

## ELDER MARION D. HANKS

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

With you I rejoice in this forthright and impressive statement by President David O. McKay of our interest and our position in a great national program. My earnest and humble prayer is that we who have influence with the young may proceed from this conference throughout the Church to give adequate emphasis to the great responsibility of developing fitness in our young. I think, if we do we may expect three great results: that, first, much good will come to the nation, and the nations, of which we are citizens; second, that the missionary work of the Church will receive great impetus through the marvelous example of the influence of the program of the Church in the lives of its young; and third, that the Church itself and its people may profit measurably by a renewed dedication to following the direction of the Lord and the leadership of the brethren in providing opportunities for development in every aspect of the personality in our young.

Early this week our seven-year-old daughter, leading our family in prayer, thanked God for her and our eyes and our ears and our mouths, and asked the Lord to bless us that we could say good things through our mouths, and because she knew her daddy had to talk that morning to some people not of the Church, she prayed that he would be able to explain the gospel understandably to them. I echo her great appreciation for God's gifts and her earnest petitions also.

A time ago I had the privilege of going to a university campus to participate in what they called "Religion in Life Week." Their theme, which I was to treat at the beginning of the week, was "Something Missing." I walked about the campus and into some of the buildings in the period preceding the appointed hour, and in a certain building where there were advertisements placed by students, I saw this written, line by line as I shall repeat the words:

For Sale  
1929 Ford  
Good body and fenders  
New paint job

No engine

\$20

See .....

And I had the idea which permitted me to treat the theme, "Something Missing." The car looked all right, I suppose. It may have seemed adequate from the exterior appearance to fulfil its purposes, but in fact, it was not. Something was missing, and that something was the chief element, the motivating power.

As President McKay spoke to the missionaries of the Church Friday night, I thanked God in my heart that over a large part of my life I have been blessed to serve on that interesting frontier where the Church meets the world—in the missionary cause. I rejoiced last evening as he talked of the wonderfully fine, loyal, intelligent people of integrity in the world, because though I seek premier position in few things in this world, I would not want to be second in my appreciation of the wonderful people there are who are not of us and not like us, but who are good and decent and honest and live to the light they have received. But I confess that much as I have learned to love them, and as honest as is my respect for them and their integrity, I have recognized . . . that in them there is something missing, and time and again I have had the blessing, with many of you, of attempting to bear witness to them of what that something is.

Why do they miss it? Why do they not enjoy it? Perhaps because they have not been taught. Perhaps because they have a seemingly satisfactory circumstance in life. Perhaps because though they may sense they miss something, the pressures and problems and influences of their lives keep them from responding, from being willing to pay the price.

I read with some of you some time ago in an eastern newspaper a little article which had no prominent place, but which represented something meaningful. It was the story of a fire in one of the clothing districts in New York City. It told of the death in this fire

of more than a dozen people—fifteen, as I recall, and one sentence from the latter part of the short article was impressive and important to me. It said that these people had perished within easy access of an escape door, but had not used it, rather had huddled together and had died in the middle of the floor because of “smoke and fear.” I have wondered if some one of the fifteen or so who died had been conscious enough of the door, if he had known of it and realized its importance he might have led the others through it to life.

And I have thought a good deal more, as perhaps you will in contemplation, about what may have happened in that clothing factory. Apparently they had been sitting within easy access of that door, some of them, at least, for years, yet had paid no heed to it. It had not apparently meant much to them, and in their hour of extremity they were not able to find it.

There are many wonderful people in the world for whom I have personal respect and love, and whose intelligence and integrity I consider at least equal to our own, in terms of what they are willing to do for what they believe. Yet I testify with all my heart that there is something here for the finest of them, but it requires a consciousness that not all is well, that there is something to be had in the world besides social competence or other of the earthly pursuits which satisfy the ambitions of men.

“Smoke and fear” are everywhere about us. I read again this morning, at an early hour, out of the eighth chapter of First Nephi, and then in the subsequent explanatory chapter, the vision of Lehi. You remember the chief symbols—the tree representing the tree of life, or the love of God; the path to it; the rod by which one holding fast could reach it, and the chasm; the large and spacious building on the other side; the mists of darkness, of vapor, rising from the river of filth to overcome those who would try to reach the tree. Do you remember these words? An exceeding great mist of darkness came up and obscured the path, while across it the great spacious building was filled with people, old and young, male and female, their manner of dress exceeding fine, and who were in the attitude of mocking

and pointing their fingers toward those who had come and were partaking of the fruit. Some of those who had tasted it were ashamed because of those who were scoffing at them, and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Note these words in the twelfth chapter of First Nephi: “. . . the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.

“And the large and spacious building, which thy father saw, [said the angel to Nephi], is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men.” (1 Nephi 12:17-18.)

My testimony and witness and the assurances of my heart are that though there are wonderfully fine people all about us, with whom I have the occasional privilege of association, some of whom I have the blessing of attempting to teach, and to many of whom I have the privilege of bearing witness, and while I have great respect for what they represent and are, yet there is something missing in them if they have not found willingness to realize that within easy access is a door leading to life, and that the Savior stands there and knocks, but they must open and walk through.

I have been deeply blessed by the great strong statements of the brethren this conference reaffirming that there is something in the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ which will bless the lives of the very finest of men who do not have it, and who therefore have something missing.

To conclude, I mention that such a sermon as President Richards delivered this morning is sometimes greeted by some of the people of whom I have spoken, with murmurings as to arrogance and smugness, with some objection on the basis of lack of goodwill, even sometimes, they say, lack of Christianity, in such a statement. I say, and humbly, that though the prophets were good and compassionate men who loved brotherhood and goodwill, yet in every instance they testified that there is a way, that men must follow that way and obey the commandments of God. We could proceed from the beginning

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to the end of the sacred records, but I choose just one as the example, and this, section 52 of the Doctrine and Covenants, where the Prophet, under the inspiration of God, encouraging and suggesting compassion and love and brotherliness, and prayer and humility and every other virtue, also had something else to say:

"Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

"He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances." (D&C 52:15-16.)

I thank God for the blessing of the gospel, of some understanding of it, and of certain witness that it is the very plan of God, and that they who speak for God are his servants in this day, as anciently, which I say, and which witness I bear, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy has just addressed us. We shall now hear from Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

### ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

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

My beloved brethren and sisters and friends: Humbly, gratefully, and prayerfully I approach this assignment and face this great audience and the unseen audience of thousands more. Since listening to the inspiring address of President McKay I have felt impressed to leave in my pocket a manuscript which I had intended to present as my small part of this conference.

I would like to say just a word about youth, if I may, the theme which the President has so impressively emphasized in our hearing by his inspiring address. With all my heart I respond to this great message of the president, prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I hope and pray that leaders of youth everywhere who were fortunate enough to hear his message, or will be fortunate enough to read it, will heed the counsel given therein.

I love the youth of the Church and of this great country. I know that our future as a nation, as a people, and our future as a Church depends very largely upon our young people.

I rejoice as I look into the faces of the leaders of youth who have been called to represent the Church. I was thrilled as we met at Camp David in the mountains north of Washington and found that Elder Marion D. Hanks had been appointed a member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee of the President's Council on Youth Fitness,

already referred to by President McKay. We have a group of great leaders in the Church who have been assigned to work with young people, and I think nowhere in all the world will you find a finer youth program than we have right here in the Church.

Everywhere I go I hear praise of the youth program of the Mormon Church, and I am sure that the praise is well merited. I have thrilled with the recent series of articles, cards, and displays on the general subject, "Be Honest with Yourself." It is our appeal to the young people of the Church to adhere strictly to the basic, eternal concepts which make for the good life. It is an appeal for them to live clean, upright lives, to adhere to those basic principles which their parents and their grandparents and their great-grandparents adhered to, and upon which they build in this western land.

It is my hope and prayer, my brethren and sisters, that those of us who have responsibility for leadership, among the youth of Zion particularly, will have the courage and the good common sense to speak frankly and honestly with our young people, that they might know what the Church expects of them, that they might know what is best for them as citizens of this great land, and citizens of the kingdom of God.

Now, what is it that we seek for our young people? It has been said that they are the greatest group of young