

## ELDER STERLING W. SILL

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**E**ACH year on the second Sunday in May we set aside a very special day which we call Mother's Day. This is a day for honoring our mothers, and is traditionally a day of family unity and happiness. On this day we put on our best clothes and perform our most thoughtful acts to honor and please our mothers.

Two days ago was a kind of special Mother's Day to me, inasmuch as it was my mother's birthday, and though she has long since departed this life, I am very grateful for the privilege which is mine to remember and honor her.

Closely associated with Mother's Day, we set aside another special day on the third Sunday in June which we call Father's Day. The importance of both of these great days was given divine emphasis and approval some 3,400 years ago when God descended in fire upon Mt. Sinai, and to the accompaniment of lightnings and thunders, said—

Honour thy father and thy mother. . . .  
(Ex. 20:12.)

As I understand it, the observance of this commandment brings more benefit to the children than to the parents, for when we honor an ideal, our lives are uplifted by it. It has been said that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children," but that may also apply to their virtues; for, as the poet said—

When the high heart we magnify  
And the sure vision celebrate  
And worship greatness passing by,  
Ourselves are great.

In President McKay's great book *Gospel Ideals*, he said, "The other night I dreamed about my mother." And then he said, "I would like to dream about my mother more often." That is, in his dream, his mind went back and relived those important experiences when he learned from his mother the lessons of life that helped to prepare him for his present high place in the world. Each time we relive some sacred experience, that experience is renewed in vitality, and we are able to reabsorb the original good.

It was while trying to relive my own mother's devotion on her birthday, that I selected the title for what I would like to say to you this morning. The title that I think would please her most is "Father's Day." And I don't mean the Father's Day that comes on the third Sunday in June. I mean the Father's Day that comes on the first day of each week, when we try to honor and please our Heavenly Father.

The Apostle Paul has reminded us that

. . . we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? (Heb. 12:9.)

The relative importance of this great day that we call the Sabbath might be indicated to us by the frequency of its reoccurrence. That is, we have one day to honor Washington, one day to honor Lincoln, one day for Thanksgiving, one day for our nation's birthday. And then our Father in heaven, in his wisdom, has set aside one-seventh of all of the days to honor God. This day is also set aside primarily for our benefit. When one honors a wonderful mother, he tends to make her standards his own, and when one honors God he tends to become like God, and thereby helps to bring about his own eternal exaltation.

These fifty-two Father's Days have also come down to us from that awe-inspiring day on Sinai thirty-four centuries ago when out of the fire God said—

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Ex. 20:8.)

In fact, it has been thought that our civilization could never have survived for half a century if it had not been for this one day in seven that we call Sunday. This is the day when we try to reach a pinnacle in our lives by living at our best. This is the day when we pay particular attention to the washing of our bodies. This is the day when we put on our best clothes and think our best thoughts and read our best

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books. This is the day when we associate with the people we love the most. This is the day for which we usually reserve the best meal of the week. This is the day when we lay aside the cares that usually concern us during the other six days while we go to the house of prayer and let our minds reach upward to try to understand the things of God and eternity. This is the special day when we worship God, and honor Him in our lives. The proper observance of the Sabbath is the process by which we put our lives in harmony with Deity.

Because President McKay has loved his mother and tried to please her, she has been enabled to help guide and enrich his life. And because President McKay has honored and loved his Heavenly Father, God has been able to magnify him and make him great.

One thing that greatly disturbs me as I go around a little bit is the consciousness of the great number of people who are losing their opportunities and their blessings by the misuse of the Sabbath day. All of our lives we have heard of the great wonders that can be accomplished by even fifteen minutes a day devoted to well-directed study and concentrated thought. We know of many who have raised themselves to great heights of achievement by this simple means. But think how wonderfully we can upgrade our spirituality by making effective use of "The Lord's Day," which he has set aside especially to enrich our lives.

Alexander Hamilton once gave the secret of his extraordinary success and we can apply his formula to the observance of the Sabbath day. Mr. Hamilton said: "Men give me some credit for genius. But all the genius I have lies in this. When I have a subject in mind I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. I explore it in all its bearings. My mind becomes pervaded with it. The result is what some men call the fruits of genius, whereas it is in reality the fruits of study and labor."

It is a thrilling idea to think of the possibility of becoming a "genius" in the things of the spirit, a "genius" in the work of the Lord. This can actually be brought about by devoting our minds

and our hearts to the important considerations for which this one day in seven was set aside.

It is still true that, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Everything starts from that one beginning.

Mind is the master power  
That molds and makes,  
And man is mind.  
And evermore he takes the tools of thought  
And fashions what he wills,  
Bringing forth a thousand joys, a thousand  
ills.

He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass  
Environment is but his looking glass.

James Lane Allen  
*Morning and Evening Thoughts*

Someone has made this challenging proposition: "How would you like to create your own mind?" But isn't that exactly what each of us does? William James said, "The mind is made up by what it feeds upon."

This idea was strikingly illustrated to me sometime ago in conversation with a friend who said, "But I am just not religious," and he shrugged his shoulders as if to say, "There is nothing that I can do about it." With the hope of helping him, I said, "Bill, I am sure that what you say is true, that you are not religious. But have you ever thought about the circumstances that brought that situation about? How could you ever hope to be religious? You don't study religion; you don't read the scriptures; you don't go to church; you don't pray to God; you don't think about him; you don't meditate about religious things. How could you ever hope to be religious?"

Someone once said to a small boy, "Who gave you that black eye?" The boy said, "No one gave me that black eye. I had to fight for it." That is what we must do for every worthwhile thing in our lives. We must fight for them. Certainly we must earn the right to be religious.

I told my friend about a little toy clown that I saw at Christmas time. It was a little plastic figure that had a lead weight in the crown of his head which could always be depended upon to bring him to an upside-down position. If you laid him on his back, he would

immediately flip up on his head. If you stood him on his feet, he would quickly reverse his position and light on his head.

But isn't that exactly our own method of response? We can absolutely depend upon this fact, that wherever we place the weights of our interest, that will be the place at which we will more or less automatically respond; for example, my friend was very much interested in athletics; he spent his Sundays and other free time reading about and participating in various kinds of sports. He told me that he could quote the batting averages of every important major league baseball player in the United States, and at the same time, he confessed that he could not quote one single verse from the word of God.

My friend thoroughly understood the importance of taking a vitamin pill every day, but he had no conception of the desirability or the methods for developing spiritual health and vitality. Someone once said, "I never put religion out of mind. I was so open-minded it fell out."

Our spiritual health must always be primarily our own responsibility. A physician judges the health by the appetite, and our spirituality may be judged the same way. It is easy to ruin our appetite for the things of God when we build bars in our homes instead of altars. By the desecration of the Sabbath Day we may become more interested in a horse race than in the celestial kingdom.

William James said, "That which holds our attention determines our action." That rule applies to a prize fight or the celestial kingdom. We ourselves choose the interests that will shape our destiny. But no life can in its final analysis ever really be successful that is primarily concerned with its own shallow pleasures and narrow interests, but can find no time for the author of our lives and our blessings. Someone said—

No time for God,  
What fools we are  
To clutter up our lives  
With worthless things  
And leave without the Lord of life  
And life itself.

No time for God?  
Better to say  
No time to eat, to sleep, to live, to die.  
Take time for God  
Or a poor misshapen thing you'll be  
To step into eternity  
And say to Him  
I had no time for Thee.

Only when we make God and his word central in our lives, can we develop that wonderful religious talent that will lead us back into his presence.

In 1935, Clarence Day, Jr., wrote a play entitled, *Life with Father*, and I would like to borrow that title this morning to apply to your eternal life. In Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord names those who will qualify for the celestial kingdom. He says—

These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever." (D & C 76:62.)

Wherefore, as it is written they are gods, even the sons of God. (D & C 76:58.)

These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun in the firmament is written of as being typical. (D & C 76:70.)

Then by way of contrast, I would like to offer for your consideration the prospect of "life without father." Suppose that we should become a part of that innumerable company who will spend eternity in the telestial kingdom, of whom it is said, "Where God and Christ are, they cannot come, worlds without end." (*Ibid.*, 76:112.)

I would just like to point out in passing that that is a very long time to be excluded from association with those we would like most to be with.

One of the most devastating of all human emotions is the sense of being alone, of not being wanted, of being unworthy. Suppose that sometime we find that because we have weighted our interests in the wrong places, that we have become unfit for the presence of God and have therefore lost our greatest blessing. A peculiar thing happens when we stand on our heads so to speak, for then it seems to us that all the world is upside-down, and we are then unable properly to appraise values.

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The most valuable thing in life is life itself. The greatest gift of God is eternal life, that is, "Life with Father." Therefore, these fifty-two wonderful days have been set aside especially to help us prepare for that magnificent experience which lies just beyond our mortality. One of our most inspiring hymns says—

We feel it a pleasure to serve Thee,  
And love to obey Thy command.

William Fowler

And one of the most important of those commands has to do with our observance of that great day on which we try to please God, the day I like to think of as "Father's Day," the divine

command concerning which not only came down to us across the ages from the fires of Sinai, but it has been given anew by the direct command of God in our own day. For God has said again to us in substance, in our own interests,

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Ex. 20:8.)

May God help us so to do, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### President David O. McKay:

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us. Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve, will be our concluding speaker.

### ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

SINCE WE LAST met in general conference, we have passed the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of President Heber J. Grant. I call this to your attention because I have great appreciation for that wonderful man, for the remarkable influence he had upon my life, particularly in my younger years.

It was President Grant who gave to me my first real introduction to the Book of Mormon. When I was about ten years of age, he came to the ward in which I lived and spoke in one of our Sacrament meetings. As he has done on other occasions, that day he told of his own first reading of the Book of Mormon and of the great impression made upon him by the life of Nephi. In his address he made Nephi such a reality to me that I had a desire to read about him for myself.

I took my father's Book of Mormon, and I read the story of Nephi, having in mind what President Grant had said. As I read, not only did I learn to appreciate that great prophet of old, but I had come into my soul also a deep love for the Book of Mormon, even as a boy.

You will remember another address that President Grant gave, sometimes repeating, pertaining to the Book of Mormon. I would like to read to you

an excerpt from that address. Said President Grant: "When I was a young unmarried man, another young man who had received a doctor's degree ridiculed me for believing in the Book of Mormon. He said he could point out two lies in that book. One was that the people had built their homes out of cement, and they were very skillful in the use of cement. He said there had never been found and never would be found, a house built of cement by the ancient inhabitants of this country, because the people in that early age knew nothing about cement. He said *that* should be enough to make one disbelieve the book. I said: 'That does not affect my faith one particle. I read the Book of Mormon prayerfully and supplicated God for a testimony in my heart and soul of the divinity of it, and I have accepted it and believe it with all my heart.' I also said to him, 'If my children do not find cement houses, I expect that my grandchildren will.' Now, since that time, houses made of cement and massive structures of the same material have been uncovered.

"Not very far from the City of Mexico there is a monument two hundred and ten feet high, built of cement. . . . My first counselor [Anthony W. Ivins] has stood on that monument. You could put forty tabernacles like this one inside