

Sunday, October 4

Third Day

the audience his willingness and the excellent spirit that he manifested.

Our first speaker this afternoon will

be Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie.

## ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**H**UMBLY and imploringly, my brethren and sisters and friends, I approach this very difficult, but challenging task. I trust that I may have an interest in your faith and prayers and be favored with the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit.

I rejoice in what we have just witnessed, in the call of these three noble men to fill vacancies in the councils of the Church. This is but typical, my brothers and sisters, of what is going on throughout the Church in the wards, stakes, and missions, weekly—the calling of men and women to positions of responsibility. Always the response is the same. To me it is a modern miracle not duplicated anywhere upon the earth. I am happy to welcome these brethren. I know them all. I love them.

I have loved Brother Richard L. Evans since I first became acquainted with him years ago. He is loved by the entire Church. He is loved by this nation, because for years he has had a national audience. His influence has reached beyond the borders of America. And I would like to say this to him: Brother Evans, you now enter upon the sweetest association known to men in this world, the association which you will have with your brethren of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. There is nothing in this world in the associations of men so sweet and so satisfying. I know that more deeply today than ever before, particularly since I have been away since last December, and yet at times, though I have been miles away, I have felt even nearer through their faith and prayers—the faith and prayers of my brethren.

I love Brother Brown. I have known him for many years. I was closely as-

sociated with him in Europe right after the war, and he is loved by the people of the British Isles, the Saints of Europe, and the servicemen all over the Church, to whom he rendered such great service during the last war. I had the privilege of serving as a counselor to his older brother, Scott B. Brown, in the Boise Stake, who now serves as a patriarch there. Hugh B. Brown comes from one of the great families of the Church.

I have not known Brother Marion Hanks intimately, but I have watched him with great interest and considered him one of the most promising young men in the Church.

With all my heart I extend the hand of fellowship to these, my brethren, and I am sure, as I do so, I am but echoing the feeling of all the other brethren in the councils of the Church, as well as the entire Church membership.

Brethren and sisters, this has been a glorious conference. I have received a great spiritual uplift. No, we have not heard anything particularly new. I recall some years ago a young fellow, a Mormon boy, returned from sacrament meeting, and as he met his father, who had been out on a high council assignment, his dad said to him, "Well, son, how did you enjoy the sacrament meeting?" He replied, "Well, Dad, it was a good meeting. However, it was pretty much the echoing of re-echoing echoes, but still it was a grand meeting."

We have heard discussed some of the old virtues. We have heard admonitions pertaining to eternal principles. They have been presented in a little different setting, with different emphasis, but in the main there has been very little new, but, oh, how we need the admonitions which have been presented.

I would to God that every man, woman, and child in this nation and throughout the world might have been listening to the counsel that has been given.

Now, as we leave the conference and go our various ways, how are we going to implement the instructions that have been given, what are we going to do to see to it that this counsel does not fall unheeded? As I think of the most effective way of implementing this counsel, I turn, my brethren and sisters, naturally, to our most basic institution, the American home, because, after all, it is still our greatest and most primary educational institution. It is, in very deed, the center of our economic, social, and cultural interest. The home is the bulwark of the nation and our most fundamental and basic institution.

Unless as parents, we can go back into the homes of the Church and carry these instructions with a determination to put them into effect at our own firesides with our own children, this conference will not have been fully effective.

Marriage, the home, and family are sacred institutions. They are not man-made. Thank God for that. They are divine. The first marriage performed was the marriage of two immortal beings. Following the consummation of that marriage, the Lord gave important scriptures and instruction to us regarding the home and the family.

The Lord made it clear it is not good for man to be alone. Woman was created as a helpmeet for man, and the two united in the sacred bonds of eternal marriage become one flesh.

"What therefore God hath joined together," said he, "let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:9.) Then later, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else." (D. & C. 42:22.) How we need that counsel today in America! What heartaches could be avoided if men would only heed that counsel wholeheartedly. How much less unfaithfulness and infidelity there would be if we could live by that admonition.

Then as though to strengthen further

the marriage bond in the home, the Lord gave instructions to children through his prophets. The Apostle Paul, echoing the admonition of Moses on Sinai, said,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:1-3.)

And then in modern revelation, the Lord has made it very clear that parents have great and serious responsibilities. Listen to these words as the Lord speaks to the parents of the Church:

And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord. (D. & C. 68:28.)

And again, inasmuch as parents . . . teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. (*Ibid.*, 68:25.)

That is a serious responsibility, and I believe, my brethren and sisters, the early history of this Church clearly indicates that our grandparents, the pioneers of these valleys, in fact, the Pilgrims, who came and settled this great American continent, honored these obligations and were blessed in their homes for so doing.

I realize that many changes have come about in the last fifty to seventy-five years. Our industrialization, specialization, concentration of populations in great cities, the great reduction in the number of people living on farms, the change in our agriculture—all these have had their effects. Greater emphasis upon material things and the seeking after money, after pleasure, personal gratification, and the insidious inroads of liquor, tobacco, and gambling—all these have had a pulling-away influence on this most sacred institution, the American home.

It is difficult to realize that fifty years ago there was only one divorce in six-

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teen marriages here in America. By 1946 the ratio had increased to one in three, and it is reported in some cities in America, there are actually more divorces each year than marriages. Our best authorities indicate that most of the delinquency in America is the result of broken, bad, and neglected homes. As J. Edgar Hoover, one of the best authorities has indicated, referring to delinquents, "The actions of the majority of them were, and are, directly related to the conduct of their parents." Yes, crime begins at home.

Now, my brethren and sisters, as Latter-day Saints, what should be done? What can be done? I am sure we all agree that no nation ever rises above its homes. This Church will never rise above its homes. We are no better as a people than are our firesides, our homes. The school, the church, and even the nation, I feel confident, stand helpless before weakened and degraded homes. The good home is the rock foundation, the cornerstone of civilization. It must be preserved. It must be strengthened.

There has never been and there never will be a satisfactory substitute for the home established by the God of heaven. If this nation is to endure, then the home must be safeguarded, strengthened, and restored to its rightful importance.

May I suggest, in the few moments remaining, five simple things that, I believe, we might well give attention to, as some of the needs of our homes today:

*First* of all, I am convinced, my brethren and sisters—and this is no reflection on our devoted mothers, who spend day after day, week after week, obediently serving their families—but I feel sure that one of our greatest needs is more time of parents in the home. Youth of the Church and of the nation need more than physical comforts. We will need to leave them more than lands and stocks. They need more than a modern automobile and a lovely modern building to live in. There is no satisfactory substitute for mother, and no one can take care of her chil-

dren as she can. No so-called social obligations, social enticements, or outside interests should impel any mother to neglect the sacred charge which is hers of caring for her own flesh and blood. Her first loyalty in the eyes of God is to her Church and her family. I feel confident that while civic and social activities may return much good, she will serve her community and her nation best, if she first devotes herself to the needs of her own children.

*Second*, and this was emphasized this morning by Brother Cowley, we need daily devotion in the home. We need to return to the practice of family prayer, secret prayer, the old-fashioned practice of devotion in the home daily, night and morning, the singing of hymns, the reading of the scriptures. How much more happiness there would be, how many fewer divorces there would be, if these simple practices were followed as was the custom in the pioneer home, as well as in the early days of this country, according to the diaries of our early founders.

*Third*, I think one of the great needs is more parental instruction in life's problems. I know there is a tendency for parents to shrink from this responsibility, the instructing of their own children in the problems of sex, the relationship with other young people, the problem of dating, and all of the many temptations that confront a growing boy and girl. These instructions should not be left to the school or to a class in sociology. The safest place, the best place, to give this vital counsel, these sacred instructions, in matters of moral purity should be in the home on a basis of confidence between parent and child. As parents, we should instruct our children. The sacred books of the ancient Persians say: "If you would be holy, instruct your children, because all the good acts they perform will be imputed unto you."

*Fourth*, I believe there is a great need, my brethren and sisters, for family recreation and cultural activities together. We should do things together as a family. It may mean a reduction

in participation in women's clubs, in men's clubs, but if families could only seek their recreation and cultural activities more as a family unit, I am sure that untold benefits and blessings would accrue. A little boy was asked only this last summer, after he said he was going to a summer camp, "What is a summer camp?" And he answered, "Those places where little boys go for mother's vacation." Let us take more of our vacations together as families. Can we have a weekly evening at home, as has been admonished and counseled for years by the First Presidency of the Church? More wholesome activities together is a great need of the families of America.

And fifth, we need a closer parent-child relationship. This is closely related to the other four matters. One of the greatest needs of our young people is a closer, more frequent companionship with father and mother. There is no satisfactory substitute. I was thrilled some time ago, as I picked up a paper in the East and read an account of a letter which a rich industrialist had sent to his son, his sixteen-year-old boy, as a Christmas present. This man could have given his son anything that money could buy—an automobile, a yacht, I guess, if he wished. But when the boy came down from his room Christmas morning and went over to the mantel where he usually found his present, there was an envelope, a plain envelope with his name on it, and he opened it and read:

"To my dear son:

"I give to you one hour each weekday

and two hours of my Sundays to be yours to be used as you want it without interference of any kind whatsoever.

"Lovingly,  
"Dad."

As I read that, I thought, what a wise father, and what a fortunate son! Yes, that is what they need.

God bless us, my brethren and sisters, that we may give personal attention now to these vital matters:

More time of parents in the home

Daily family devotion in the home

Parental instruction in life's problems

Family recreation and cultural activities together

A closer parent-child relationship

May we be faithful to this great obligation of parenthood, this sacred obligation, that we may build our homes solidly upon eternal principles, that we may have no regrets. May we never be recreant to the great trust which has been imposed in us. May we always keep in mind that these spirits that have entered our homes are choice spirits. Many of them have been born under the covenant. As we look into their faces and contemplate their needs, we might well consider that some of them were probably choicer spirits up there than we were. It is a grave responsibility. May we not shirk it.

God bless us in our homes and in all our worthy endeavors. May we carry with us from this conference the instructions given and put them into practice in our homes I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

IT HAS been my privilege, for seven years now, to serve on the First Council of the Seventy with Elder Richard L. Evans, and I think I can certify to you from personal knowledge, born of that association, that Brother Richard is a man of great ability and

devotion to the cause of Christ. He supports and sustains the brethren and the programs of the Church, and, I am persuaded, has a great mission to perform in his new and high calling.

I think, perhaps, there is scarcely a name in the Church more widely known