

Now tonight we shall visit together a little in regard to matters that the priesthood are concerned about, and our first speaker will be the Historian of the Church, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, who will have some information that I am sure some of you will be very happy to obtain, and by learning of it will be able to help the Historian's Office with its work.

### ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

*of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I wish to address my remarks particularly to the bishops and the presidents of stakes, and yet we are all concerned with the records of the Church.

#### KEEPING OF RECORDS

In the days of Adam, one of the first things the Lord did was to call upon him and others following him to keep records. You will read of that in the Pearl of Great Price.

In Section twenty, which was given at the time of the organization of the Church, and in the next Section, Section twenty-one, of the Doctrine and Covenants, you will find written instructions in regard to the keeping of records in the Church. What would we do, what condition would we be in if records had not been kept in days of old? We would not have our Bible; we would not have our Book of Mormon; and in our own day we would not have the Doctrine and Covenants, nor the Pearl of Great Price. You all know how valuable these books are, and the Lord preserved them that they might be a benefit to us in learning of His ways and in the keeping of His commandments.

#### WARD AND STAKE RECORDS

Now the Church has given instructions that records be kept in every ward and in every stake of Zion. We send out the blanks with definite instruction printed upon them as to the nature of the information which is to be gathered. We try to make it easy for the clerks. And I want to say that it is just as important, ordinarily so at least, to have a good, efficient clerk, as it is to have a good, efficient president of a stake, one who has the desire and the ability to keep the records.

These records should be kept in duplicate and one copy sent in quarterly to the Historian's Office and one filed in the stake. Records should be kept in the wards. The stake clerk should keep a record of all events, taking from the ward records the material that is essential to place in the record of the stake.

All recorders know, or should know, the nature of the recording that they ought to make.

## HISTORICAL REPORTS

Now we have had a great deal of difficulty in getting these historical reports. Sixty-three stakes and two missions failed to send in reports for 1947 and 1948 and 1949. We have some stakes and some missions that have not reported for much longer periods of time, and yet these are quarterly reports. We are under the necessity constantly of sending out letters asking for these historical records to be sent in to us so that they may be filed and preserved according to the commandments of the Lord.

## COMPLETENESS AND ACCURACY

I would like to call attention also, to the fact that, notwithstanding the information we ask for, that many of these reports are not complete. Every name should be written in full. Clerks should be appointed, or historians, in the wards and stakes who can write legibly so that their records can be read.

Some of them evidently do not read the instructions that are on these blanks. Many valuable matters pertaining to the records are not included. We would like to call your attention to this. We have been after you and some of you know that we are after you because we are writing constantly, and some of the stakes have been busy and they have gone to work and have complied, although they have had to go back years to do it.

## UP-TO-DATE RECORDS

Too many mistakes are made because information is not written at the time. Everything should be recorded as nearly at the time of the event as it is possible for it to be. I know from my own experience that I cannot trust to my memory, and when things are neglected for any length of time mistakes are bound to enter into the records, in regard to certain incidents and as to the time when matters have been performed.

Now brethren, will you look into these matters in your stakes and see that this record is kept up to date? This is the way we are keeping the record of the Church. It is most valuable; it is absolutely necessary, and we ask you for your help, for your support in these matters, that we may have our records up to date, kept neatly, written in permanent ink, or upon the typewriter with a permanent ribbon, and in a manner that it can be preserved eternally.

I thank you for the opportunity of presenting this matter to you. May the Lord bless you all, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

## PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

*Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

As Elder Mark Petersen and President S. Dilworth Young and I were walking at a good clip this evening to get into our seats by