

ELDER S. DILWORTH YOUNG*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

I should like to testify of the truthfulness of what Bishop Richards has just told you. If we could send our boys and girls into the mission fields with a thorough knowledge of the Book of Mormon, they would never want for a witness and a testimony to bear to those who, in their hearts, are ready to hear the gospel.

My experience in traveling about the missions is that when the missionaries know this great witness, they have no doubt in their minds. They have confidence in the truth of the gospel and are possessors of a sure testimony of its restoration and of the goodness of the Savior to us in this day.

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN H. TAYLOR

It is not my purpose to talk about the Book of Mormon at this time, and before I begin on the subject I have chosen, I should like to digress for a moment and add my voice to that of my fellow member of the First Council of the Seventy, Richard L. Evans, in honor of our departed brother, John H. Taylor.

My first introduction to scouting as a profession was punctuated, and set off in quotation marks, by the work of this man. Many men living in the area which I served were boys during the years after 1912 when President Taylor directed this, the Scout organization for the Church. These men have told me many times of their love for this great leader and of the value to them of his teaching of scouting principles.

When I came into the First Council of the Seventy he treated me as a son, rather an overgrown son it is true, but he made me feel that he had a fatherly interest in me. He gave me gentle, humorous guidance, for John H. Taylor had a very deep and abiding sense of humor, which was delightful to hear, and which I enjoyed very much. He offered his counsel in so kindly a manner that no offense was ever given, and he applied the brakes to my impetuous nature in such a way that I did not know that I was being slowed up.

All the while he was doing this, his wife, Sister Rachel Grant Taylor, took Sister Young and me into her heart. She had us to her home and made us feel that we belonged as no one else has done in a long time. John Taylor possessed great humanity, great humbleness, and great gentleness. He was a gentle man. Sister Taylor is a gentle woman.

AN INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF A MISSION PRESIDENT

I should like to speak today about the mission presidents. Many of us wonder what these men do, and what their responsibilities could be.

As an elder or a sister boards a train in Salt Lake City, and it

disappears around the bend, Mother and Father wipe the tears from their eyes, turn homeward, and wonder what kind of man will receive their loved one. All they know is that they have given their child for two years to a man who is only a name to them. They wonder if he will understand the temperament and disposition of their missionary, and if he will bring out the best qualities which are in him.

What is the life of a mission president? No one doubts that these servants of the Lord are chosen from among the best people we have in the Church. What kind of life do they lead, and what are their problems?

The mission president first worries over finding someone to take his house for three or four years with some hope of receiving it back in good condition. Then he has to decide which of his possessions he will store away and which he will take with him. While engrossed in these operations, he is stopped many times by his friends who say words something like this, "I envy you now that you are going to have a three-year vacation at the expense of the Church." He has this repeated to him so often that before he is fairly on his way, he begins to wonder if in some way he could be taking advantage of the Church—that is, until he arrives in the mission.

In due time he reaches the mission home with his family. He rings the bell, and is welcomed by the office staff and the housekeeper, if he is lucky enough to have one. They all make the new president and his family welcome. If any children are tagging along, they are looked upon with some suspicion by the office staff. Certainly the children are equally suspicious of them.

The first meal is an eye opener. If he had an idea he could ever have his family to himself, it is dispelled here. The table is set for from ten to fifteen people. Never again will the president be free from strangers at mealtime. The number will vary, but it will always be more than was expected. Somehow his children must adjust to this new condition. They must learn that other things are more important. New table manners must be taught. Often they feel lost in the immensity of it all. The president's wife is, in the meantime, rearranging her idea of things. She used to plan for three, or four, or six, now she must plan for double or treble the number. She must supply the physical wants of from six to twelve extra people all the time.

Sleeping problems are continually pressing. About the time rooms are permanently assigned to the regular dwellers, someone from headquarters comes to visit, and things must be rearranged. Elders are continually going to and coming from their fields of labor. Often they stay all night, or two, or three nights. New missionaries arrive and have to be cared for while they are being assigned.

Then in the middle of all of these problems, the president and his wife have to be away visiting the branches and the missionaries in their fields of labor. Fully sixty percent of their time is spent away from the home.

Problems multiply. There are from three to six thousand Saints to care for, to talk to, to encourage. As the presidential party arrives in any one town, it would appear that all of the accumulation of problems since the last visit are suddenly thrown at them. In addition, they find time to visit with the missionaries, your boys and girls. They listen to their difficulties and give them new courage from the abundant supply of their own.

They go from town to town, visiting with people, holding meetings, climbing to the top floor of dingy office buildings to meet, in dark, unpleasant halls, the Saints who loyally gather to hear the word of the Lord, and to receive encouragement and good counsel at their hands.

The questions they solve are knotty. One very prevalent one is that of the young woman member who wants to know how she can get married. She can't come to Utah; she can't find any Latter-day Saint boys—there aren't any where she lives. Shall she marry a non-member? The president is puzzled as to what to advise in many cases. I would be puzzled, too, if I had to answer the questions.

If the missionaries become ill, and they sometimes do, the president has to see that they are taken care of. If they need a doctor and hospital care, he has to get it done. He knows better than anyone else that he has the choice children of the Church in his care, and that he must leave no stone unturned to assure their safety and protection from harm. No one can do it for him—his alone is the responsibility. He must make all the decisions for all the missionaries and all the Saints without help from a high council, or counselors. His only aid is his wife, and it is she alone to whom he must turn.

Together they face disease and death. They go into places where, lacking strong resistance and the protection of our Father in heaven, they could easily contract fatal maladies—yet they do all this unflinchingly, without malice, with love in their hearts for the people to whom they administer the gospel.

All the time they are visiting in the mission, they are directing the affairs of the mission home by mail. The wife supervises the food budget and the general home control by mail, while the president in the same manner is instructing those who cannot wait for his personal visit. All the time the welfare program, the Relief Society program, and the auxiliaries must be kept moving and active.

They return to the mission home after an extended tour, and the moment they arrive, the president disappears into his office and burns the midnight oil catching up on affairs which have awaited his return, and strives desperately to get enough done so that he can leave in two or three days for another visit.

Anyone who thinks that a mission is a vacation at the expense of the Church for three years would certainly have his eyes opened if he followed the president around for two or three weeks. You mission presidents have my profound admiration.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

I should like to add one thing as I stand here looking at this great audience. There are assembled in this room one percent, approximately, of the Church. I am sorry you mission presidents are facing this way. If you could turn your chairs around and see the faces of those who support you, and who pray that you may have strength to do what you are called upon to do, you would go back to your missions happy and pleased to think that you have the backing of the finest group of men and women there is on the earth. They want you to send their boys and girls home safely to them; they want you to teach them the gospel that they may come home with a testimony; but they want you to know, too, if I sense the feeling of this group, that you have their unbounded backing to the limit, and will always have it. And they envy you, it is true, because they would like to be in the same boat, and they would like to row it with you. They do go with you vicariously.

May God bless these mission presidents who carry the great load of preaching the gospel to the nations of the earth. The rest of us can go around and inspect and talk to them, and give them advice and counsel, but after we have gone home, they have to do the job. And they do it most nobly. They love the people of their missions; they give them courage; they build up their spirit; and they bring them to the Zion of the Lord our God in happiness and in joy. They bear their testimonies to the nations of the earth and teach the boys and girls of our community the kind of courage they must have to do the same thing. May the Lord sustain them in their high and holy calling, I ask, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President George Albert Smith:

I am sure we have had a wonderful time this morning. It is lovely to be in the House of the Lord on the Lord's Day. There is no other place where you will have more comfort and satisfaction, under the influence of the Spirit of our Heavenly Father. He is always with us when we meet in His name.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing the "Hallelujah Chorus," from the "Mount of Olives," by Beethoven.

The closing prayer will be offered by President H. Golden Tempest of the East Jordan Stake, after which this Conference will stand adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon. Proceedings of that session will be broadcast over Station KSL at Salt Lake City and KSUB at Cedar City.

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