

Of Missions, Temples, and Stewardship

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Now, if I may have an interest in your faith and prayers, I hope to be able to say something that is helpful. Last Saturday evening, one week ago, a great Relief Society conference was held in this Tabernacle. It was an inspiring experience to look into the faces of that vast congregation of women of strength and faith and capacity. Now it is likewise an inspiring experience to look into the faces of you brethren and feel of your strength, your faith, your loyalty, your devotion.

This has been an hour of inspiration. We have heard much of wonderful counsel that will bless our lives if we will accept it. I desire to speak of two or three matters.

The first has already been dealt with by President Monson and Brother Hillam. I wish to add my endorsement, together with a few further observations.

I speak also of missionary service. I was recently in London, England, and there we held a meeting with the missionaries serving in that area. Representatives of the British Broadcasting Corporation filmed part of the service. They are preparing a documentary of our missionary work in the British Isles.

Prior to this I had been interviewed by a representative of the BBC Radio Worldwide Service. He had seen the missionaries and noted their youthful appearance. He asked me, "How do you expect people to listen to these callow youth?"

In case some of you do not know the meaning of *callow*, it means immature, inexperienced, lacking sophistication.

I replied to the reporter with a smile, "Callow youth? It is with these missionaries today as it was with Timothy in the days of Paul. It was Paul who wrote to his young companion, saying, 'Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 Tim. 4:12).

"The remarkable thing is that people do receive them and listen to them. They are wholesome. They are bright, they are alert, they are upstanding. They are clean looking, and people quickly develop confidence in them."

I might have added, "They are a miracle." They knock on doors, but not many are at home these days in a city like London. And so missionaries approach them on the street and engage them in conversation.

It is not an easy thing for a sensitive young man or woman to do this. But they come to believe in these further words of Paul to Timothy:

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

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:7–8).

They recognize that fear comes not from God but from the adversary of truth. And so they develop a capacity to engage people in conversation concerning their work and their message. They and their associates will bring into the Church during this year of 1995 almost 300,000 converts. That is the equivalent of a hundred new stakes of Zion and more than five hundred new wards in one year.

“Callow youth?” Yes, they are lacking in sophistication. What a great blessing this is. They carry no element of deception. They speak with no element of sophistry. They speak out of their hearts, with personal conviction. Each is a servant of the living God, an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power comes not of their learning in the things of the world. Their power comes of faith, and prayer, and humility. As we have been reminded, the work is not easy. It has never been easy. Long ago Jeremiah said that the Lord would gather His people one of a city and two of a family and bring them to Zion and feed them with pastors after His own heart (see Jer. 3:14–15). In terms of the individual missionary, the harvest is not great in most instances, but in the aggregate it becomes tremendous. The work demands courage, it demands effort, it demands dedication, it demands the humility to get on one’s knees and ask the Lord for help and direction.

I throw out a challenge to every young man within this vast congregation tonight. Prepare yourself now to be worthy to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary. He has said, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30). Prepare to consecrate two years of your lives to this sacred service. That will in effect constitute a tithe on the first twenty years of your lives. Think of all that you have that is good—life itself, health, strength, food to eat and clothing to wear, parents, brothers and sisters, and friends. All are gifts from the Lord.

Of course your time is precious, and you may feel you cannot afford two years. But I promise you that the time you spend in the mission field, if those years are spent in dedicated service, will yield a greater return on investment than any other two years of your lives. You will come to know what dedication and consecration mean. You will develop powers of persuasion which will bless your entire life. Your timidity, your fears, your shyness will gradually disappear as you go forth with boldness and conviction. You will learn to work with others, to develop a spirit of teamwork. The cankering evil of selfishness will be supplanted by a sense of service to others. You will draw nearer to the Lord than you likely will in any other set of circumstances. You will come to know that without His help you are indeed weak and simple, but that with His help you can accomplish miracles.

You will establish habits of industry. You will develop a talent for the establishment of goals of effort. You will learn to work with singleness of purpose. What a

tremendous foundation all of this will become for you in your later educational efforts and your life's work. Two years will not be time lost. It will be skills gained.

You will bless the lives of those you teach, and their posterity after them. You will bless your own life. You will bless the lives of your family, who will sustain you and pray for you.

And above and beyond all of this will come that sweet peace in your heart that you have served your Lord faithfully and well. Your service will become an expression of gratitude to your Heavenly Father.

You will come to know your Redeemer as your greatest friend in time or eternity. You will realize that through His atoning sacrifice He has opened the way for eternal life and an exaltation above and beyond your greatest dreams.

If you serve a mission faithfully and well, you will be a better husband, you will be a better father, you will be a better student, a better worker in your chosen vocation. Love is of the essence of this missionary work. Selflessness is of its very nature. Self-discipline is its requirement. Prayer opens its reservoir of power.

And so, my dear young brethren, resolve within your hearts today to include in the program of your lives service in the harvest field of the Lord as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And now, brethren, I pass to another subject. Missionary work is concerned with providing saving ordinances to our Father's living children throughout the world. Temple work is primarily concerned with service in behalf of the sons and daughters of God who have passed beyond the veil of death. God is no respecter of persons. If the living in all nations are deserving of the saving ordinances of the gospel, then those of all past generations must likewise be deserving.

Our people cannot partake of all of the blessings of the gospel unless they can receive their own temple ordinances and then make these ordinances available to those of their kindred dead and others. If this is to happen, temples must be available to them. I feel very strongly about this.

Back in 1954, before I was a General Authority, President McKay called me into his office and told me of the planned construction of the Swiss Temple. He gave me an assignment to find a way by which the temple ordinances could be administered to those of various languages without multiplying the number of temple workers. Since that time I have had much to do with these sacred buildings and the ordinances administered therein.

We now have forty-seven working temples. Eight of these are in Utah, sixteen in other areas of the United States, two in Canada, and twenty-one outside of North America. Twenty-eight of the forty-seven have been dedicated since I came into the First Presidency in 1981. In addition, four have been rededicated after very extensive remodeling. We now have under construction six more, located in American Fork and Vernal, Utah; St. Louis, Missouri; Hong Kong; Preston, England; and Bogotá, Colombia.

We have announced seven additional temples for Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic; Madrid, Spain; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Recife, Brazil; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Hartford, Connecticut. And we are working on the possibility of another in Venezuela.

After working for years to acquire a suitable site in the Hartford area, during which time the Church has grown appreciably in areas to the north and south, we have determined that we will not at this time build a temple in the immediate area of Hartford, but rather we will build one in the area of Boston, Massachusetts, and another in White Plains, New York. In other words, there will be two to serve the needs of the people where originally it was planned one would do. We have beautiful sites in both of these new locations.

We apologize to our faithful Saints in the Hartford area. We know you will be disappointed in this announcement. You know that we and your local officers have spent countless hours searching for a suitable location that would handle the needs of the Saints of New York and New England. While we deeply regret disappointing the people in the Hartford area, we are satisfied that we have been led to the present decision and that temples will be located in such areas that those of you who reside in the Hartford area will not have too far to drive.

Additionally, we are working on six other sites. It is a tremendously ambitious program.

I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We can proceed only so fast. We try to see that each temple will be in an excellent location, where there will be good neighbors over a long period of time. Real estate prices in such areas are usually high. A temple is a much more complex structure to build than an ordinary meetinghouse or stake center. It is built to a higher standard of architecture. It takes longer and costs more. The work is moving about as fast as we can go. It is my constant prayer that somehow it might be speeded up so that more of our people might have easier access to a sacred house of the Lord.

Brigham Young once said that if young people really understood the blessings of temple marriage, they would walk all the way to England if that were necessary (see *Journal of Discourses*, 11:118). We hope they will not have to go anywhere near that far.

These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives. There is need occasionally to

leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace.

If every man in this church who has been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood were to qualify himself to hold a temple recommend, and then were to go to the house of the Lord and renew his covenants in solemnity before God and witnesses, we would be a better people. There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us.

Now, brethren, I have one more matter before I conclude, and if I run overtime a little, I hope you will excuse me.

I desire to present to the priesthood of the Church my appraisal of the present condition of this great organization of which each of us is a part and in which each of us has an interest. I think you are entitled to occasionally hear such a report.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church is in good condition. It is healthy. It is growing in numbers. As of the end of 1994 our membership stood at 9,025,000, a gain of 300,730 over the previous year. This means that we are adding a million new members each three and a-half years, and I am confident that momentum will increase. It is expanding geographically over the world. I believe that it is well managed. But we are not without problems. Too many of our people drift into inactivity. Too many fail to live the principles of the gospel. But with all of this, we have cause to rejoice as to what is occurring.

The Church has no debt. I qualify that to the extent that we have some contracts for the purchase of properties where the sellers insist on payments over a period of time. There are resources to ensure that these contracts will be covered in a timely way.

In our few business enterprises, some debt is used as a tool of management. But the ratio of debt to assets would be envied by the executives of any large organization.

The Church has been living within its means, and it will continue to do so. I am profoundly grateful for the law of tithing. To me it is a constantly recurring miracle. It is made possible by the faith of the people. It is the Lord's plan for financing the work of His kingdom.

It is so simple and straightforward. It consists of thirty-five words set forth in section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants D&C 119:4. What a contrast with the cumbersome, complex, and difficult tax codes with which we live as citizens.

There is no compulsion to pay tithing, other than the commandment of the Lord, and that, of course, becomes the best of all reasons. This is the only large society of which I am aware that does not drop from its rolls those who fail to pay what might be considered their dues.

The payment of tithing carries with it the conviction of the truth of the principle.

Now, we know that these funds are sacred. We have a compelling trust to use them carefully and wisely. I have said before that I keep on the credenza in my office this genuine widow's mite (too small for you to see, but it's there nevertheless), given me long ago by Brother David B. Galbraith, who at the time was the president of the Jerusalem Branch of the Church. I keep it as a reminder of the sacrifice it represents, that we are dealing with the consecration of the widow as well as the offering of the wealthy. I thank all who live honestly with the Lord in the payment of their tithes and offerings. But I know that you do not need to be thanked. Your testimony of the divinity of this law, and of the blessings that flow from its observance, is as strong as is my testimony.

Not only are we determined to live within the means of the Church, but each year we put into the reserves of the Church a portion of our annual budget. We are only doing what we have suggested every family do. Should there come a time of economic distress, we would hope to have the means to weather the storm.

We recognize the importance of consecrated voluntary service in carrying forward the programs of the Church. We have a veritable army of dedicated people who give freely of their time to assist in the work. Our Human Resources people indicate that there are 96,484 of these volunteers now serving. They represent the equivalent of 10,000 full-time employees, and their service has an annual value of \$360 million. They labor in a missionary or volunteer capacity in our Church Educational System, in our family history organization, in the temples, and in various other departments and offices of the Church. We are deeply grateful and heavily indebted to them for their magnificent contribution. I am confident that the Lord is pleased with their dedicated service.

Our program of weekday religious education moves forward. Wherever the Church is organized, the seminary program is put in place. Likewise, our institutes are providing a wonderful service for those of college and university age. During this 1995–1996 academic year, there are more than 583,000 students enrolled in seminaries and institutes. Many of you young men who are here this evening—I venture that almost every one of you—is a beneficiary of this wonderful Church program. I'd like all of you to stand, just for a moment, who are seminary or institute enrollees. Look at that! That says it! Thank you very much.

We hope that all for whom these programs are available will take advantage of them. Knowledge of the gospel will be increased, faith will be strengthened, and you will enjoy wonderful associations and friendships with those of your own kind.

I think of the Prophet Joseph's struggle in getting out the first edition of the Book of Mormon. There were 5,000 copies in that first edition, and its printing was made possible only through the generosity of Martin Harris. You may be interested to know that last year 3,742,629 copies of the Book of Mormon were distributed. All or substantial parts of the book are printed in eighty-five languages. We may not be flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon, as President Benson had urged us to

do, but let me say that it is no small thing to distribute three and three-quarter million copies in a single year.

It was my privilege to preside over the 150th stake of the Church, which was created in 1945, 115 years after the Church was organized. Now, an even fifty years later, there are 2,101 stakes of Zion. Seven hundred and seventy-two new wards and branches were organized during 1994, bringing the total at the close of the year to 21,774 wards and branches. It should be apparent to all why we must construct so many new buildings in which to house our people for worship and instruction. We have 375 new buildings in the course of construction at the present time. They are becoming increasingly costly to build. We hope that you will take good care of them. To you young men I make a special plea that you do all possible in this regard. We want these facilities *used* for the purposes for which they are constructed, but we do not want them *abused*. Utility costs are high. Turn off the lights when the buildings are not in use. Leave no litter about them. Keep the grounds clean and attractive. Wherever one of our buildings is found, it ought to say to those who pass, "The people who worship here are people who believe in cleanliness, order, beauty, and respectability."

I have already spoken to you about the increase in the number of temples. It is so with every aspect of the program. I see a bright future ahead. I do not discount the fact that we will be faced with problems. This work has always been faced with problems. The work of the adversary continues against it. But we will move forward as those who have gone before us have moved forward. Every man and boy within the sound of my voice tonight has the responsibility to assist in this great work of reaching out and growing stronger.

Brethren, thank you for your faith. Thank you for your devotion. We are aware of the great trust which you place in us. We are aware of the sacred trust placed in us by the Lord. And He has likewise placed a sacred trust in each of you who holds His divine priesthood. As I have said before, we are all in this together. Each of us has his part in the building of this kingdom. How wonderful, how very satisfying it is to know that each of us can do something to strengthen this, the work of the Almighty.

It is true. It is our Father's work. It is the church of our Redeemer. The priesthood which we hold is a very real and a very precious thing. I leave you my testimony, my love and my blessing, and my gratitude, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.