskets being filled with groceries. There was no money exchanged. One brief comment was made: "Young men, this is what the money you collect on fast day provides—even food, clothing, and shelter for those who are in need." The Aaronic Priesthood young men smiled more, stepped higher, and served more willingly in filling their assignments.

Teachers and priests are home teachers

Now, pertaining to the teachers and priests, every one of you should be given the assignment to home teach with a companion who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A young man will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.[2]

President David O. McKay counseled: "Home teaching is one of our most urgent and most rewarding opportunities to nurture and inspire, to counsel and direct our Father's children. . . . [It] is a divine service, a divine call. It is our duty as Home Teachers to carry the divine spirit into every home and heart."[3]

Home teaching answers many prayers and permits us to see the occurrence of living miracles.

Johann Denndorfer's home teachers

As I think of home teaching, I am reminded of a man by the name of Johann Denndorfer from Debrecen, Hungary. He had been converted to the Church years before in Germany, and now, following World War II, he found himself virtually a prisoner in his own land of Hungary. How he longed for contact with the Church. Then his home teachers visited. Brother Walter Krause and his companion went from the northeastern portion of Germany all the way to Hungary to fulfill their home teaching assignment. Before they left from their homes in Germany, Brother Krause had said to his companion, "Would you like to go home teaching with me this week?"

His companion asked, "When will we leave?"

Brother Krause's response: "Tomorrow."

Then came the question, "When will we come back?"

Brother Krause did not hesitate; he said, "Oh, in about a week."

And away they went to visit Brother Denndorfer and others. Brother Denndorfer had not had home teachers since before the war. Now, when he saw the servants of the Lord, he was overwhelmed. He did not shake hands with them; rather, he went to his bedroom and took from a secret hiding place his tithing that he had saved for years. This tithing he gave to his home teachers, and then he said, "Now I can shake your hands."

A priest overcomes stuttering to baptize

Now a word for the priests in the Aaronic Priesthood. You young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue your home teaching duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Fifty-five years ago I knew a young man, Robert Williams, who held the office of priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. When he spoke, Robert stuttered and stammered, void of control. He was self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and everybody else; this impediment was devastating to him. Rarely did he accept an assignment; never would he look another person in the eye; always would he gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the responsibility to baptize another.

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I sat next to Robert in the baptistry of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I knew he needed all the help he could get. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I asked him how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost uncontrollably that he felt terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. The clerk then said, "Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest."

Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He spoke the words, "Nancy Ann McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

And he baptized her. Not once did he stutter! Not once did he falter! A modern miracle had been witnessed. Robert then performed the baptismal ordinance for two or three other children in the same fashion.

In the dressing room, I hurried to congratulate Robert. I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

I testify to you that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

Just over two years ago it was my privilege to speak at the funeral services for Robert Williams and to pay tribute to this faithful priesthood holder who tried his best throughout his life to honor his priesthood.

Young men, never give up

Some of you young men here tonight may be shy by nature or might consider yourselves inadequate to respond to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. We can look up and reach out for divine help.

Like some of you, I know what it is to face disappointment and youthful humiliation. As a boy, I played team softball in elementary and junior high school. Two captains were chosen, and then they, in turn, selected the players they desired on their respective teams. Of course, the best players were chosen first, then second, and third. To be selected fourth or fifth was not too bad, but to be chosen last and relegated to a remote position in the outfield was downright awful. I know; I was there.

How I hoped the ball would never be hit in my direction, for surely I would drop it, runners would score, and teammates would laugh.

As though it were just yesterday, I remember the very moment when all that changed in my life. The game started out as I have described: I was chosen last. I made my sorrowful way to the deep pocket of right field and watched as the other team filled the bases with runners. Two batters then went down on strikes. Suddenly, the next batter hit a mighty drive. I even heard him say, "This will be a home run." That was humiliating, since the ball was coming in my direction. Was it beyond my reach? I raced for the spot where I thought the ball would drop, uttered a prayer while running, and stretched forth my cupped hands. I surprised myself. I caught the ball! My team won the game.

This one experience bolstered my confidence, inspired my desire to practice, and led me from that last-to-be-chosen place to become a real contributor to the team.

We can experience that burst of confidence. We can feel that pride of performance. A three-word formula will help us: *Never give up.*

Magnify priesthood calling by serving

From the play *Shenandoah* comes the spoken line which inspires: "If we don't

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try, then we don't do; and if we don't do, then why are we here?"

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."[4]

And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Brethren, it is in *doing,* not just *dreaming,* that lives are blessed, others are guided, and souls are saved. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves,"[5] counseled James.

May all within the sound of my voice make a renewed effort to qualify for the Lord's guidance in our lives. There are many who plead and pray for help. There are those who are discouraged and in need of a helping hand.

The conversion of the Anastors

Many years ago when I served as a bishop, I presided over a large ward with over 1,000 members, including 87 widows. On one occasion I was visiting, along with one of my counselors, a widow and her mature handicapped daughter. As we left their apartment, a lady from the apartment across the hall was standing outside her door and stopped us. She spoke with a foreign accent and asked if I were a bishop; I replied that I was. She told me that she noticed I often visited with others. Then she said, "No one visits me or my bedfast husband. Do you have time to come in and visit with us, even though we are not members of your church?"

As we entered her apartment, we noticed that she and her husband were listening to the Tabernacle Choir on the radio. We talked with the couple for a while, then provided a blessing to the husband.

Following that initial visit I stopped by as often as I could. The couple eventually met with the missionaries, and the wife, Angela Anastor, was baptized. Sometime later her husband passed away, and I had the privilege of conducting and speaking at his funeral services. Sister Anastor, with her knowledge of the Greek language, later was to translate the widely used pamphlet *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story* into the Greek language.

Do your duty; that is best

I love the motto "Do [your] duty; that is best; Leave unto [the] Lord the rest!"[6]

Active service in the Aaronic Priesthood will prepare you young men to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to serve missions, and to marry in the holy temple.

You will ever remember your Aaronic Priesthood quorum advisers and your fellow quorum members, thereby experiencing the truth "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."[7]

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, your future beckons; prepare for it. May Heavenly Father ever guide you as you do so. May He guide all of us as we strive to honor the priesthood which we hold and to magnify our callings, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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NOTES

1. Evan Stephens, "A Mormon Boy," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 296.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
3. *Priesthood Home Teaching Handbook,* rev. ed. (1967), ii–iii.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14.
5. James 1:22.
6. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Legend Beautiful," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (1893), 258.
7. Paraphrasing James Barrie, in *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time,* comp. Laurence J. Peter (1977), 335.

President Monson

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We express appreciation to the father-and-son priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "True to the Faith." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Adhemar Damiani of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Seek to live exemplary lives

My dear brethren of the priesthood, wherever you may be across this broad world, what a tremendous body you have become, men and boys of every race and kindred, all a part of the family of God.

How precious is His gift to us. He has given to us a portion of that which is His divine authority, the eternal priesthood, the power by which He brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. It follows that when much has been given to us, much is required of us (see Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3).

I know that we are not perfect men. We know the perfect way, but we do not always act according to our knowledge. But I think that for the most part we are trying. We are trying to be the kind of men our Father would have us be. That is a very high objective, and I commend all of you who are trying to reach it. May the Lord bless you as you seek to live exemplary lives in every respect.

Helping people in the Gulf States

Now, as all of us are aware, the Gulf States area of the United States has recently suffered terribly from raging winds and waters. Many have lost all they had. The damage has been astronomical. Literally millions have suffered. Fear and worry have gripped the hearts of many. Lives have been lost.

With all of this, there has been a great outpouring of help. Hearts have been softened. Homes have been opened. Critics love to talk about the failures of Christianity. Any such should take a look at what the churches have done in these circumstances. Those of many denominations have accomplished wonders. And far from the least among these has been our own Church. Great numbers of our men have traveled considerable distances, bringing with them tools and tents and radiant hope. Men of the priesthood have given thousands upon thousands of hours in the work of rehabilitation. There have been three and four thousand at a time. There are some there tonight. We cannot say enough of thanks to them. Please know of our gratitude, of our love, and of our prayers in your behalf.

Two of our Area Seventies, Brother John Anderson, who resides in Florida, and Brother Stanley Ellis, who lives in

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Texas, have directed much of this effort. But they would be the first to say that the credit belongs to the great numbers of men and boys who have given assistance. Many have worn shirts that say "Mormon Helping Hands." They have won the love and respect of those they have assisted. Their assistance has gone not only to members of the Church in trouble, but to great numbers of those concerning whom no religious affiliation has been made.

They have followed the pattern of the Nephites as recorded in the book of Alma:

"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; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore 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" (Alma 1:30).

Women and girls in many parts of the Church have rendered a Herculean effort in providing hygiene and cleaning kits by the tens of thousands. The Church has provided equipment, food, water, and comfort.

We have contributed substantial amounts of money to the Red Cross and other agencies. We have given millions from fast offerings and humanitarian funds. To every one of you I say thanks in behalf of your beneficiaries and thanks in behalf of the Church.

Prophets have foretold catastrophes

Now, I do not say, and I repeat emphatically that I do not say or infer, that what has happened is the punishment of the Lord. Many good people, including some of our faithful Latter-day Saints, are among those who have suffered. Having said this, I do not hesitate to say that this old world is no stranger to calamities and catastrophes. Those of us who read and believe the scriptures are aware of the warnings of prophets concerning catastrophes that have come to pass and are yet to come to pass.

There was the great flood, when waters covered the earth and when, as Peter says, only "eight souls were saved" (1 Peter 3:20).

If anyone has any doubt concerning the terrible things that can and will afflict mankind, let him read the 24th chapter of Matthew. Among other things the Lord says:

"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. . . .

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

"All these are the beginning of sorrows. . . .

"And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! . . .

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:6–8, 19, 21–22).

Destruction in the Western Hemisphere

In the Book of Mormon we read of unimaginable destruction in the Western Hemisphere at the time of the Savior's death in Jerusalem. Again I quote:

"And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land.

"And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder.

"And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land.

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"And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

"And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned.

"And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain. . . .

". . . The whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth;

"And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.

"And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate" (3 Nephi 8:5–10, 12–14).

What a terrible catastrophe that must have been.

Suffering and death through the centuries

The plague, or Black Death, of the 14th century took millions of lives. Other pandemic diseases, such as smallpox, have brought untold suffering and death through the centuries.

In the year A.D. 79 the great city of Pompeii was destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted.

Chicago was ravaged by a terrible fire. Tidal waves have swamped areas of Hawaii. The San Francisco earthquake in 1906 ruined the city and took some 3,000 lives. The hurricane that hit Galveston, Texas, in 1900 killed 8,000. And more recently, as you know, has been the terrible tsunami of Southeast Asia, where thousands of lives were lost and where relief efforts are still needed.

Current calamities were foretold

How portentous are the words of revelation found in the 88th section of the Doctrine and Covenants concerning the calamities that should befall after the testimonies of the elders. The Lord says:

"For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

"And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

"And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people" (D&C 88:89–91).

How interesting are descriptions of the tsunami and the recent hurricanes in terms of the language of this revelation, which says, "The voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds."

Man's inhumanity to man expressed in past and present conflict has and continues to bring unspeakable suffering. In the Darfur region of Sudan, tens of thousands have been killed and well over a million have been left homeless.

"If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"

What we have experienced in the past was all foretold, and the end is not yet. Just as there have been calamities in the past, we expect more in the future. What do we do?

Someone has said it was not raining when Noah built the ark. But he built it, and the rains came.

The Lord has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

The primary preparation is set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein it says, "Wherefore, stand ye in holy places,

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and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come" (D&C 87:8).

We sing the song:

When the earth begins to tremble,
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;
When thy judgments spread destruction,
Keep us safe on Zion's hill.
["Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," *Hymns*, no. 83]

Keep the Lord's commandments

We can so live that we can call upon the Lord for His protection and guidance. This is a first priority. We cannot expect His help if we are unwilling to keep His commandments. We in this Church have evidence enough of the penalties of disobedience in the examples of both the Jaredite and the Nephite nations. Each went from glory to utter destruction because of wickedness.

We know, of course, that the rain falls on the just as well as the unjust (see Matthew 5:45). But even though the just die, they are not lost but are saved through the Atonement of the Redeemer. Paul wrote to the Romans, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Romans 14:8).

Heed warnings

We can heed warnings. We have been told that many had been given concerning the vulnerability of New Orleans. We are told by seismologists that the Salt Lake Valley is a potential earthquake zone. This is the primary reason that we are extensively renovating the Tabernacle on Temple Square. This historic and remarkable building must be made to withstand the shaking of the earth.

Stock the family storeroom

We have built grain storage and storehouses and stocked them with the necessities of life in the event of a disaster. But the best storehouse is the family storeroom. In words of revelation the Lord has said, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing" (D&C 109:8).

Our people for three-quarters of a century have been counseled and encouraged to make such preparation as will assure survival should a calamity come.

We can set aside some water, basic food, medicine, and clothing to keep us warm. We ought to have a little money laid aside in case of a rainy day.

The Lord will watch over us

Now what I have said should not occasion a run on the grocery store or anything of that kind. I am saying nothing that has not been said for a very long time.

Let us never lose sight of the dream of Pharaoh concerning the fat cattle and the lean, the full ears of corn and the blasted ears, the meaning of which was interpreted by Joseph to indicate years of plenty and years of scarcity (see Genesis 41:1–36).

I have faith, my dear brethren, that the Lord will bless us and watch over us and assist us if we walk in obedience to His light, His gospel, and His commandments. He is our Father and our God, and we are His children, and we must be in every way deserving of His love and concern. That we may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "True to the Faith."

Elder Adhemar Damiani offered the benediction.

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SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2005. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott and John Longhurst were the organists. The choir sang "The Morning Breaks" to begin the session. President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott and John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

The choir sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

The choir sang "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief."

President Hinckley

Thank you, choir, for that magnificent number.

We'll first hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, after which President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Presidency of the Seventy. We shall all then join together in singing "Sweet Is the Work."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Cheryl C. Lant, Primary general president, will address us. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us, and the choir will then sing "The Seer, Joseph, the Seer."

President Thomas S. Monson

Joseph Smith: teacher by example

My brothers and sisters, in this bicentennial year of his birth, I should like to speak of our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith.

On December 23, 1805, Joseph Smith Jr. was born in Sharon, Vermont, to Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. On the day of his birth, as the proud parents looked down upon this tiny baby, they could not have known what a profound

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impact he would have upon the world. A choice spirit had come to dwell in its earthly tabernacle; he has affected our lives and has taught us—through his own example—essential lessons. Today I should like to share a few of those lessons with you.

Joseph's childhood leg surgery

When Joseph was about six or seven years old, he and his brothers and sisters were stricken with typhus fever. Although the others recovered readily, Joseph was left with a painful sore on his leg. The doctors, using the best medicine they had, treated him, and yet the sore persisted. In order to save Joseph's life, they said, he would have to lose his leg. Thankfully, however, soon after that diagnosis, the doctors returned to the Smith home and reported that there was a new procedure which might save Joseph's leg. They wanted to operate immediately and had brought some cord with which to tie little Joseph to the bed so he wouldn't thrash about, since they had nothing with which to dull the pain. Young Joseph, however, told them, "You won't need to tie me."

The doctors suggested he take some brandy or wine so that the pain might not be so severe. "No," young Joseph replied. "If my father will sit on the bed and hold me in his arms, I will do whatever is necessary." Joseph Smith Sr. held in his arms his small child, and the doctors removed the diseased piece of bone. Although young Joseph was lame for some time afterward, he was healed.[1] At such a young age and countless other times throughout his life, Joseph Smith taught us *courage*—by example.

The First Vision

Before Joseph's 15th year, his family moved to Manchester, New York. He later described the great religious revival which seemed everywhere present at this time and of prime concern to nearly everyone. Joseph himself longed to know which church he should join. He writes in his history:

"I often said to myself: . . . Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

"While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by . . . these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, . . . : *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*"[2]

Joseph reported that he knew he must either put the Lord to the test and ask Him or perhaps choose to remain in darkness forever. Early one morning he stepped into a grove, now called sacred, and knelt and prayed, having faith that God would give him the enlightenment which he so earnestly sought. Two personages appeared to Joseph—the Father and the Son—and he was told, in answer to his question, that he was to join none of the churches, for none of them was true. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us the principle of *faith*—by example. His simple prayer of faith on that spring morning in 1820 brought about this marvelous work which continues today throughout the world.

Joseph's unwavering faith

A few days after his prayer in the Sacred Grove, Joseph Smith gave an account of his vision to a preacher with whom he was acquainted. To his surprise, his communication was treated with "contempt" and "was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase." Joseph, however, did not waver. He later wrote, "I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true. . . . For

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I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it."[3] Despite the physical and mental punishment at the hands of his opponents which the Prophet Joseph Smith endured throughout the remainder of his life, he did not falter. He taught *honesty*—by example.

Joseph's patience and diligence

After that great First Vision, the Prophet Joseph received no additional communication for three years. However, he did not wonder; he did not question; he did not doubt the Lord. He waited patiently. He taught us the heavenly virtue of *patience*—by example.

Following the visits of the angel Moroni to young Joseph and his acquisition of the plates, Joseph commenced the difficult assignment of translation. One can but imagine the dedication, the devotion, and the labor required to translate in fewer than 90 days this record of over 500 pages covering a period of 2,600 years. I love the words Oliver Cowdery used to describe the time he spent assisting Joseph with the translation of the Book of Mormon: "These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom!"[4] The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us *diligence*—by example.

As we know, the Prophet Joseph sent forth missionaries to preach the restored gospel. He himself served a mission in Upper New York and in Canada with Sidney Rigdon. He not only inspired others to volunteer for missions, but he also taught the importance of *missionary work*—by example.

Joseph Smith's martyrdom

I think one of the sweetest lessons taught by the Prophet Joseph, and yet one of the saddest, occurred close to the time of his death. He had seen in vision the Saints leaving Nauvoo and going to the Rocky Mountains. He was anxious that his people be led away from their tormentors and into this promised land which the Lord had shown him. He no doubt longed to be with them. However, he had been issued an arrest warrant on trumped up charges. Despite many appeals to Governor Ford, the charges were not dismissed. Joseph left his home, his wife, his family, and his people and gave himself up to the civil authorities, knowing he would probably never return.

These are the words he spoke as he journeyed to Carthage: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men."[5]

In Carthage Jail he was incarcerated with his brother Hyrum and others. On June 27, 1844, Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor, and Willard Richards were together there when an angry mob stormed the jail, ran up the stairway, and began firing through the door of the room they occupied. Hyrum was killed, and John Taylor was wounded. Joseph Smith's last great act here upon the earth was one of selflessness. He crossed the room, most likely "thinking that it would save the lives of his brethren in the room if he could get out, . . . and sprang into the window when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without."[6] He gave his life; Willard Richards and John Taylor were spared. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."[7] The Prophet Joseph Smith taught us *love*—by example.

In retrospect, over 160 years later, although the events of June 27, 1844, were tragic, we are provided comfort as we realize that Joseph Smith's martyrdom was not the last chapter in this account. Although those who sought to take his life felt that the Church would collapse without him, his powerful testimony of truth, the teachings he translated, and his decla-

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ration of the Savior's message go on today in the hearts of over 12 million members throughout the world, who proclaim him a prophet of God.

A missionary testifies of Joseph Smith

The testimony of the Prophet Joseph continues to change lives. Some years ago I served as the president of the Canadian Mission. In Ontario, Canada, two of our missionaries were proselyting door-to-door on a cold, snowy afternoon. They had not had any measure of success. One elder was experienced; one was new.

The two called at the home of Mr. Elmer Pollard, and he, feeling sympathy for the almost frozen missionaries, invited them in. They presented their message and asked if he would join in prayer. He agreed, on the provision that he could offer the prayer.

The prayer he offered astonished the missionaries. He said, "Heavenly Father, bless these two unfortunate, misguided missionaries that they may return to their homes and not waste their time telling the people of Canada about a message which is so fantastic and about which they know so little."

As they arose from their knees, Mr. Pollard asked the missionaries never to return to his home. As they left, he said mockingly to them, "You can't tell me you really believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God anyway!" and he slammed the door.

The missionaries had walked but a short distance when the junior companion said timidly, "Elder, we didn't answer Mr. Pollard."

The senior companion responded: "We've been rejected. Let's move on."

The young missionary persisted, however, and the two returned to Mr. Pollard's door. Mr. Pollard answered the knock and angrily said, "I thought I told you young men never to return!"

The junior companion then said, with all the courage he could muster, "Mr. Pollard, when we left your door, you said that we didn't really believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I want to testify to you, Mr. Pollard, that I *know* Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that by inspiration he translated the sacred record known as the Book of Mormon, that he did see God the Father and Jesus the Son." The missionaries then departed the doorstep.

I heard this same Mr. Pollard in a testimony meeting state the experiences of that memorable day. He said, "That evening, sleep would not come. I tossed and turned. Over and over in my mind I heard the words, 'Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know it. . . . I know it. . . . I know it.' I could scarcely wait for morning to come. I telephoned the missionaries, using their number which was printed on the small card containing the Articles of Faith. They returned, and this time my wife, my family, and I joined in the discussion as earnest seekers of truth. As a result, we have all embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. We shall ever be grateful to the testimony of truth brought to us by those two courageous, humble missionaries."

The prophet and seer of the Lord

In the 135th section of the Doctrine and Covenants we read the words of John Taylor concerning the Prophet Joseph: "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."[8]

I love the words of President Brigham Young, who said, "I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained, and to whom he gave keys and power to build up the Kingdom of God on earth."[9]

To this fitting tribute to our beloved Joseph, I add my own testimony that I

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know he was God's prophet, chosen to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I pray that as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth, we may learn from his life. May we incorporate into our own lives the divine principles which he so beautifully taught—by example—that we, ourselves, might live more completely the gospel of Jesus Christ. May our lives reflect the knowledge we have that God lives, that Jesus Christ is His Son, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that we are led today by another prophet of God—even President Gordon B. Hinckley.

This conference marks 42 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In my first meeting with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in the temple, the hymn which we sang, honoring Joseph Smith the Prophet, was and is a favorite of mine. I close with a verse from that hymn:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.[10]

I testify of this solemn truth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother,* ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 69–76.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:10–11.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:21–22, 25.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
6. *History of the Church,* 6:618.
7. John 15:13.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young,* sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 456.
10. "Praise to the Man," *Hymns,* no. 27.

President Boyd K. Packer

Optimism despite declining standards

I have lived a long time and watched the standards upon which civilization must depend for survival swept aside one piece at a time.

We live in a day when the age-old standards of morality, marriage, home, and family suffer defeat after defeat in courts and councils, in parliaments and classrooms. Our happiness depends upon living those very standards.

The Apostle Paul prophesied that in our day, these last days, men would be "disobedient to parents, . . . without natural affection, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2–4).

And he warned: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). He was right. Nevertheless, when I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with a feeling of positive optimism.

Continuing revelation prepares us

Paul told young Timothy to continue in the things he had learned from the Apostles and said he would be safe because "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

A knowledge of the scriptures is important. From them we learn about spiritual guidance.

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I have heard people say, "I would have willingly endured persecution and trials if I might have lived in the early years of the Church when there was such a flow of revelation published as scripture. Why is that not happening now?"

The revelations that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, printed as scripture, laid the permanent foundation of the Church through which the gospel of Jesus Christ could go forth to "every nation" (2 Nephi 26:13).[1]

The scriptures define the office of the prophet and president and his counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric, and the stakes and wards and branches. They define the offices of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods. They establish the channels through which inspiration and revelation can flow to the leaders and teachers and parents and to individuals.

The opposition and trials are different now. If anything, they are more intense, more dangerous than in those early days, aimed not so much at the Church as at us as individuals. The early revelations, published as scriptures for the permanent guidance of the Church, define the ordinances and covenants and are still in force.

One of those scriptures promises, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

Let me tell you what has been done to prepare us. Perhaps you will then understand why I do not fear the future, why I have such positive feelings of confidence.

I cannot possibly describe in detail or even list all that has been put in place by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in recent years. In them you will see continuing revelation, open to the Church and to each individual member. I will describe a few of them.

LDS edition of the scriptures

More than 40 years ago it was determined to make the doctrine quickly and easily available to every member of the Church by preparing a Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. We set out to cross-reference the King James Bible with the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The text of the King James Bible was left completely unaltered.

Tyndale and Wycliffe prepared the way

Work was done centuries ago to prepare for our day. Ninety percent of the King James Bible is as translated by William Tyndale and John Wycliffe. We owe much to those early translators, those martyrs.

William Tyndale said, "I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than [the clergy]."[2]

Alma had come through great trials and faced even greater ones. And the record says, "And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God" (Alma 31:5).

That is exactly what we had in mind when we began the scripture project: that every member of the Church could know the scriptures and understand the principles and doctrines to be found in them. We set out to do in our day what Tyndale and Wycliffe had done in theirs.

Both Tyndale and Wycliffe were terribly persecuted. Tyndale suffered in a freezing prison in Brussels. His clothing was worn to rags, and he was terribly cold. He wrote to the bishops asking for his coat and cap. He begged for a candle, saying, "It is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark."[3] They were so enraged at this request that he was taken from prison and, before a large crowd, burned at the stake.

Wycliffe escaped death by burning, but the Council of Constance had his body

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exhumed and burned at the stake and his ashes scattered.[4]

The Prophet Joseph Smith had borrowed the volumes of the *Book of Martyrs* by the 16th-century English cleric John Foxe from the mother of Edward Stevenson of the Seventy. After he read them, he said, "I have, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, seen those martyrs, and they were honest, devoted followers of Christ, according to the light they possessed, and they will be saved."[5]

The enormous work of preparation

To cross-reference more than 70,000 verses of scripture and provide footnotes and helps was known to be enormously difficult, perhaps even impossible. But it was begun. It took 12 years and the help of over 600 people to complete. Some were experts in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew or had a knowledge of ancient scriptures. But most were ordinary, faithful members of the Church.

The spirit of inspiration brooded over the work.

The project would have been impossible without the computer.

A remarkable system was designed to organize tens of thousands of footnotes to open the scriptures to every ploughboy and every ploughgirl.

With a subject-matter index, a member can, in just a few minutes, look up such words as *atonement, repentance,* and *Holy Ghost* and find revealing references from all four scriptures.

Several years into the project, we asked how they were progressing with the tedious, laborious listing of topics in alphabetical order. They wrote, "We have been through *Heaven* and *Hell,* past *Love* and *Lust,* and now we're working toward *Repentance.*"

Original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon came into our hands. These made possible the correction of printers' errors which creep into scriptural translations.

Most notable in the Topical Guide are the 18 pages, single-spaced, small print, under the heading "Jesus Christ," the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the name Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world. Follow these references, and you will open the door to whose Church this is, to what it teaches and by what authority—all anchored to the sacred name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, our Lord.

Two new revelations were added to the Doctrine and Covenants—section 137, a vision given to Joseph Smith the Prophet on the occasion of the administration of the endowment, and section 138, President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead. Then, just as this work was being closed for printing, the marvelous revelation on the priesthood was received and announced in an official declaration (see D&C Official Declaration 2), proving that the scriptures are not closed.

Then came the enormous challenge of translation into the languages of the Church. Now the triple combination, with the Guide to the Scriptures, has been published in 24 languages, with others to follow. The Book of Mormon is now printed in 106 languages. Forty-nine translations are under way.

Other things were done. The Book of Mormon was given a subtitle—the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

With the foundation doctrines in place as solid as the granite in the Salt Lake Temple and open to everyone, more could witness the constant flow of revelation to the Church. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

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Church curriculum restructured

While the scripture publication moved on, another great work was begun. This too would take years. The entire curriculum of the Church was restructured. All courses of study in priesthood and auxiliary organizations—for children, youth, and adults—were revised to center on the scriptures, to center on Jesus Christ, to center on the priesthood, and to center on the family.

Hundreds of volunteers worked year in and year out. Some of them were experts in writing, curriculum, instruction, and other related fields, but most were ordinary members of the Church. It was all anchored in the scriptures, with emphasis on the authority of the priesthood and with focus on the sacred nature of the family.

Many evidences of continuing revelation

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."[6] They then published "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles."[7]

Seminaries and institutes of religion spread across the world. The teachers and students learn and teach by the Spirit (see D&C 50:17–22), and both are taught to understand the scriptures, the words of the prophets, the plan of salvation, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Apostasy and Restoration, the unique position of the restored Church, and to identify the principles and doctrines found in them. Students are encouraged to develop a habit of daily scripture study.

Monday night was reserved for family home evening. All activities of the Church are to yield so that families can be together.

In natural sequence, missionary work was reanchored to the revelations under the title *Preach My Gospel.* Each year more than 25,000 missionaries are released to return to their homes in 148 countries after spending two years learning the doctrine and how to teach by the Spirit and sharing their testimonies.

Principles of priesthood government have been clarified. The place of the quorums of the priesthood—Aaronic and Melchizedek—has been magnified. Always, everywhere, there are leaders who hold the keys—bishops and presidents—to give guidance, to clarify misunderstandings, to detect and correct false doctrines.

The course of study for adults in priesthood and Relief Society is based on the teachings of the Presidents of the Church.

Church magazines have been redesigned and are published now in 50 languages.

An awesome era of temple building goes on, with 122 temples opened for ordinance work and two more announced yesterday.

Genealogy was renamed "family history." Faithful members are aided by the newest technology to prepare and bring names to the temple.

These things all witness of continuing revelation. There are other things, too numerous to describe in detail.

The Church's power is in hearts and souls

There is in the Church a central core of power deeper than programs or meetings or associations. It does not change. It cannot erode. It is constant and certain. It never recedes or fades.

While the Church is housed in chapels, it lives in the heart and soul of every Latter-day Saint.

Everywhere in the world, humble members draw inspiration from the scriptures to guide them through life, not fully understanding that they have found that "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:46) about which the Lord spoke to His disciples.

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We can each stand on Zion's hill

When Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, collected hymns for the first hymnbook, she included "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," which is, in fact, a prayer:

When the earth begins to tremble,
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;
When thy judgments spread destruction,
Keep us safe on Zion's hill.[8]

Every soul who willingly affiliates with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and seeks to abide by its principles and ordinances is standing "on Zion's hill."

Each can receive assurance which comes through inspiration and testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is just as He declared it to be, "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See also Revelation 5:9; 14:6; 1 Nephi 19:17; Mosiah 3:13, 20; 15:28; 16:1; Alma 9:20; 37:4; Doctrine and Covenants 10:51; 77:8, 11; 133:37.
2. In David Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament,* trans. William Tyndale (1989), viii.
3. In Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament,* ix.
4. See John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs,* ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 18–20.
5. In Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (1893), 6.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign,* Nov. 1995, 102.
7. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign,* Apr. 2000, 2.
8. *Hymns,* no. 83.

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

The universal nature of the gospel

Recently a participant on a radio program questioned the international appeal of the Church, given its origins in New York, its headquarters in Utah, and the Book of Mormon story of an ancient American people. As I thought of friends in Asia, Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world, it was apparent that the discussant did not understand the universal nature of the restored gospel or the all-encompassing applicability of its ordinances, covenants, and blessings. The worldwide significance of the Prophet Joseph Smith's First Vision and the Book of Mormon are not measured by location but by their message regarding man's relationship to God, the Father's love for His children, and the divine potential within each human being.

The prophetic call through all ages has been, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32; see also Matthew 5:48; John 10:10; 14:6), that salvation is through the Only Begotten Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; D&C 29:42). The call is universal and applies to all of God's children, whether African, Asian, European, or any other nationality. As the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, all of us "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29).

The Savior was rejected by many

The Father's plan of life, with its central focus on Christ's Atonement, was prepared before the foundation of the world (see Abraham 3:22–28; Alma 13:3). It was given to Adam and Eve, and they were commanded to teach it to their children

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(see Moses 5:6–12). Over time the posterity of Adam rejected the gospel, but it was renewed through Noah and then again through Abraham (see Exodus 6:2–4; Galatians 3:6–9). The gospel was offered to the Israelites in Moses's day. But a sterner taskmaster was required to bring them to Christ, given centuries in apostasy (see Exodus 19:5–6; D&C 84:19–24). The fulness of the gospel was finally restored to Israel by the Savior Himself in the meridian of time.

One of the most illuminating passages of scripture regarding this sequence of apostasy and restoration is found in Jesus's parable of the wicked husbandmen (see Mark 12:1–10). In the parable, Jesus reminds the people of the many prophets who have been sent through the ages to raise up righteous nations. He then states how the messengers were rejected again and again. Some were beaten and sent away empty. Others were killed. And then, prophesying about His own ministry, Jesus tells His listeners that the Father decided to send His "one son, his well beloved" (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 12:7), saying, "They will reverence my son" (Matthew 21:37).

Jesus, however, knowing His own fate, then declared:

"But those husbandmen said . . . , This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

"And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard" (Mark 12:7–8).

Knowledge of God has been restored

Following the Savior's death and those of His Apostles, doctrines and ordinances were changed, and apostasy set in again. This time spiritual darkness lasted for hundreds of years before rays of light would once more penetrate the earth. The Apostle Peter knew of this Apostasy and prophesied following the Savior's Ascension that the Lord would not return for His Second Coming until there was a "restitution of all things" (see Acts 3:19–21). The Apostle Paul also prophesied of a time when the members would "not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3–4) and that a "falling away" (2 Thessalonians 2:2–3) would precede the Second Coming of Christ. He too referred to the "restitution of all things," saying that the Savior "in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Ephesians 1:10).

The Lord directed the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The "restitution of all things" began in the Sacred Grove with the Father and the Son appearing to Joseph Smith. In vision, Joseph learned of God's personal nature—that the Father and the Son are separate, exalted beings with bodies of flesh and bone.

Book of Mormon teaches the Atonement

At the beginning of most dispensations, a book is given to the newly called prophet. Moses received tablets (see Exodus 31:18). Lehi was given a book to read concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:11–14). Ezekiel was given "a roll of a book" (Ezekiel 2:9–10) containing the Lord's message for the house of Judah in his day. John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos was shown a book with seven seals (see Revelation 5; D&C 77:6). Is it any wonder, then, that the Lord would provide a book containing the fulness of the gospel as part of the "restitution of all things"? The Book of Mormon has the power to draw all men and women to Christ. Its references to the Savior's Atonement are the clearest on record with regard to its purpose and powers.

The Holy Spirit has whispered to my soul that Joseph saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove and that the Book of Mormon is true. I am grateful for the additional knowledge concerning the Savior's Atonement contained in the Book

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of Mormon. One of the titles given to the Savior is that of Only Begotten Son of the Father. For example, the Apostle John in his Gospel states that he beheld the majesty and glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration and that His glory was that of the "only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14; see also verse 18). The Book of Mormon likewise uses this title many times.

The Savior's death was voluntary

Unlike mortals who inherit the seeds of death from both parents, Jesus was born of a mortal mother but an immortal Father. The seeds of death received from Mary meant that He could die, but the inheritance from His Father gave Him infinite life, which meant death was a voluntary act. Thus, Jesus told the Jewish people, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26).

On another occasion He stated:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17–18).

Christ suffered for each of us

The infinite nature received from His Father gave Jesus power to perform the Atonement, to suffer for the sins of all. The prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus not only took upon Himself our sins but also our pains, afflictions, and temptations. Alma also explains that Jesus took upon Himself our sicknesses, death, and our infirmities. (See Alma 7:11–13.) This He did, Alma said, so that His "bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know . . . how to succor his people" (Alma 7:12).

The prophet Abinadi further states that "when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed" (Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi then identifies the Savior's seed as the prophets and those who follow them. For many years I thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt "our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15), "[bore] our griefs, . . . carried our sorrows . . . [and] was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

The Savior knows how to help each of us

The Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us.

The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were "numberless as the sand upon the sea shore" (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith. That is why a young Hispanic woman suddenly realized that she was more than a speck in the universe when the Holy Spirit gave her a witness of the Restoration. She felt God's love, that she was His daughter, and realized that He knew her. It also explains why the plan of salvation seemed familiar to my Japanese friend as the missionaries taught him and as the Holy Spirit confirmed his purposes on earth and his potential.

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The gospel is a pattern for all

I testify that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a pattern for all. It is not the location of events that matters; it is the good news—the timeless doctrine and atoning powers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bear witness that He lives, that He is the Christ. I testify that the gospel restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith is Peter's "restitution of all things." I bear witness that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang "Sweet Is the Work."

Sister Cheryl C. Lant

Delighting in the scriptures

Our beloved prophet has recently asked us to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year. As I have accepted this invitation, I have found myself discovering new and exciting things in this book even though I have read it many times before. For instance, I rediscovered 2 Nephi 4:15, which reads, "For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children."

This scripture teaches us how to read the Book of Mormon. It mentions three important ideas.

First, "My soul delighteth." I love this phrase! I have thought about hungering and thirsting after knowledge as I read the scriptures, but delighting in them is something else. I find that what I take away from the scriptures is determined by what I bring. Each time I read them, I am, in a sense, bringing a new person with new eyes to the experience. Where I am in my life, the experiences I am having, and my attitude all affect how much I will gain. I love the scriptures. I treasure the truths I find as I read them. Joy fills my heart as I receive encouragement, direction, comfort, strength, and answers to my needs. Life looks brighter, and the way opens before me. I am reassured of my Heavenly Father's love and concern for me every time I read. Surely this is a delight to me. As one little boy in a Sunbeam class put it, "I feel happy about the scriptures!"

Pondering the scriptures

Second, "My heart pondereth them." How I love to carry the scriptures with me in my heart! The spirit of what I have read rests there to bring me peace and comfort. The knowledge I have gained gives me guidance and direction. I have the confidence born out of obedience.

Sometimes I have the luxury of immersing myself in the scriptures. Sometimes I read them in snatches. However, it doesn't seem to matter where or when I read the scriptures; I can still carry them in my heart. I have found that by reading them in the morning I am able to carry the influence of the Spirit with me throughout the day. When I read them midday, it is usually because a need has taken me there, where I am able to find answers and directions that influence my decisions and actions. When I read them at night, the sweet, comforting messages from the Lord linger in my subconscious mind as I rest. Many times I awaken at night with ideas or thoughts that originate from the words I read just before drifting off to sleep. My mind may go many places during the day, but my heart securely embraces the words of the Lord found in the scriptures and "pondereth them."

Through this I have learned that "as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). As I ponder the scriptures, something happens to me. I have a stronger desire to live close to my Heavenly Father. I long to serve Him. I want to

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live the principles that I learn in the scriptures, and as I do, my heart "writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children."

Writing scriptures into our lives

I, of course, do not write scriptures as did Nephi, but when I read the scriptures and live the principles I learn, those scriptures become written in my life. They govern my actions and are written there for my children to see and follow. I can build a legacy, a tradition of righteous living, based on the principles I learn in the scriptures.

Doctrine and Covenants 93:39–40 teaches:

"And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.

"But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth."

By reading the scriptures, I can be assured that I will know the "light and truth" that will bless me and my family. As I know what to do, I can work to bring my actions—my "traditions"—into line with what I know. Then my example will not lead my children astray but rather will lead them to the scriptures and to the truth that is found there.

I love the Primary song that teaches:

Search, ponder, and pray
Are the things that I must do.
The Spirit will guide, and, deep inside,
I'll know the scriptures are true.[1]

I find that if I pray not only to have a witness of the truthfulness of the scriptures but also to have the Spirit with me as I read, my sensitivity is heightened, and I see ever so much more clearly. I can see where I am in my life and where my Heavenly Father wants me to be. I can understand principles of truth, and I can see how to make the needed changes in my life. I can feel assured that the Lord will help and strengthen me to accomplish the task. Thus the scriptures become written in my life.

Scriptures strengthen families

When we read the scriptures we are hearing the voice of the Savior. He is not absent from our lives. He is actively positioned in the verses of these holy books. Our prophet has asked us to draw closer to the Savior by reading the Book of Mormon.

And what of our children? How blessed is the child whose parents base their lives on the teachings in the scriptures! There is absolutely nothing more important we can do for our families than to strengthen them in the scriptures. Parents, call your families together to read the scriptures and work to make it possible in your busy family schedules. Children, respond quickly and happily when you are called to scripture study.

President Gordon B. Hinckley gave us an invitation, but he also gave us promises if we choose to accept. He promised "an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."[2]

One of my daughters, who is in a wonderful place in her life where her greatest blessings are her greatest challenges (she has three small children), said to me: "Mom, I am doing it. I am reading the Book of Mormon. And I am holding on to those wonderful promises. They are exactly what I need in my life right now."

Are these blessings what you need in your life? They are ours for the taking. As individuals, let us pledge to follow the prophet. As families, let us claim our blessings. President Hinckley, we love you, we have heard your voice, and we will follow.

May I bear my testimony that I know that Heavenly Father lives and loves us. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior.

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I know that the scriptures are true. They are the word of God. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet today. I know that as we follow him, we receive great blessings from our Father in Heaven. I am so grateful for this witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Search, Ponder, and Pray," *Children's Songbook,* 109.
2. "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign,* Aug. 2005, 6.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Mortality is a time of testing and growth

All around us we see a growing desire for spiritual direction the world over as a result of increasing natural and human-caused disasters. This yearning for spiritual guidance is a consequence of our being children of a divine Heavenly Father. It is understandable that when we face difficulty we turn to our Creator for help. Our loving Heavenly Father knew that deteriorating world conditions, severe personal challenges, and disasters would lead His children to seek His spiritual nourishment. The challenge is how to properly find it.

We lived in the presence of God our Holy Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in a premortal existence. There we gained an understanding of the Father's plan of salvation and the promise of help when we would be born as mortals on earth. The primary purpose of life was explained. We were told:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate [that is to be obedient in the premortal existence] shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate [that is, to be obedient during mortal life] shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever."[1]

Those words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth. That purpose is to prove yourself obedient to the commandments of the Lord and thereby grow in understanding, capacity, and every worthy trait. It is to receive every required ordinance and to make and keep every needed covenant. It is to form and nourish a family. This experience includes having periods of trial and happiness, with the objective of returning triumphantly, having met well the challenges and opportunities of mortal life to receive the glorious blessings promised for such obedience.

Preparation in the premortal life

So that the period of mortal testing and growth would yield its greatest benefit, you were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality. Our Father's pattern for guiding you through mortal life was explained. He would choose from among the most valiant, obedient spirit children prophets and other authorized servants to hold His priesthood, to be taught His truth, and to be guided to disseminate that truth among His children on earth. God would give each child moral agency, the right to choose His counsel or to ignore it. All would be encouraged but not forced to obey. You understood that while you could choose your path on earth, you could not determine the outcome of your choices. That would be decided by eternal law.

Should one live to qualify for all of the richest promised blessings but for reasons beyond his or her control not be able

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to obtain them on earth, there would be a compensating opportunity in postmortal life. Your memory of premortal life would be kept from you to ensure that it would be a valid test, but there would be guidance given to show you how to live. Our Father's plan for salvation in this life with the opportunity of returning to Him would be called the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From before the Creation of this earth, there was rebellion against our Father's plan, instigated by a brilliant but evil spirit we know as Lucifer or Satan. He proposed a modification of the requirements. So convincing was his argument that one-third of the Father's spirit children followed Satan and were cast out. They lost the extraordinary opportunity to grow and the critical advantage of a mortal body.

Making correct choices on earth

Our Holy Father, who knows each of His children perfectly, realized that over time many would be tempted, become worldly, and reject the testimony and teachings of His prophets. Spiritual darkness would replace the light of truth in a condition called an apostasy. The period from the introduction of truth to its general loss through sin would be called a dispensation. Prophet after prophet would be chosen in a series of dispensations to keep truth on earth for the faithful despite its distortion or rejection by many.

You learned that the Light of Christ would provide that guidance. It gives light and life to all things. It prompts all individuals throughout the earth to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong. The Light of Christ is not a person. It is a power and influence that comes from God our Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, and, when followed, can lead a person to qualify for the more definitive guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. You were told that transgression would weaken the influence of the Holy Ghost but that it could be restored through proper repentance. You rejoiced to know that the obedient who would receive the proper ordinances with the necessary covenants and remain faithful would inherit celestial glory and live in the presence of the Father and His Son throughout the eternities.

How do we know these truths? How can you confirm their validity? You see around you great confusion regarding the nature of God, His teachings, and the purpose of life. How then does God, our Heavenly Father, guide His children on earth? How does He communicate truth and His will so that faithful, believing children can make the right choices and receive the blessings Heavenly Father wants them to have? I will explain.

Dispensations of gospel truth

From the foundation of this earth, God our Father has consistently followed His plan I have just described. Adam labored to share our Father's plan with his children and descendants. Many believed and were blessed. But many chose to use their divine gift of moral agency to refuse His teachings and His gospel. The disobedient rejected the truth, distorted the teachings and ordinances, and distanced themselves from God. In time, the light of truth was replaced by spiritual darkness, and the priesthood and the true Church were lost among the people.

Prophets such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses renewed the truth for their dispensation, but in time their efforts were rejected by most. In the meridian of time, Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son of God, was born on earth. He restored the truth and ministered with love and compassion. He established His Church again on earth with apostles and prophets. Through intense suffering He fulfilled His Holy Father's divine commission to become our Savior and Redeemer. He allowed Himself to be crucified. He was resurrected and overcame physical death. His infinite atoning sacrifice is a supernal gift that allows

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the repentant to be forgiven of sins and qualify for eternal life. But even so, the Son of God was rejected by all but a few. His Apostles and Church members were persecuted and many killed. The earth sank into a long and dreadful period of intense spiritual darkness.

Truth restored in the final dispensation

The scriptures record that throughout history, on occasions of exceptional importance, God the Father's voice has been heard. On repeated occasions Jesus Christ has personally appeared to select individuals. Yet there is only one supernal, singular instance of which we have knowledge that God the Father Himself appeared in person. This was done with His precious Holy Son, Jesus Christ, to an audience of one. That one was young Joseph Smith Jr., an extraordinary spirit prepared before the foundation of the earth. He would become the greatest prophet sent to earth. About to come forth was the return of priesthood authority and the complete restoration of the Church established by the Savior, with additional scripture required for our time provided by continuing revelation from the Savior.

Our benevolent Father came from His vast creations to this earth to clarify truth, to disperse the intense clouds of spiritual darkness, to establish His true identity, to restore a fulness of truth, and to provide the only way to obtain secure, spiritual guidance. This momentous Restoration began with the Father's simple phrase "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"[2] There followed a restoration of truth, priesthood, sacred ordinances, and the true Church, with the Father's plan of salvation and happiness. When that plan is lived, it will help you overcome every challenge in life. It will help you qualify, through faith and obedience, to have the divine spiritual guidance you need. That support will give you the strength to live as you know you ought to live, no matter how world conditions degrade.

What occasion would be so stupendously important as to warrant this unprecedented visit of God the Father? It was to initiate the "dispensation of the fulness of times" foretold by prophets of the Old and New Testaments. The time had come for the Father to gather "all things in Christ,"[3] commit all the keys of the kingdom, and restore the knowledge communicated in past dispensations[4] as He established the final dispensation of the gospel for this earth.

Knowing that it would be difficult for many to believe that such a glorious restoration did occur, the Savior provided a tangible witness to establish the truth of it, namely the Book of Mormon. The way to confirm the reality of the Restoration is described in its pages. Also, He provided additional illuminating scripture needed for our time in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price through Joseph Smith. No wonder so much of Joseph Smith's ministry is focused on the Savior, His Atonement and doctrine.

We must each know the truth

While this precious, vital message has been proclaimed across the world, Satan has been most effective in causing people to ignore it or to look in the wrong places for it. The vast majority of Father's children have not only forgotten their Father in Heaven and the purpose of mortal life, but they rarely even think of Him or ponder for what purpose they are here in mortality. They have been led to be absorbed by mundane things that distract them from the essential ones. Don't you make that mistake.

As a servant of Jesus Christ, I testify that what I have described is true. It is not sufficient to have a vague understanding of truth or the reality of the Father and His Son, our Savior. Each of us must come to know who They really are. You must feel how very much They love you. You must trust that as you consistently live the truth the best you can, They will help

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you realize the purpose of your earth life and strengthen you to qualify for the blessings promised.

Read the Book of Mormon

To be obedient to the commandments of God requires an understanding of them. It necessitates faith in them. That comprehension is best obtained through personal study of doctrine. That is one of the reasons that in July of this year, President Hinckley and his counselors invited all members to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. They promised, "Those who read the Book of Mormon will be blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God."[5]

I have tested and proven that promise in my own life and have confirmed its truth. If you have conscientiously obeyed that counsel, you know what I mean. If you have not yet begun, there is still time to have your life enriched by reading the pages of the Book of Mormon. Please do it.

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I solemnly testify that God our Father and Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith brought to pass the Restoration I have described, that the resplendent light of truth and the Church of Jesus Christ are again on earth, that the true nature of God the Father and His Son has been again revealed, and that the proper way to receive spiritual guidance has been clarified. I testify that God's plan of salvation has been made available to all who will honestly seek it. Embrace it. Live it for your peace and happiness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Abraham 3:24–26.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
3. Ephesians 1:10.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18–21.
5. See First Presidency letter, July 25, 2005.

The choir sang "The Seer, Joseph, the Seer."

President Hinckley

That was wonderful, that great rendition of "The Seer." Thank you very much, the Tabernacle Choir and Brother Stanford Olsen, who provided the beautiful music.

It will now be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "Ode for Joseph" and "Praise to the Man." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Ned B. Roueché of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Furthering the work of the Lord

My dear brothers and sisters, I thank my Father in Heaven that He has prolonged my life to be part of these challenging times. I thank Him for the opportunity of service. I have no desire but to do all that I can in furthering the work of the Lord, in serving His faithful people, and in living at peace with my neighbors.

I recently traveled around the world, more than 25,000 miles, visiting Alaska, Russia, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, and Nigeria, where in this last place we dedicated a new temple. We then dedicated the Newport Beach California Temple. I have just been to Samoa for another temple dedication, another 10,000 miles. I do not enjoy travel, but it is my wish to get out among our people to extend appreciation and encouragement and to bear testimony of the divinity of the Lord's work.

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Forgiveness—the greatest virtue

I often think of a poem I read long ago. It goes like this:

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by—
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.

I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban;—
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.
[Sam Walter Foss, "The House by the Side of the Road," in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 422]

That is the way I feel.

Age does something to a man. It seems to make him more aware of the need for kindness and goodness and forbearance. He wishes and prays that men might live together in peace without war and contention, argument and conflict. He grows increasingly aware of the meaning of the great Atonement of the Redeemer, of the depth of His sacrifice, and of gratitude to the Son of God, who gave His life that we might live.

I wish today to speak of forgiveness. I think it may be the greatest virtue on earth, and certainly the most needed. There is so much of meanness and abuse, of intolerance and hatred. There is so great a need for repentance and forgiveness. It is the great principle emphasized in all of scripture, both ancient and modern.

The prodigal son: the lost is found

In all of our sacred scripture, there is no more beautiful story of forgiveness than that of the prodigal son found in the 15th chapter of Luke. Everyone should read and ponder it occasionally.

"And when [the prodigal] had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:14–21).

And the father caused that a great feast should be held, and when his other son complained, he said to him, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (verse 32).

When there has been wrongdoing and then there has come repentance, followed by forgiveness, then literally the offender who was lost is found, and he who was dead is made alive.

How wonderful are the blessings of mercy and forgiveness.

Forgiveness after World War II

The Marshall Plan following World War II, with the gift of millions of dollars, helped put Europe on its feet.

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In Japan, after this same war, I saw great steel mills, the money for which I was told had come from America, Japan's former enemy. How much better this world is because of the forgiveness of a generous nation in behalf of its former enemies.

Love your enemies

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord taught:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:38–44).

Those are very strong words.

Do you really think you could follow that injunction? They are the words of the Lord Himself, and I think they apply to each of us.

A woman taken in adultery

The scribes and Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman taken in adultery so that they might entrap Him.

"But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

"And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:6–11).

The Savior taught of leaving the ninety and nine to find the lost sheep, that forgiveness and restitution might come.

We are required to forgive all men

Isaiah declared:

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:16–18).

The great crowning love of the Savior was expressed when in His dying agony He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

In our day the Lord has said in revelation:

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

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:9–10).

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The Lord has offered a marvelous promise. Said He, "He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more" (D&C 58:42).

There are so many in our day who are unwilling to forgive and forget. Children cry and wives weep because fathers and husbands continue to bring up little shortcomings that are really of no importance. And there also are many women who would make a mountain out of every little offending molehill of word or deed.

New York woman forgives a young man

A time back I clipped a column from the *Deseret Morning News,* written by Jay Evensen. With his permission, I quote from a part of it. Wrote he:

"How would you feel toward a teenager who decided to toss a 20-pound frozen turkey from a speeding car headlong into the windshield of the car you were driving? How would you feel after enduring six hours of surgery using metal plates and other hardware to piece your face together, and after learning you still face years of therapy before returning to normal—and that you ought to feel lucky you didn't die or suffer permanent brain damage?

"And how would you feel after learning that your assailant and his buddies had the turkey in the first place because they had stolen a credit card and gone on a senseless shopping spree, just for kicks? . . .

"This is the kind of hideous crime that propels politicians to office on promises of getting tough on crime. It's the kind of thing that prompts legislators to climb all over each other in a struggle to be the first to introduce a bill that would add enhanced penalties for the use of frozen fowl in the commission of a crime.

"The New York Times quoted the district attorney as saying this is the sort of crime for which victims feel no punishment is harsh enough. 'Death doesn't even satisfy them,' he said.

"Which is what makes what really happened so unusual. The victim, Victoria Ruvolo, a 44-year-old former manager of a collections agency, was more interested in salvaging the life of her 19-year-old assailant, Ryan Cushing, than in exacting any sort of revenge. She pestered prosecutors for information about him, his life, how he was raised, etc. Then she insisted on offering him a plea deal. Cushing could serve six months in the county jail and be on probation for 5 years if he pleaded guilty to second-degree assault.

"Had he been convicted of first-degree assault—the charge most fitting for the crime—he could have served 25 years in prison, finally thrown back into society as a middle-aged man with no skills or prospects.

"But this is only half the story. The rest of it, what happened the day this all played out in court, is the truly remarkable part.

"According to an account in the New York Post, Cushing carefully and tentatively made his way to where Ruvolo sat in the courtroom and tearfully whispered an apology. 'I'm so sorry for what I did to you.'

"Ruvolo then stood, and the victim and her assailant embraced, weeping. She stroked his head and patted his back as he sobbed, and witnesses, including a Times reporter, heard her say, 'It's OK. I just want you to make your life the best it can be.' According to accounts, hardened prosecutors, and even reporters, were choking back tears" ("Forgiveness Has Power to Change Future," *Deseret Morning News,* Aug. 21, 2005, p. AA3).

What a great story that is, greater because it actually happened and that it happened in tough old New York. Who can feel anything but admiration for this woman who forgave the young man who might have taken her life?

I know this is a delicate and sensitive thing of which I am speaking. There are

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hardened criminals who may have to be locked up. There are unspeakable crimes, such as deliberate murder and rape, that justify harsh penalties. But there are some who could be saved from long, stultifying years in prison because of an unthoughtful, foolish act. Somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.

The supreme act of forgiveness

The great Atonement was the supreme act of forgiveness. The magnitude of that Atonement is beyond our ability to completely understand. I know only that it happened and that it was for me and for you. The suffering was so great, the agony so intense, that none of us can comprehend it when the Savior offered Himself as a ransom for the sins of all mankind.

It is through Him that we gain forgiveness. It is through Him that there comes the certain promise that all mankind will be granted the blessings of salvation, with resurrection from the dead. It is through Him and His great overarching sacrifice that we are offered the opportunity through obedience of exaltation and eternal life.

May God help us to be a little kinder, showing forth greater forbearance, to be more forgiving, more willing to walk the second mile, to reach down and lift up those who may have sinned but have brought forth the fruits of repentance, to lay aside old grudges and nurture them no more. For this I humbly pray, in the sacred name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Ode for Joseph" and "Praise to the Man."

Elder Ned B. Roueché offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2005. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 175th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who has presided at the conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "The Iron Rod." The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing "Where Love Is." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Russell M. Nelson

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and Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. Following their remarks, we shall hear from Elder Won Yong Ko of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Iron Rod."

Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie offered the invocation.

The choir sang "Where Love Is."

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Jesus Christ—the Master Healer

My beloved brothers and sisters, I extend love and greetings to each of you. From the Brethren, I express gratitude for your goodness, for your many generous acts of kindness, for your prayers and sustaining influence in our lives. Our challenges are like yours. We are all subject to sorrow and suffering, to disease and death. Through times good and bad, the Lord expects each of us to endure to the end. As we all go forward together in His sacred work, the Brethren realize the importance of your thoughtful consideration, so lovingly offered and gratefully received. We love you and pray for you, as you pray for us.

I express special gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am thankful for His loving-kindness and for His open invitation to come unto Him.[1] I marvel at His matchless power to heal. I testify of Jesus Christ as the Master Healer. It is but one of many attributes that characterize His incomparable life.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Creator, the great Jehovah, the promised Immanuel, our atoning Savior and Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father, our great Exemplar. And one day we will stand before Him as our just and merciful Judge.[2]

Miracles of healing

As the Master Healer, Jesus directed His friends to "go . . . and tell . . . what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, [and] the dead are raised."[3]

The books of Matthew,[4] Mark,[5] Luke,[6] and John[7] repeatedly report that Jesus went about preaching the gospel and healing all types of sickness.

When the risen Redeemer appeared to the people of ancient America, He mercifully invited those "afflicted in any manner"[8] to come unto Him and be healed.

Marvelously, His divine authority to heal the sick was conferred upon worthy priesthood bearers in earlier dispensations[9] and again in these latter days, when His gospel has been restored in its fulness.[10]

Influence of prayer on healing

We can also access His healing power through prayer. I'll never forget an experience that Sister Nelson and I had about three decades ago with President Spencer W. Kimball and his beloved Camilla. We were in Hamilton, New Zealand, for a large conference with the Saints. I was not a General Authority at that time. I had been invited to participate in this and similar meetings in other Pacific Islands while serving as general president of the Sunday School. And as a doctor of medicine, I had attended President and Sister Kimball for many years. I knew each of them very well—inside and out.

A Saturday evening cultural program had been prepared for this conference by local youth of the Church. Unfortunately, President and Sister Kimball both became very ill, each with a high fever. After receiv-

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ing priesthood blessings, they rested at the nearby home of the president of the New Zealand Temple. President Kimball asked his counselor, President N. Eldon Tanner, to preside at the cultural event and to excuse President and Sister Kimball.

Sister Nelson went with President and Sister Tanner and other leaders to the event while President Kimball's secretary, Brother D. Arthur Haycock, and I watched over our feverish friends.

While President Kimball was sleeping, I was quietly reading in his room. Suddenly President Kimball was awakened. He asked, "Brother Nelson, what time was this evening's program to begin?"

"At seven o'clock, President Kimball."

"What time is it now?"

"It's almost seven," I replied.

President Kimball quickly said, "Tell Sister Kimball we are going!"

I checked President Kimball's temperature. It was normal! I took Sister Kimball's temperature. It was also normal!

They quickly dressed and got into an automobile. We were driven to the stadium of the Church College of New Zealand. As the car entered the arena, there was a very loud shout that erupted spontaneously. It was most unusual! After we took our seats, I asked Sister Nelson about that sudden sound. She said that when President Tanner began the meeting, he dutifully excused President and Sister Kimball because of illness. Then one of the young New Zealanders was called upon to pray.

With great faith, he gave what Sister Nelson described as a rather lengthy but powerful prayer. He so prayed: "We are 3,000 New Zealand youth. We are assembled here, having prepared for six months to sing and dance for Thy prophet. Wilt Thou heal him and deliver him here!" After the "amen" was pronounced, the car carrying President and Sister Kimball entered the stadium. They were identified immediately, and instantly everyone shouted for joy![11]

I had witnessed the healing power of the Lord! I had also witnessed revelation as received and responded to by His living prophet!

I recognize that on occasion some of our most fervent prayers may seem to go unanswered. We wonder, "Why?" I know that feeling! I know the fears and tears of such moments. But I also know that our prayers are never ignored. Our faith is never unappreciated. I know that an all-wise Heavenly Father's perspective is much broader than is ours. While we know of our mortal problems and pain, He knows of our immortal progress and potential. If we pray to know His will and submit ourselves to it with patience and courage, heavenly healing can take place in His own way and time.

Steps toward healing

Afflictions can come from spiritual as well as physical causes. Alma the Younger remembered that his sin was so painful that he wished to "become extinct both soul and body, that [he] might not be brought to stand in the presence of . . . God, to be judged of [his] deeds."[12] At such times, how can we be healed by Him?

We can more fully repent! We can become more fully converted! Then the "Son of Righteousness"[13] can more fully bless us by His healing hand.

Early in His mortal ministry, Jesus announced that He had been sent "to heal the brokenhearted."[14] Wherever He taught them, His pattern was consistent. As I quote His words spoken at four different times and locations, note the pattern.

- To people of the Holy Land, the Lord said that His people "should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."[15]
- To people of ancient America, the resurrected Lord extended this invitation:

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"Return unto me, . . . repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you."[16]

• To leaders of His Church, He taught, "Continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them."[17]

• Later, during the "restitution of all things,"[18] the Lord taught the Prophet Joseph Smith regarding the pioneers, "After their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted, and I will heal them."[19]

The sequence of His pattern is significant. Faith, repentance, baptism, a testimony, and enduring conversion lead to the healing power of the Lord. Baptism is a covenant act—a sign of a commitment and a promise. Testimony develops when the Holy Ghost gives conviction to the earnest seeker of the truth. True testimony fosters faith; it promotes repentance and obedience to God's commandments. Testimony engenders enthusiasm to serve God and fellow human beings.[20] Conversion means "to turn with."[21] Conversion is a turning *from* the ways of the world *to,* and staying *with,* the ways of the Lord. Conversion includes repentance and obedience. Conversion brings a mighty change of heart.[22] Thus, a true convert is "born again,"[23] walking with a newness of life.[24]

As true converts, we are motivated to do what the Lord wants us to do[25] and to be who He wants us to be.[26] The remission of sins, which brings divine forgiveness, heals the spirit.

How do we know if we are truly converted? Self-examination tests are available in the scriptures. One measures the degree of conversion prerequisite to baptism.[27] Another measures our willingness to serve others. To His disciple Peter, the Lord said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."[28] Willingness to serve and strengthen others stands as a symbol of one's readiness to be healed.

Magnitude of His healing

John the Beloved declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!"[29] What power! Only the Master Healer could take away the sin of the world. Our debt to Him is incalculably great.

Well do I remember an experience while speaking to a group of missionaries. After I had invited questions, one elder stood. With tears in his eyes he asked, "Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?" I asked the elder to open his book of hymns and recite words from "How Great Thou Art." He read:

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.[30]

Then I asked this elder to read from "Reverently and Meekly Now." These words are particularly poignant because they are written as the Lord would express His own answer to the very question that had been asked:

Think of me, thou ransomed one;
Think what I for thee have done.
With my blood that dripped like rain,
Sweat in agony of pain,
With my body on the tree
I have ransomed even thee. . . .

Oh, remember what was done
That the sinner might be won.
On the cross of Calvary
I have suffered death for thee.[31]

Jesus suffered deeply because He loves us deeply! He wants us to repent and be converted so that He can fully heal us.

When sore trials come upon us,[32] it's time to deepen our faith in God, to work

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hard, and to serve others. Then He will heal our broken hearts. He will bestow upon us personal peace[33] and comfort.[34] Those great gifts will not be destroyed, even by death.

Resurrection—the consummate act of healing

The gift of resurrection is the Lord's consummate act of healing. Thanks to Him, each body will be restored to its proper and perfect frame.[35] Thanks to Him, no condition is hopeless. Thanks to Him, brighter days are ahead, both here and hereafter. Real joy awaits each of us—on the other side of sorrow.

I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ—the Master Healer—in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Matthew 11:28–30. Indeed, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "Jesus the Christ, Our Master and More," *Ensign,* Apr. 2000, 4–17.
3. Luke 7:22.
4. See Matthew 4:23; 8:1–3, 5–13, 16–17; 9:1–8, 32–35; 12:15; 14:14, 34–36; 15:29–31.
5. See Mark 1:32–34, 40–45; 2:1–12; 6:53–56; 7:31–37.
6. See Luke 4:40–41; 5:12–15, 17–26; 7:1–10; 11:14; 22:50–51.
7. See John 4:46–53.
8. 3 Nephi 17:7.
9. See Matthew 10:5–8; Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17; 4 Nephi 1:5.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:65–70.
11. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 172–74.
12. Alma 36:15.
13. 3 Nephi 25:2; see also Malachi 4:2.
14. Luke 4:18; see also Isaiah 61:1.
15. Matthew 13:15; see also Isaiah 6:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:27.
16. 3 Nephi 9:13.
17. 3 Nephi 18:32.
18. Acts 3:21.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 112:13; see also Doctrine and Covenants 124:104.
20. Thus keeping the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27).
21. *Conversion* comes from two Latin roots: *con,* meaning "with," and *vertere,* meaning "to turn."
22. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14.
23. See John 3:3–7; 1 Peter 1:23; Mosiah 27:24–26; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:59; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:62.
24. See Romans 6:3–4.
25. See Mosiah 5:2–5.
26. See 3 Nephi 27:21, 27.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; Mosiah 18:10.
28. Luke 22:32.
29. Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:29.
30. *Hymns,* no. 86; see also Psalm 8:3–9; 9:1–2; Mosiah 4:5–13.
31. *Hymns,* no. 185; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19; 45:3–5.
32. See "Did You Think to Pray?" *Hymns,* no. 140, verse 3.
33. See John 14:27.
34. See Isaiah 40:1; John 14:16–17, 26.
35. See Alma 11:43; 40:23.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Foundation for the Restoration

This year we are commemorating the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. To the world we testify that he was the prophet of God foreordained to bring about the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This he did under the direction of our Savior, who said to an earlier prophet, "My name is

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Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee."[1]

I acknowledge the Lord's hand in the restoration of the gospel. Through the inspired sacrifices of God's children through the ages, the foundation of the Restoration was laid, and the world is preparing for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His gospel was first established on the earth beginning with Adam and has been taught in every dispensation through such prophets as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. Each of these prophets foretold the coming of Jesus Christ to atone for the sins of the world. Those prophecies have been fulfilled. The Savior did establish His Church. He called His Apostles and established His priesthood. Most importantly, He laid down His life and took it up that all will rise again, thus carrying out the atoning sacrifice. But that was not the end.

After the Savior's resurrection, He commissioned His Apostles to lead the Church and administer gospel ordinances. Faithful to this charge, they were persecuted, and some were eventually martyred. As a result, the Lord's priesthood authority was no longer on earth, and the world fell into spiritual darkness. In the centuries that followed, God's children had the Light of Christ, could pray, and could feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. But the fulness of the gospel had been lost. There was no one left on earth with the power and authority to lead the Church or perform sacred ordinances such as baptism, conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the saving ordinances of the temple. Almost everyone was denied access to the scriptures, and most people were illiterate.

First step: making the scriptures available

Making the scriptures available and helping God's children learn to read them was the first step to the restoration of the gospel. Originally the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, languages unknown to common people throughout Europe. Then, about 400 years after the Savior's death, the Bible was translated by Jerome into Latin. But still the scriptures were not widely available. Copies had to be written by hand, usually by monks, each taking years to complete.

Then, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, an interest in learning began to grow in the hearts of people. This Renaissance or "rebirth" spread throughout Europe. In the late 1300s, a priest named John Wycliffe initiated a translation of the Bible from Latin into English. Because English was then an emerging, unrefined language, church leaders deemed it unsuitable to convey God's word. Some leaders were certain that if people could read and interpret the Bible for themselves, its doctrine would be corrupted; others feared that people with independent access to the scriptures would not need the church and would cease to support it financially. Consequently, Wycliffe was denounced as a heretic and treated accordingly. After he died and was buried, his bones were dug up and burned. But God's work could not be stopped.

While some were inspired to translate the Bible, others were inspired to prepare the means to publish it. By 1455 Johannes Gutenberg had invented a press with movable type, and the Bible was one of the first books he printed. For the first time it was possible to print multiple copies of the scriptures and at a cost many could afford.

Meanwhile, the inspiration of God also rested upon explorers. In 1492 Christopher Columbus set out to find a new path to the Far East. Columbus was led by the hand of God in his journey. He said, "God gave me the faith, and afterwards the courage."[2]

These inventions and discoveries set the stage for further contributions. In the

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early 1500s young William Tyndale enrolled at Oxford University. There he studied the work of the Bible scholar Erasmus, who believed that the scriptures are "the food of [a man's] soul; and . . . must permeate the very depths of [his] heart and mind."[3] Through his studies, Tyndale developed a love for God's word and a desire that all God's children be able to feast on it for themselves.

Reformation spreads the scriptures

At about this time, a German priest and professor named Martin Luther identified 95 points of error in the church of his day, which he boldly sent in a letter to his superiors. In Switzerland, Huldrych Zwingli printed 67 articles of reform. John Calvin in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland, and many others assisted in this effort. A reformation had begun.

Meanwhile, William Tyndale had become a trained priest and was fluent in eight languages. He believed a direct translation from Greek and Hebrew into English would be more accurate and readable than Wycliffe's translation from Latin. So Tyndale, enlightened by the Spirit of God, translated the New Testament and a portion of the Old Testament. His friends warned him that he would be killed for doing so, but he was undaunted. Once, while disputing with a learned man, he said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost."[4]

Eventually Tyndale, like others, was killed for his efforts—strangled and burned at the stake near Brussels. But the belief for which he gave his life was not lost. Millions have come to experience for themselves what Tyndale taught throughout his life: "The nature of God's word is, that whosoever read it, . . . it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man."[5]

Turbulent political times brought change. Because of a disagreement with the church in Rome, King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England and required that copies of the English Bible be placed in every parish church. Hungry for the gospel, people flocked to these churches, reading the scriptures to one another until their voices gave out. The Bible was also used as a primer to teach reading. Though martyrdoms continued across Europe, the dark night of ignorance was coming to an end. Declared one preacher before being burned, "We shall this day light such a candle, by God's Grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."[6]

The King James Version of the Bible

We express gratitude to all who lived in England and throughout Europe who helped kindle that light. By God's grace, the light grew brighter. Aware of the divisions within his own country, English King James I agreed to a new official version of the Bible. It has been estimated that over 80 percent of William Tyndale's translations of the New Testament and a good portion of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, or Genesis through Deuteronomy, and Joshua through Chronicles) were retained in the King James Version.[7] In time, that version would find its way to a new land and be read by a 14-year-old plowboy named Joseph Smith. Is it any wonder that the King James Version is the approved English Bible of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today?

American colonists inspired

Religious persecution in England continued under James's son Charles, and many were prompted to seek freedom in new lands. Among them were the Pilgrims,

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who landed in the Americas in 1620, the very part of the world Columbus had explored over 100 years earlier. Other colonists soon followed, including those like Roger Williams, founder and later governor of Rhode Island, who continued to search for Christ's true Church. Williams said that there was no regularly constituted church of Christ on earth, nor any person who was authorized to administer any church ordinance, nor could there be until new Apostles were sent by the great Head of the church, for whose coming he was seeking.[8]

Over a century later such religious feeling guided founders of a new nation on the American continent. Under God's hand they secured religious freedom for every citizen with an inspired Bill of Rights. Fourteen years later, on December 23, 1805, the Prophet Joseph Smith was born. The preparation was nearing its completion for the Restoration.

Restoration through Joseph Smith

As a young man, Joseph "was called up to serious reflection"[9] on the subject of religion. Because he was born in a land of religious freedom, he could question which of all the churches was right. And because the Bible had been translated into English, he could seek an answer from the word of God. He read in the book of James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,"[10] and he did as directed. In answer to Joseph's prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him.[11] This humble farm boy was the prophet chosen by God to restore the ancient Church of Jesus Christ and His priesthood in these latter days. This restoration was to be the last, the dispensation of the fulness of times, restoring all the priesthood blessings which man could possess on earth. With this divine commission, his work was not to reform nor was it to protest what was already on the earth. It was to restore what had been on earth and had been lost.

Translation of the Book of Mormon

The Restoration, begun with the First Vision in 1820, continued with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. On September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith was visited by the angel Moroni, who taught him of an ancient record containing "the fulness of the everlasting gospel . . . preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah."[12] Recorded on plates of gold, the Book of Mormon gives an account of Christ's ministry in the Western Hemisphere, just as the Bible records His life and ministry in the Holy Land. Joseph received the gold plates four years later and, in December of 1827, began to translate the Book of Mormon.[13]

Restoration of the priesthood

While translating, Joseph Smith and his scribe Oliver Cowdery read about baptism. Their desire to receive this blessing for themselves prompted the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829, under the hands of John the Baptist.[14]

There followed the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which was bestowed on Joseph and Oliver by the Apostles Peter, James, and John, who held the keys. After centuries of spiritual darkness, the power and authority to act in God's name, to perform sacred ordinances, and to lead His Church were once again upon the earth.

Organization of the Church

The first printed copies of the Book of Mormon were published on March 26, 1830. A few days later, on April 6, Christ's true Church in these latter days was once again organized, at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York. Describing the effects of these events upon the world, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote:

> The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
> Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!

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The dawning of a brighter day, . . .
Majestic rises on the world.[15]

The long night was finally over, and revelation streamed forth, resulting in additional scripture. The Doctrine and Covenants was accepted by the Church on August 17, 1835. The Pearl of Great Price translation of the book of Abraham also began in that year.

Restoration of all priesthood keys

Further authority to act in the name of the Lord soon followed. The Kirtland Temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836.[16] In that temple, the Savior appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, followed by the appearances of Moses, Elias, and Elijah, who gave additional priesthood keys to the Prophet.[17]

This gospel light would never again be taken from the earth. In 1844 Joseph Smith conferred all the keys of the priesthood upon Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and their fellow Apostles. The Prophet said: "I have lived until I have seen this burden, which has rested on my shoulders, rolled on to the shoulders of other men; . . . the keys of the kingdom are planted on the earth to be taken away no more for ever. . . . No matter what becomes of me."[18] Sadly, three months later, on June 27, Joseph Smith the Prophet and his brother Hyrum were martyred at Carthage, Illinois.

Elder John Taylor, who was with the Prophet when he was martyred, testified of him, "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."[19]

Be faithful in these last days

I testify that the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith is the Savior's work. In the Lord's service the path is not always easy. It often requires sacrifices, and we will likely experience adversity. But in serving Him, we discover that His hand is truly over us. So it was for Wycliffe, Tyndale, and thousands of others who prepared the way for the Restoration. So it was for the Prophet Joseph Smith and all who helped usher in the restored gospel. So it is and will be for us.

The Lord expects us to be as faithful, as devoted, as courageous as those who went before us. They were called to *give* their lives for the gospel. We are called to *live* our lives for the same purpose. In these last days we have special reason to do so.

Prepare for the Savior's Second Coming

Before that sacred night in Bethlehem, the events of history and the words of the prophets of all dispensations prepared the way for the first coming of the Lord and His Atonement. Similarly, history and prophecy laid the groundwork for the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Do we have eyes to see that the events and prophecies of *our* time are preparing us for the Savior's *Second* Coming?

I bear special witness that our Savior Jesus Christ lives. I testify that His hand has been over the work of the Restoration from before the foundation of this world and will continue until His Second Coming.

That each of us will prepare ourselves to greet Him is my humble prayer. In His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Abraham 2:8.
2. In Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (1975), 29.
3. In Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (2001), 89.

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4. In S. Michael Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones: William Tyndale—Martyr, Father of the English Bible* (2004), 47.
5. In Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones,* xv.
6. In Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters,* 168; see also James E. Kiefer, *Biographical Sketches of Memorable Christians of the Past,* "Hugh Latimer, Bishop and Martyr," http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/269.html.
7. See Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones,* 125–26, 197; see also *Foxe's Book of Martyrs,* ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 124.
8. See William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In,* 2 vols. (1872–74), 1:500–502; see also LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder,* rev. ed. (1966), 29.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:8.
10. James 1:5.
11. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20.
12. Book of Mormon introduction.
13. See Joseph Smith—History 1:27–62.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:66–72; *Church History in the Fulness of Times,* 2nd ed. (Church Educational System Manual, 2003), 55.
15. "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns,* no. 1.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 109.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 110.
18. Quoted by Wilford Woodruff in *Deseret News,* Dec. 21, 1869, 2.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.

Elder Won Yong Ko

Scriptures teach of great sacrifices

Brothers and sisters, good afternoon. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation" (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 69). If we summarize the history of the scriptures, we can say that it is the history of sacrifice.

We can find wonderful examples in the scriptures of those who sacrificed their lives in order to keep their faith and testimonies. One example is from the story of Alma and Amulek when they had to watch with pain the people of Ammonihah who were thrown into the fire and died but kept their faith (see Alma 14:7–13).

Also we think of Jesus Christ, who condescended to come down from His Father's presence to this earth and made the sacrifice to save the world through more severe pain than anyone else has ever endured.

In this last dispensation of the gospel, many pioneers lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice to keep their faith.

Sacrifice brings joy and blessings

Today we are not likely to be asked to make such a big sacrifice as giving up our lives, but we can see many examples of Saints who make painful sacrifices to keep their faith and testimonies alive. Maybe it is more difficult to make the small sacrifices in our daily lives. For instance, it could be regarded as a small sacrifice to keep the Sabbath day holy, to read the scriptures daily, or to pay our tithing. But these sacrifices cannot be easily made unless we have the mind and the determination to make the sacrifices that are needed to be able to keep those commandments.

As we make these small sacrifices, we are compensated by more blessings from the Lord. King Benjamin said, "And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever" (Mosiah 2:24). And, as he did with his own people, King Benjamin encourages us so that we will receive more blessings as we continue to obey the Lord's word.

I think that the very first blessing coming from sacrifice is the joy that we can feel

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when we pay the price. Perhaps the very thought that the sacrifice itself could be a blessing becomes a blessing. When we have that kind of thought and feel the joy, we might have received a blessing already.

Sacrifices of Korean Saints

Recently, I have found that kind of blessing among the Saints in Korea who participated in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Church in Korea and the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth. I would like to tell you briefly about their sacrifices and the joy and blessings they received.

To celebrate the gospel, which gave hope and courage to people in Korea who were hurt so much by the Korean War, the members started to prepare for this celebration more than a year ago. Many of the members in Korea—the Primary, young men, young women, young single adults, Relief Society sisters, and others—gathered together to practice for the celebration. They prepared many traditional folk dances, including the flower dance, circle dance, fan dance, and farmer dance. They played drums; performed tae kwon do, drama, ballroom dances, and musical numbers; showed animation; and gave choir performances.

Because the young men produced such loud drum sounds, neighbors complained, and they had to stop practicing. It was really difficult to practice for long periods of time, but they did it with joy. I could not find anyone complaining about their effort and sacrifice when they had to get up at 4:00 in the morning to ride the bus for the joint practice. They felt great joy and gratitude for the blessings of the Lord and for the opportunity to show their appreciation.

Also many returned missionaries from overseas came back to Korea with their wives and children for this celebration. They made the sacrifice when they came to Korea on their missions a long time ago. This time they made another sacrifice of time and money to bring their families and participate in the celebration during the hot summer. But they rejoiced and were grateful for all the celebrations in which they participated.

To encourage the Korean Saints and others, the Lord sent His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, to Korea. President Hinckley made a great sacrifice for this trip by scheduling a 13-day, around-the-world trip and came to Korea to meet with the Saints whom he has loved for many years and to personally convey the special love of the Lord. Nobody felt that this was a sacrifice. Instead, we had tears of joy and gratitude. This is the blessing we are talking about, isn't it?

Become Saints willing to sacrifice

Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of sacrifice. Please enjoy the happiness and blessings from the sacrifice itself.

Occasionally there is a time gap between the sacrifice and the blessing. The sacrifice may come according to our time schedule, but the blessing may not come by our, but by the Lord's, calendar. Because of this, the Lord comforts us by saying, "Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work" (D&C 64:33).

The blessings surely come to us. Please remember that the sacrifice itself might be a form of blessing. Let us make the sacrifice of small things.

When we read the Book of Mormon while rubbing our sleepy eyes, let us remember that we are following the counsel of our prophet and receive the joy that comes from that knowledge. We have many bills to pay, but when we pay tithing, let us feel joy for having the opportunity to donate something to the Lord.

And then greater blessings will be poured out on us. It will be just like our surprise and joy when we receive an unexpected gift.

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As President Spencer W. Kimball said, "As we give, we find that 'sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven!' ["Praise to the Man," *Hymns,* no. 27.] And in the end, we learn it was no sacrifice at all" ("Becoming the Pure in Heart," *Ensign,* Mar. 1985, 5). I pray that we will all become Saints willing to sacrifice and become eligible for the Lord's special blessings. The Lord will watch over us so that it will not be too difficult to endure any sacrifice. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Paul E. Koelliker, Lowell M. Snow, and Ulisses Soares of the Seventy will address us. These brethren will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

Elder Paul E. Koelliker

Be faithful to covenants

Today I desire to express my deep feelings of reverence and love for our Father in Heaven; for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and for the Holy Spirit. I further bear my witness of the sacred call of President Gordon B. Hinckley as the Lord's prophet, seer, and revelator. I sustain him with all my heart and energy.

I am grateful for the covenant of marriage in the temple to a gracious eternal companion, whom I love and cherish. She continually sets an example of caring service to those who are in need. Our marriage has been blessed with faithful and energetic children and grandchildren who have taught us much and continue to do so.

I feel particularly blessed that my brother, sisters, and I were born of righteous parents who have remained faithful to their temple covenants and have willingly sacrificed all that we might be securely invested in our Heavenly Father's plan. To my angel mother, I can only say thank you for keeping the chain of love and gospel ordinances strong in our lives.

I have mentioned these sacred relationships because of the happiness that I feel knowing there is a binding covenant with each of them sealed in the holy temple. I am profoundly grateful to know that regardless of any challenges that yet await us, there is hope and confidence in knowing that by keeping the covenants of the gospel, all of the momentary trials of life can be transcended. The scriptures teach us that all will eventually be well as we are faithful to our covenants. King Benjamin taught:

"Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ. . . .

"Therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

"And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God" (Mosiah 5:7–9).

Covenants are critical to salvation

Giving careful attention to covenant making is critical to our eternal salvation. Covenants are agreements we make with our Heavenly Father in which we commit our hearts, minds, and behavior to keeping

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the commandments defined by the Lord. As we are faithful in keeping our agreement, He covenants, or promises, to bless us, ultimately, with all that He has.

In the Old Testament we are taught the Lord's covenant pattern in Noah's experience with a wicked world and the Lord's plan for cleansing the earth. Because of Noah's faithful, steadfast commitment, the Lord said to him:

"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. . . .

"And Noah did . . . all that the Lord commanded him" (Genesis 6:18; 7:5).

After the floods were abated, they went forth out of the ark.

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord. . . .

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons [who were] with him, saying,

"And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you" (Genesis 8:20; 9:8–9).

We too have entered into sacred covenants with the Lord that we might be preserved from the adversary. Just as in Noah's time, we live in a day of prophetic promise and fulfillment. In the past eight years, 71 new temples have been dedicated—a feat, under the direction of the Lord's prophet, which may in some ways be like the building of the ark in Noah's day.

Our living prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has invited us to come through the door of the temple, where we can enter into covenants with the Lord.

Covenants require sacrifice

As in Noah's day, our efforts to live these covenants may often be accompanied by a measure of sacrifice. This sacrifice, regardless of how great or small, often determines how committed in mind and heart we are to be submissive to the will of our Heavenly Father. The pattern of sacrifice often includes a season of struggle where we must evaluate and weigh the consequences of our decisions. Choices may not always be clear or easy, so we struggle on. When we finally determine to rid ourselves of struggle and to sacrifice our will for the Lord's, we are lifted to a new level of understanding. This process is often more recognizable in our lives when we experience a significant tragedy or challenge.

Just a few weeks ago a young man, while at a Scout camp in the mountains east of Salt Lake City, was struck by lightning, which took his life. His parents, grief stricken and devastated at the sudden loss of their son, struggled quietly and asked why this happened. Because their hearts were submissive and their faith strong, there came a great outpouring of love from the Lord. In the midst of their grief came a quiet, tender resolve to accept without anger the outcome of this experience. With their acceptance came a larger vision of the purpose of life and a remembrance of the covenants that were in place. Though still filled with anguish from their sudden loss, they found themselves standing on a higher plane, committed to hold even faster to their covenants and to live such that they might be assured of a joyful reunion with their son.

Provide temple covenants for the dead

In this dispensation, covenant making has taken on a new perspective different from the days of Noah. We are not only responsible to make covenants for ourselves, but additionally we have been given the responsibility to search out our kindred dead and open the door for all who desire to make covenants and worthily receive the gospel ordinances.

The work among those who lived previously is aggressively going forward with the forces of heaven commissioned by the Lord. In President Joseph F. Smith's vision of the dead, he records:

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"But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth. . . .

"I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption" (D&C 138:30, 57).

The scriptures further teach us that the messengers included "the prophets who had testified of [the Redeemer] in the flesh" (D&C 138:36). Some of those messengers might have included Peter, Paul, Alma, John, Joseph, and Nephi.

Having read this vision of President Smith's and knowing of the missionaries assigned to do this work, one would think it would be highly motivational for each of us to keep our covenant to find the names of our deceased family members and fill all the available hours in every temple. I can, with some confidence, report there is still available time in many temples to accommodate the counsel of the First Presidency to put aside some of our leisure time and devote more time to performing temple ordinances. I pray that we will be responsive to this invitation to come to the door of the temple.

I feel humbled at the opportunity to serve in this trusted calling and pray that I may act upon my covenants with the Lord and be submissive to the direction of the Spirit. I declare my solemn witness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I express my love for the covenants and ordinances of the temple and commit to redouble my effort to participate in these holy houses of God. I know, as we make and keep sacred covenants, the Lord will bring us to His sacred presence. I testify of this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Lowell M. Snow

Brothers and sisters, as I sat here I felt a great desire to express my love to you and to assure all who are under the sound of my voice of the love of their Heavenly Father. On behalf of the Brethren, I express gratitude for your willingness to come this day to be nourished by the good word of God.

The Savior marks the path

I enjoy hiking in the mountains, and as I move along in the backcountry I often use a compass, maps, and signs to guide me toward my destination. These tools prove to be very helpful, even invaluable, when I am faced with unknown roads and trails that run in every direction.

Life is full of many intersecting roads and trails. There are so many paths to follow, so many voices calling out "lo, here" or "lo, there."[1] There is such a variety and volume of media flooding our personal space, most of it intent on herding us down a path that is broad and traveled by many.

When pondering which of these voices to listen to or which road among the many is right, have you ever asked yourself, as Joseph Smith did: "What is to be done? Who of all these [voices and roads is] right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?"[2]

My witness to you is that Jesus Christ continues to mark the path, lead the way, and define every point on our journey. His path is strait and narrow and leads toward "light and life and endless day."[3] May I share an example from the scriptures with you.

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The Liahona showed the way

At the Lord's command, Lehi and his children left Jerusalem and began an epic journey toward a land of promise. After being camped for a season in a valley by the river, the Lord told Lehi one night that it was time to continue their journey into the wilderness. With much on his mind, he walked out his tent door the next morning and, to his great astonishment, found an object before him on the ground that could have been placed there only by the hand of God. It was a compass, a Liahona in their language, and its pointers were constructed to guide them on their journey, allowing them to steer a course where they could prosper and remain safe in the more fertile parts of their route. But that was not all. Writing appeared on this compass that was plain and easy to read and even changed from time to time, giving the family better understanding concerning the ways of the Lord.[4]

Faith and diligence were required

During their journey, this Liahona, or compass, proved to be invaluable in helping Lehi's family prosper and eventually arrive at their destination. But it is important to note Nephi's observation that it was only through the faith, diligence, and heed they gave to the compass that it worked. Of this marvelous helper that guided them through the wilderness, Nephi simply observed, "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things."[5]

Nephi's conclusion was not lost on Alma 500 years later when he reminded his own son about the importance of the Liahona. He explained to Helaman that the Lord prepared this compass to show their fathers the course they should travel in the wilderness, but because that miraculous device worked by *small* means, their fathers were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence. As a result, this marvelous device ceased to work, and they did not progress in their journey or travel a straight course but tarried in the wilderness and were afflicted because of their negligence.[6]

"O my son," Alma continued, "do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. The way is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever. And now, my son, see that ye take care of these sacred things, yea, see that ye look to God and live."[7]

The compass of the Lord today

The Lord provides guidance and direction to individuals and families today, just as He did with Lehi. This very general conference is a modern Liahona, a time and place to receive inspired guidance and direction that prospers us and helps us follow God's path through the more fertile parts of mortality. Consider that we are gathered to hear counsel from prophets and apostles who have prayed mightily and prepared carefully to know what the Lord would have them say. We have prayed for them and for ourselves that the Comforter would teach us the mind and will of God. Surely there is no better time or place for the Lord to direct His people than in this conference.

The teachings of this conference are the compass of the Lord. In the coming days you may, as Lehi did, walk out your front door and find a *Liahona, Ensign,* or other Church publication in your mailbox, and it will contain the proceedings of this conference. As with the Liahona of old, this new writing will be plain and easy to read and will give you and your family understanding concerning the ways and paths of the Lord.

As Nephi and Alma both remind us, the Lord provides direction for our journey according to the faith, diligence, and heed we give to that direction. He is not

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likely to reveal new paths if we have not faithfully followed Him along those He has already marked. Provident prospering along the way comes to those who diligently follow inspired counsel, making it their "walk and talk" until once again a new writing appears to help them progress in their journey toward the land of promises.

My brothers and sisters, prophets and apostles through the ages are our compass from the Lord. His direction through them is plain; the charted course from them is sure. His path, like His yoke, is easy. But do not be deceived by the easiness of His way, assuming it to be a small matter or a thing of naught, but rather take care of these sacred things and look to Him so you can be like Him and live with Him—forever.

I stand today as a witness that our Father's promises will all be fulfilled; that He sent His Only Begotten to the earth to mark the path and lead the way; that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith on the morning of a beautiful, clear day early in the spring of 1820, restoring thereafter all that is required to successfully complete man's earthly journey; and that a prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, points the way for those who will look and live forever. That we will exercise our faith and diligently give heed to the directions and pointers of latter-day Liahonas, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Joseph Smith—History 1:5.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:10.
3. "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns,* no. 195.
4. See 1 Nephi 16:9–16.
5. 1 Nephi 16:29.
6. See Alma 37:38–41.
7. Alma 37:46–47.

Elder Ulisses Soares

"Feed my sheep"

On one occasion the Savior asked a question to Peter three times:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. [Jesus] saith unto him, Feed my sheep."[1]

Because the Lord was deeply concerned with the welfare of our Heavenly Father's children, He gave Peter the special charge of feeding the sheep. He reaffirmed this same concern in modern times through a revelation given to Joseph Smith:

"Now, I say unto you, and what I say unto you, I say unto all the Twelve: Arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep."[2]

As we study the scriptures, we notice that the Savior ministered to people according to their specific needs. A good example of this occurred when He was near Capernaum, and Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, fell down at Jesus's feet and pleaded with the Lord to come into his house and bless his daughter, who was dying. Jesus went with Jairus even though the crowd made it difficult for Him to move fast.

And then a messenger came telling Jairus his daughter was already dead. Even grieving as he was, Jairus kept his steadfast faith in the Lord, who comforted the heart of that father, saying:

"Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

"And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

"And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. . . .

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". . . And took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

"And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat."[3]

Jesus showed patience and love to all who came to Him seeking relief for their physical, emotional, or spiritual illnesses and who felt discouraged and downtrodden.

Nurture each one of our sheep

To follow the Savior's example, each one of us must look around and reach out to the sheep who are facing the same circumstances and lift them up and encourage them to proceed on the journey toward eternal life.

This need today is as great as or perhaps even greater than when the Savior walked on this earth. As shepherds we must understand that we should nurture each one of our sheep to bring them to Christ, which is the purpose of all we do in this Church.

Any activity, meeting, or program should focus on this same objective. As we stay in tune with the needs of the people, we can strengthen them and help them overcome their challenges so they will remain steadfast in the way which will lead them back to our Heavenly Father's presence and help them endure to the end.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is about people, not programs. Sometimes, in the haste of fulfilling our Church responsibilities, we spend too much time concentrating on programs, instead of focusing on people, and end up taking their real needs for granted. When things like that happen, we lose the perspective of our callings, neglect people, and prevent them from reaching their divine potential to gain eternal life.

A bishop lovingly encourages a deacon

As I was about to have my 12th birthday, my bishop invited me for an interview and taught me how to prepare to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained a deacon. As the interview was coming to an end, he pulled out a set of forms from his desk and challenged me to fill them out. They were mission call papers. I was astonished. After all, I was only 11. But that bishop had a vision of the future and of the blessings that would be mine if I prepared properly to serve a mission when my time came.

He showed he really cared about me. He told me the steps I should take to prepare both financially and spiritually to serve the Lord. After that day, he interviewed me at least twice a year until I was 19 and encouraged me to remain faithful in my preparation.

He kept my missionary forms in his files and mentioned them whenever we had an interview. With my parents' help and with the encouragement of a loving and patient bishop, I served a mission. The mission helped me gain a perspective of the blessings God has in store for all who endure to the end.

Truly love; don't just fulfill callings

It does not matter whether it is a child, youth, or adult—everyone needs to feel loved. We have been counseled for several years to focus on working with new converts and less-active members. People will remain in the Church when they feel someone cares for them.

Among the last instructions the Savior gave His Apostles, He said:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."[4]

People are most receptive to our influence when they feel that we truly love them, and not only because we have a calling to fulfill. As we express true love for people, they will be able to feel the influ-

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ence of the Spirit and may feel motivated to follow our teachings. It is not always easy to love people for what they are. The prophet Mormon explained what we should do if such challenges arise:

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure."[5]

Minister as the Savior did

Christ Himself ministered to people, lifting the heavy laden, giving hope to the disheartened, and seeking after the ones who were lost. He showed people how much He loved and understood them and how precious they were. He acknowledged their divine nature and eternal value. Even when calling people to repentance, He condemned the sin without condemning the sinner.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul emphasized the need of expressing this true love to each sheep of the Lord's flock:

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . .

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."[6]

As we follow the Savior's example and teachings, we can assist people to fulfill their earthly mission and return to live with our Heavenly Father.

Of this I bear you my testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John 21:16.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 112:14.
3. Luke 8:50–52, 54–55; see also verses 41–42, 49.
4. John 13:34–35.
5. Moroni 7:48.
6. 1 Corinthians 13:3–7, 13.

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The basics of airplane flight

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear friends:

During my professional life as an airline pilot, I sometimes had passengers visit the cockpit of my Boeing 747. They asked about the many switches, instruments, systems, and procedures and how all this technical equipment would help such a huge and beautiful airplane fly.

As with all pilots, I enjoyed the fact that they were impressed by the apparent complexity of this plane and that they wondered what kind of magnificent and brilliant person it takes to operate it! At this point of my story, my wife and children would kindly interrupt and say with a twinkling in their eyes, "Pilots are born with a great measure of natural humility!"

To the visitors in my cockpit, I would explain that it takes a great aerodynamic design, many auxiliary systems and programs, and powerful engines to make this flying machine equal to the task of bring-

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ing comfort and safety to those joining the flight.

To simplify my explanation by focusing on the basics, I would add that all you really need is a strong forward thrust, a powerful upward lift, and the right aircraft attitude, and the laws of nature will carry the 747 and its passengers safely across continents and oceans, over high mountains and dangerous thunderstorms to its destination.

Doctrines, principles are the gospel core

In recent years I have often contemplated that being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints invites us to ask similar questions. What are the basics, the fundamental principles of our membership in the kingdom of God on earth? After all is said and done, what will really carry us at times of greatest need to our desired eternal destination?

The Church, with all its organizational structure and programs, offers many important activities for its members aimed at helping families and individuals to serve God and each other. Sometimes, however, it can appear that these programs and activities are closer to the center of our heart and soul than the core doctrines and principles of the gospel. Procedures, programs, policies, and patterns of organization are helpful for our spiritual progress here on earth, but let's not forget that they are subject to change.

In contrast, the core of the gospel—the doctrine and the principles—will never change. Living according to the basic gospel principles will bring power, strength, and spiritual self-reliance into the lives of all Latter-day Saints.

Faith is such a principle of power. We need this source of power in our lives. God works by power, but this power is usually exercised in response to our faith. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). God works according to the faith of His children.

Agency and spiritual self-reliance

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves" (quoted by John Taylor, in "The Organization of the Church," *Millennial Star,* Nov. 15, 1851, 339). To me, this teaching is beautifully straightforward. As we strive to understand, internalize, and live correct gospel principles, we will become more spiritually self-reliant. The principle of spiritual self-reliance grows out of a fundamental doctrine of the Church that God has granted us—agency. I believe that moral agency is one of the greatest gifts of God unto His children, next to life itself.

When I study and ponder moral agency and its eternal consequences, I realize that we are truly spirit children of God and therefore should act accordingly. This understanding also reminds me that as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are part of a great worldwide family of Saints.

The gospel offers answers to all people

The organizational structure of the Church allows great flexibility according to the size, growth pattern, and needs of our congregations. There is the basic unit program with a very simple organizational structure and fewer meetings. We also have large wards with great organizational resources to serve one another. All are established within the inspired programs of the Church to help members "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

All these varied options are equal in divine value because the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the same in each unit. I testify as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ that He lives, that the gospel is true, and that it offers the answers to all personal and collective challenges the children of God have on this earth today.

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This summer my wife and I visited with members of the Church in many countries throughout Europe. In some parts of Europe the Church has been present for many years, even since 1837. There is a great heritage of faithful members in Europe. Currently we have more than 400,000 members in Europe. As we look at all the generations who have emigrated from Europe to America during the 19th and 20th centuries, that total number could easily be multiplied a few times.

Why did so many faithful members leave their home countries in those early days of the Church? Many reasons can be named: to escape persecution, to help build the Church in America, to improve their economic circumstances, the desire to be close to a temple, and many more.

Europe still feels the consequence of this exodus. But the strength that comes from several faithful generations of Church members is now becoming more apparent. We see more young men and women and more senior couples serve missions for the Lord; we see more temple marriages; we see more confidence and courage by the members to share the restored gospel. Among the peoples of Europe and many other parts of the world, there is a spiritual vacuum of Christ's true teachings. This vacuum must, can, and will be filled with the message of the restored gospel as our wonderful members live and proclaim this gospel with greater courage and faith.

Strong members in Russia

With the expansion of the Church in Europe, there are now countries where the Church has been for less than 15 years. I spoke with a mission president serving in his homeland of Russia who has been a member for only seven years. He told me, "The same month I was baptized I was called as a branch president." Did he feel overwhelmed at times? Absolutely! Did he try to implement the full range of Church programs? Fortunately not! How did he grow so strong in such a small congregation in such a short time? He explained:

"I knew with all my soul the Church was true. The doctrine of the gospel filled my mind and my heart. As we joined the Church, we felt part of a family. We felt warmth, trust, and love. We were only few, but we all tried to follow the Savior."

They supported each other, they did the best they could, and they knew the Church was true. It was not the organization that had attracted him, but the light of the gospel, and this light strengthened those good members.

Build the Church in your country

In many countries the Church is still in its beginnings, and the organizational circumstances are sometimes far from perfect. However, the members may have a perfect testimony of the truth in their hearts. As the members will stay in their countries and build the Church, despite economic challenges and hardships, future generations will be grateful to those courageous modern-day pioneers. They abide by the loving invitation of the First Presidency given in 1999:

"In our day, the Lord has seen fit to provide the blessings of the gospel, including an increased number of temples, in many parts of the world. Therefore, we wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States. . . .

"As members throughout the world remain in their homelands, working to build the Church in their native countries, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church collectively" (First Presidency letter, Dec. 1, 1999).

May I add a word of caution to those of us who live in large wards and stakes. We have to be careful that the center of our testimony is not located in the social

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dimension of the Church community or the wonderful activities, programs, and organizations of our wards and stakes. All of these things are important and valuable to have, but they are not enough. Even friendship is not enough.

We recognize that we are living in a time of turmoil, disaster, and war. We and many others feel strongly the great need for a "defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:6). How do we find such a place of safety? The prophet of God, even President Hinckley, has taught: "Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign,* Nov. 2001, 90).

Focus on following the Savior

Recall with me how Jesus Christ instructed His Apostles, clearly and directly, at the beginning of His mortal ministry, "[Come,] follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). This was also the beginning of the ministry of the Twelve Apostles, and I suspect that they had a feeling of inadequacy, as I deeply have, being one who has also been called to this sacred work. May I suggest that the Savior Himself teaches us here a lesson about core doctrine and priorities in life. Individually, we need to first "follow Him," and as we do this, the Savior will bless us beyond our own capacity to become what He wants us to be.

To follow Christ is to become more like Him. It is to learn from His character. As spirit children of our Heavenly Father, we do have the potential to incorporate Christlike attributes into our life and character. The Savior invites us to learn His gospel by living His teachings. To follow Him is to apply correct principles and then witness for ourselves the blessings that follow. This process is very complex and very simple at the same time. Ancient and modern prophets described it with three words: "Keep the commandments"—nothing more, nothing less.

Develop Christlike attributes

Developing Christlike attributes in our lives is not an easy task, especially when we move away from generalities and abstractions and begin to deal with real life. The test comes in practicing what we proclaim. The reality check comes when Christlike attributes need to become visible in our lives—as husband or wife, as father or mother, as son or daughter, in our friendships, in our employment, in our business, and in our recreation. We can recognize our growth, as can those around us, as we gradually increase our capacity to "act in all holiness before [Him]" (D&C 43:9).

The scriptures describe a number of Christlike attributes we need to develop during the course of our lives. They include knowledge and humility, charity and love, obedience and diligence, faith and hope. These personal character qualities stand independent of the organizational status of our Church unit, our economic circumstances, our family situation, culture, race, or language. Christlike attributes are gifts from God. They cannot be developed without His help. The one help we all need is given to us freely through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Having faith in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement means relying completely on Him—trusting in His infinite power, intelligence, and love. Christlike attributes come into our lives as we exercise our agency righteously. Faith in Jesus Christ leads to action. When we have faith in Christ, we trust the Lord enough to follow His commandments—even when we do not completely understand the reasons for them. In seeking to become more like the Savior, we need to reevaluate our lives regularly and rely, through the path of true

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repentance, upon the merits of Jesus Christ and the blessings of His Atonement.

Developing Christlike attributes can be a painful process. We need to be ready to accept direction and correction from the Lord and His servants. This worldwide conference with its music and spoken word offers spiritual power, direction, and blessings "from on high" (D&C 43:16). It is a time when the voice of personal inspiration and revelation will bring peace to our souls and will teach us how to become more Christlike. This voice will be as sweet as the voice of a dear friend, and it will fill our souls when our hearts are sufficiently contrite.

By becoming more like the Savior, we will grow in our ability to "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13). We will "lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better" (D&C 25:10).

The wind beneath our wings

This leads me back to my aerodynamic analogy from the beginning. I spoke of focusing on the basics. Christlike attributes are the basics. They are the fundamental principles that will create "the wind beneath our wings." As we develop Christlike attributes in our own lives, step-by-step, they will "bear [us] up as on eagles' wings" (D&C 124:18). Our faith in Jesus Christ will provide power and a strong forward thrust; our unwavering and active hope will provide a powerful upward lift. Both faith and hope will carry us across oceans of temptations, over mountains of afflictions, and bring us safely back to our eternal home and destination.

Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Young Women and Young Men choir, and the father-and-son priesthood choir. We likewise thank their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend gratitude to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Dennis E. Simmons of the Seventy, and this conference will then be adjourned.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Well, my brothers and sisters, we have had a remarkable conference. It has literally been an inspirational feast at the table of the Lord. The music, the prayers, the talks have been wonderful. We have been informed and uplifted; our faith has been strengthened.

Fulfillment of Joseph Smith's prophecies

The growth of the Church has been made evident by the fact that our words have been translated into 80 languages and our message has been broadcast by satellite all across the world and heard by people in many, many lands. It is all the wonderful fruition of the words spoken by Moroni to the boy prophet on the night of September 21, 1823.

He was a young man, then a poor farm boy with very little education. He had nothing. His parents had nothing. He lived in a rural community, scarcely recognized outside its borders. And yet the angel said

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to him that "he was a messenger sent from the presence of God . . . ; that God had a work for [Joseph] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

How could such a thing be? Joseph must have wondered. He must have been absolutely stunned.

And yet it has all come to pass. And far greater will yet come to pass.

Celebration of Joseph Smith's birthday

On December 23 of this year, 2005, we intend to honor his birthday with a great celebration in tribute to him.

I intend, if possible, to go to the place of his birth to repeat what Joseph F. Smith, the sixth President of the Church, did on December 23, 1905, a century ago. On that occasion he dedicated the monument which marks the place of the Prophet's birth and where a memorial cottage has also been built.

When I am in Vermont, Presidents Monson and Faust, with others of the General Authorities, will be here in the Conference Center. This great hall will be filled, and the program will be carried far and wide by satellite. There will be appropriate music and words of tribute spoken both in South Royalton and Salt Lake City to the great prophet of this dispensation.

What the choir sang so magnificently this morning in tribute to the Prophet will be but a dress rehearsal for the occasion in December. We look forward to this and hope all of you will be with us at that time.

Testimony and benediction

We leave with you our testimony of the divinity of this work. What a wonderful work it is. How empty our lives would be without it. God, our Eternal Father, lives. He loves us. He watches over us. Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. They have restored Their work in this last and final dispensation through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph. I so testify in all solemnity and leave my love and my blessing with you, my beloved brethren and sisters of this grateful Church. God bless you every one.

Now in closing, I wish to thank all of those who have done so very, very much to make of this a great conference, the many who work behind the scenes to make all of this possible. They work night and day to bring about this great result—the ushers, the technicians, the security force, the first-aid people, the traffic officers, the translators, the secretaries who labor over our talks and type them time after time.

God bless all of us, I humbly pray. May we strive to walk in righteousness before Him, I humbly ask, and leave my benediction with you in the sacred and holy name of our Redeemer, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Dennis E. Simmons offered the benediction.

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SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A choir of young women and young men from stakes in Bountiful, Woods Cross, and North Salt Lake, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the priesthood session was provided by a priesthood choir of fathers and sons from stakes in Orem, Utah. Donald Ripplinger directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

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