

PRESIDENT DAVID O. McKAY

BELOVED brethren and sisters: Few of you realize the great responsibility of this moment. I humbly seek your sympathetic and prayerful assistance, and above all the guiding influence of the Spirit of the Lord.

At this, the opening session of the 125th semi-annual conference of the Church, it gives me great satisfaction and joy, in behalf of the General Authorities of the Church, to extend a hearty welcome to you stake presidencies, bishoprics, and to all members who are present at this service here in the Tabernacle and in other groups on Temple Square, and to those listening in by radio and television. May the spirit of unity and oneness characterize this great session this morning.

You join me, I am sure, when we extend love and greetings to members of the Church and to interested, loyal friends throughout the world, in Canada and Mexico, in Europe, South Africa, South America, New Zealand, Australia, the Polynesian Islands, in Japan and China, Greenland, and Iceland, to groups in Korea and the Philippines, on Guam, and other islands of the Pacific. May the spirit of this conference be felt by them through the mysterious medium of soul communion, even before they read the minutes of our great conference.

Among the purposes of these general conferences are, in summary, as follows:

(1) To inform the membership of general conditions—whether the Church is progressing or retrogressing, economically, ecclesiastically, or spiritually. (2) To commend true merit. (3) To express gratitude for divine guidance. (4) To give instruction “in principles, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel.” (5) To proclaim the restoration, with divine authority to administer in all the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to declare, quoting the Apostle Peter, that “there is none other name under heaven given among men” than Jesus Christ “whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12.) (6) To admonish and inspire to continue in greater activity.

When thinking and praying in anticipation of this moment, I felt impressed to say a word about what the Church is doing to help parents in rearing their children, having in mind particularly the teen-agers of our Church. In a very familiar poem a mother says to her son:

“Do you know that your soul is of my soul such a part,
That you seem to be fibre and core of my heart?”

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“Be yours then the task, if task it should be,
To force the proud world to do homage to me,
Be sure it will say, when its verdict you’ve won,
She reaped as she sowed, Lol this is her son.”

—Margaret Johnston Graflin

I should like to say a word in commendation of the groups in the Church who are helping you mothers and fathers to have your children bring you honor. Before doing that, however, I should like to make a brief report to you of conditions.

Through the loyalty and faithfulness of the members of the Church in paying tithes and offerings, by income from investments and generous contributions from well-wishing, devoted friends, the Church is entirely out of debt, strong financially, and working under a budget carefully planned to meet all obligations incurred in the great building program of chapels, temples, recreation halls, classrooms, throughout the organized stakes and missions of the world.

We commend all of you, and each of you, for your faithfulness in thus contributing to the finances of the Church, without which it would be impossible to supply the needs of a rapidly increasing membership.

We have just heard the report given by the Clerk of the Conference of the organization of new wards, branches, and stakes during the last six months.

Friday, October 1

First Day

The growth of the Church at home and abroad is most encouraging.

With this increase in membership are evidences of increased spirituality. Spirituality results in the greatest good when expressed in acts, not merely in day-dreams. ". . . shew me thy faith without thy works," said James, "and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (James 2:18.)

The great majority of the members of the Church are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. This is shown, first in contributions in cash and labor in building four hundred chapels at an average cost last year of \$80,000 each. In addition to this, the people of Southern California, for example, have contributed in cash toward the building and furnishing of the Los Angeles Temple, over one million dollars. On January 2, 1952, there was a meeting called of all stake presidencies in the Southern California district, at which those present voted unanimously to raise a million dollars to be paid as the building progressed. Today we are pleased to report that pledges for that amount and more have been fulfilled.

Another example of spirituality is the missionary work. There are at present 3457 full-time missionaries laboring in the forty-three missions, supported financially either by themselves or by their parents. There are 7188 missionaries in organized stakes, making a total number of missionaries paying their own expenses of 10,645.

Melchizedek Priesthood quorum work has never been more effective. The Senior Aaronic Priesthood activity is giving results unprecedented. The female Relief Society, the first auxiliary organized in the Church, is carrying on at its usual high standards, its influence extending beyond the boundaries of the Church as exemplified by the recent trip abroad by its worthy president, Sister Belle Smith Spafford, accompanied by Sister Marba C. Josephson of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association. All of you should read their reports.

To all who are working devotedly in the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums, and in the Relief Society, we extend

our love, confidence, and commendation.

I should like to commend, having in mind this Church work with teenagers, the Presiding Bishopric, the ward bishoprics, and the auxiliary general superintendents, general presidencies, and general boards for their earnest and most effective effort to guide the youth of the Church.

Perhaps the Church could do more for the delinquents who get into the clutches of the law, but I feel impressed to refer to agencies working to prevent young people from becoming delinquents. For approximately three thousand years men have read the admonition: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6.) The word *train* means "to lead, or to direct the growth of, to form by instruction, discipline, drill, to educate."

Three groups carry the responsibility of training children: First, the family; second, the Church; third, the state. The most important of these is the family. By divine edict the Lord has placed upon parents the responsibility, first to teach the doctrine of repentance; second, faith in Christ, the Son of the living God; third, baptism and confirmation; fourth, to teach children to pray; fifth, to teach children to walk uprightly before the Lord. Parents who shirk this responsibility will have to answer for the sin of neglect.

A newborn babe is the most helpless creature in the world. The protecting care of parenthood is essential to its survival, as well as its growth. It must be led and directed by instruction, discipline, drill, and proper education. Our most precious possessions are not our abundant harvests, nor our orchards yielding luscious fruit, nor our waterways, nor our million miles of paved highways, nor our oil wells, nor our rich mines of copper, silver and gold, nor even of uranium—our most precious possessions, our treasures of eternity, are our children. These merit and should receive our greatest and our most constant care and guidance.

Daniel Webster was right when he said:

"If we work upon marble, it will perish;
 If we work upon brass, time will efface it;
 If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust;
 But if we work upon immortal souls,
 If we imbue them with principles,
 With the just fear of the Creator and love of fellow men,
 We engrave on those tablets something which will brighten eternity."

The bringing of children into the world bears with it great responsibilities and opens to view the noblest purpose of life, namely, a co-partnership with deity "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

The most effective way to teach is by example. It is the child's nature to be active. It is the duty of the parents and of guardians so to direct that activity, as to lead children to know God's love, and the happiness found in obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Parents should ever keep in mind that admonition is of much more avail when example conforms to the admonition given.

You will be gratified, and thinking men generally will be interested, to know what the Aaronic Priesthood quorums and the auxiliary boards are doing in a practical way to assist you parents to train your children to become upright in character, loyal citizens of their country, and faithful members of the Church.

Recently I sent a letter to the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, to the general superintendencies of the Sunday School and YMMIA, and to the general presidencies of the YWMA and to the Primary—the five groups dealing directly with the young people of the Church. In that letter I inquired as to how effectively they are attempting to contact all children and youth in these great organizations. Here are some of the headings of that letter: First, give your total membership, your total enrolment; second, give the percent of those who should or might be enrolled; third, method or methods of contacting the indifferent; fourth, how may parents render more effective co-operation; and fifth, what have been your outstanding achievements during 1953 and 1954.

In the Aaronic Priesthood, we learned that they have an enrolment for the young men under twenty-one of 63,641. The percent of the enrolment of the total members that should be enrolled, 92.79. In the Sunday School, they have an enrolment of 983,025; 91 percent of those who should be enrolled. They had a weekly attendance of 381,656, or 35.5 percent of the total membership of the Church. The Young Men's Mutual, May 31, 1953, had an enrolment of 129,528, and on a corresponding day this year, 140,754; an average weekly attendance of 88,546. Every boy or man between the ages of twelve and twenty-four is enrolled in that organization, every one; 31,856 of these are enrolled in scouting; 25,368 are enrolled as Explorers.

The Young Women's enrolment for 1953 was 124,079 plus visitors of 11,342. To date (note the increase) the enrolment is 134,303, with a weekly average of visitors of 10,384, or a total of 144,676, and the average attendance is 64% of those enrolled.

One cannot help having a pretty warm spot in one's heart for these teen-agers in Mutual and Sunday School.

All members of the Church from the ages of twelve to twenty-five in the Young Women's are enrolled, and others.

Now we enter the Primary. The total number of children whose lives were touched by Primary in '52-53—200,000; 83% of the children of the Church of Primary age are enrolled; 69% of the children enrolled are attending Primary; 142,745 children are enrolled in the Stakes; 6,841 non-member children are enrolled in the stakes; 68% of the children enrolled are in attendance each week at Primary; 13,000 Latter-day Saint children are enrolled in the missions. This has increased on an average of 1,000 each year for the last five years.

The Primary Association has assumed the direction of scouting for the eleven-year-old boys. According to a survey made in March, 92% of the eleven-year-old boys were enrolled in the Guide Patrols; 109 stakes, six missions have organized Cub Scout dens and packs since the Primary Association has

Friday, October 1

First Day

sponsored the Cub scouting as requested by the First Presidency.

Now, besides these auxiliaries and quorums, we have our seminaries. The total enrolment for seminaries and institutes in 1953 was 36,074; 1954—39,022. The average attendance for seminaries in '54, 32,226, or 94% of the enrolment. That speaks well for our students in colleges and high schools.

As an illustration of the influence of the seminaries upon teen-agers, and also as a lesson in co-operation of parents, I shall take the time to quote to you the following, taken from the September-October 1954, issue of a national magazine, not of our Church, *Faith Today*. The article is entitled "Teen-age Frontier," written by Leola Anderson, for a copy of which I am indebted to President Ernest Wilkinson [of Brigham Young University]. It is designated by one of the editors as "one of the most heartening signs of the times." Here are a few quotations from it:

"The luminous hands of the clock beside the boy's bed point to 5:45 a.m. The alarm goes off. It has been raining all night; the air outside is cold and wet—and still black.

"Groggily the boy gropes about for the button to shut off the noise. Resolutely he swings his feet out onto the cold floor. For a moment he drops his tired face into his hands. It was 12:30 last night before he finished sweeping at the supermarket, and 1 o'clock when he got home to bed. It has been like that all week. In his drooping body is a desperate urge to slip back into bed.

"That's why he stands up quickly and moves on into the shower. Because this morning and every school morning he drives seven miles to attend a class at 7 o'clock. It is a very special class, which he would not think of missing, so long as he is able to stand.

"What kind of class is it? A Bible-study class.

"Would you find it incredible that this boy is one of 1,700 typical, fun-loving teen-agers who get up every morning to attend a 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. Bible class before going on to high school? They do it without credit,

without coercion, and often against tremendous odds. They do it five days a week, nine months a year, despite daylight-saving time.

"Furthermore, so great is the demand for this early morning instruction that next September (that's this month) 90 classes will open to meet the requests of 2,500 students in Southern California alone.

"Incredible? Not at all. This has been going on in the Los Angeles area for the last four years. It is a part of the program of daily religious education offered by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a program which last year served 38,000 young men and women in seven western states and in Canada and Mexico.

"With the Bible as text, emphasis is placed on a practical application of its teachings to the lives of youth. What better blueprint for living was ever recorded than that preserved by the prophets? The answers to the questions of modern youth, as uncertainties pile up on them in an increasingly chaotic world, are all found in the experience of the past.

"This is the key to why these young people leave cosy, warm beds on chill winter mornings to attend daily classes that are not accepted either for high school graduation or college entrance credit.

"Neither are these selected students. They are not even all members of the same church. There's a piquant little redhead in one class who answered our question this way: 'No, I'm not a Mormon. I simply couldn't understand why my best friend insisted on getting up so early to come down here, so I came along one morning for laughs. I got so interested I asked to register. I haven't missed a day since!'

"No, they are not selected excepting by their own desire to learn. They represent a cross-section of young America with all its problems. They are average kids looking for a defense against the grim spectre of fear and destruction that now shrouds their future.

"And how do these Bible teachers meet that challenge?

"By teaching respect for the inspired Constitution of the United States with

its God-given liberty, regard for the rights of others, and love for all mankind. By showing the wisdom of avoiding the mistakes of the past, and fostering a dynamic and living faith in God and the ultimate triumph of good. All this through daily basic instruction in the Master's written word. . . .

"Teachers are also meeting the challenge by putting into the hands of the young people the tools of self-government and teaching them their use, thus preparing them for leadership, when in the process of inexorable time they will become our leaders.

"In the words of one vivacious brunette, president of her class: 'Every senior student gets a turn being a class officer. We learn confidence in ourselves and how to do the job. Besides, when you're responsible for the whole class, it makes you think twice before you make a decision. . . .'

"This teamwork (referring to Bible class and to the baseball team practicing in Church recreation hall after school particularly), one student says, 'This teamwork is also noticeable in the group spirit of the classroom.'

"The youth of America are studying together, singing together, praying together, and loving it. In one class, five nationalities—White Russian, Mexican, Italian, Greek, and American—work as one. . . .

"There is a carry-over, too, with the students. Bill Kemsley, a husky youth, was graduated last June from the first three-year course. Bill drove sixteen miles each morning from his home in San Fernando to a North Hollywood class. He transported a carload of students to class and back to San Fernando. The second year he transferred to North Hollywood High.

"I wanted to get away from my old companions,' he said seriously. 'They weren't bad fellows, you understand, but I guess my standards had changed. Two of those boys are in jail now,' he added thoughtfully.

"Parents, too, no longer show inertia where this program is concerned. Their comments read like a before-and-after commercial: 'I used to have such a time getting Mary out of bed in the morning. Now she gets me up! . . .'

"And what is being done," concludes the author, "in Southern California to open a frontier for youth to live and learn the fundamentals of peace and progress could be duplicated anywhere in America by any similar group."

To the question in that letter sent to the auxiliaries, "How may parents render more effective co-operation?" came answers common to every article: First, parents should become acquainted with lessons and plans of the organization; second, take rather than send their children; third, set a proper example.

In conclusion, parents, if you would have your children pray, then teach them to pray in the home. If you would have your children refrain from taking the name of God in vain, then let them never hear profanity pass your lips. If you would have your teenagers sense the value of keeping themselves true to their future husbands or wives, then let chastity and loyalty to your marriage covenant pervade the atmosphere of your own home. If you would have them refrain from the use of tobacco, then you refrain from the use of tobacco yourself.

Brethren and sisters, in presenting this general picture of what the Church is doing for teen-agers I have had in mind, first, to commend the workers for their diligence and efficiency. God bless them. And second, to show how effective the Church is in its divine organization in touching the life and activities of every member therein. We see how true are Paul's words when he wrote: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-13.)

In conclusion, and by way of testimony, the gospel is truly the power of God, and the Church the divine means of bringing, first, satisfaction and joy to the individual, here and now; second, bringing harmony in the home; third, more general understanding and re-

Friday, October 1

First Day

sultant peace among the nations—what a message!—and fourth, salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of our Father.

With all my soul I pray that the Lord will hasten the day when the influence of this divine organization will be felt more potently for the good of the inhabitants of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop Carl W. Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric will now address us, after which we shall hear from the Choir and congregation, "O Ye Mountains High."

Bishop Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric.

BISHOP CARL W. BUEHNER

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

AT A RECENT quarterly conference, a high councilman was invited to speak, and when he came to the pulpit he expressed the situation in these classic words: "Every time I stand up to speak my brain sits down." I have wondered what happens to me, but I think that describes it about as well as anything.

I hope, brothers and sisters, you will have a little prayer in your hearts for me, and for all those who are asked to participate in this great conference of the Church. I have been lifted and inspired by the powerful message of the President. I am sure we were all thrilled with the statistics given, to learn that we are making progress and that we are headed in the right direction. President McKay is an inspiration to everyone and I suppose the Number One missionary in the Church. He lifts people wherever he goes. I have often thought we might well adopt a new slogan in the Church—something to this effect: "Let's follow the Leader." We cannot follow him all over the world as he has traveled far and wide, but if we would show the same enthusiasm for the work that has been assigned to us, as he does for the work that is his, we would have even greater records in our Church.

I would like to say a few words this morning about another program of great magnitude in the Church that I have learned to love since I have been very close to it, and that is the ward teaching program. I would like to commend the leadership of the Church for the progress we have made in this activity. We are visiting more families than we have ever visited before. I

think the effectiveness of our messages in the homes are more impressive than they have ever been. This year our records indicate that we are visiting thirty thousand more homes every month than we visited a year ago. This is very commendable.

I feel this about ward teaching—that it is the one program in the Church that literally extends its arms around the entire Church. That other units only have the ministry of their particular organization, but if we do one hundred percent ward teaching, we will have a visit in the home of every member of the Church every month. In these days where there is great concern and many problems, I know of no finer program than to have two fine ward teachers visit and bless each home, leave a message of inspiration and encouragement, and invite the membership of the Church to attend the various meetings of the Church. It becomes, to me, the one organization that can get into every home in the Church every month.

What do you ward teachers find in the homes of the members of the Church? I have been a ward teacher. We enter homes where there is a wonderful spirit and a fine influence. We also visit homes where there are young men and women in the service of our country, others who are off in the mission fields of the Church. There are frequently young people away from home attending school. Parents are concerned about the temptations confronting these youngsters. We can bring cheer, consolation, and comfort, and make them feel good about the