

## Elder Howard W. Hunter

Of the Council of the Twelve

The greatest search of our time is the search for personal identity and for human dignity. Each of us wants life to be worthwhile and to have real meaning—a personal meaning—in the living we do from day to day. There is a search being made by people everywhere, a search as important as life itself for self-respect, for self-fulfillment, and for emotional maturity. Much of our character and nature, as individuals, depends upon how and to what ends we conduct this search. Too many of us turn the direction of our lives to tragic goals and distorted purposes. The friends we choose, the choices we make, and what we do about these choices are the determining guide lines that form and mold our lives; but choices alone are not enough. The best goals, the best of friends, and the best of opportunities are all meaningless unless they are translated into reality through our daily actions.

### Gospel of imperatives

Belief must be realized in personal achievement. Real Christians must understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just a gospel of belief; it is a plan of action. His gospel is a gospel of imperatives, and the very nature of its substance is a call to action. He did not say "observe" my gospel; he said "live" it! He did not say, "Note its beautiful structure and imagery"; he said, "Go, do, see, feel, give, believe!" The gospel of Jesus Christ is full of imperatives, words that call for personal commitment and action—obligatory, binding, compulsory.

There is never achievement in any field of endeavor unless it is preceded by a strong sense of purpose. There must be reasons for action and guides for action in the form of real goals and objectives. That is why we are given a plan of salvation and progression. Because the gospel is a long-range—even an eternal—goal, it must be broken up into short-range, immediate objectives that can be achieved

today and tomorrow and the next day. The gospel imperatives constitute an immediate challenge to action in our lives right now, today, as well as a plan for action eternally.

Notice the forceful expression Jesus gave to his teachings; he said: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7-8.)

". . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." (Matt. 5:44.)

### Gospel of action

I believe he would have endorsed the modern addition to an ancient scripture: "And with all thy getting, get going!" His principles are briefly paraphrased. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Go the second mile." "If you want to know whether what I say is true, try it out!" This is what we mean by gospel imperatives. They are words that challenge to action—"Go, do, pray, repent, love, find, give, consider, provide," and a host of others.

One of the most dynamic challenges in the scriptures comes at the end of King Benjamin's address to his people as he concludes his ministry and turns the reigns of government over to his son, Mosiah. Standing on the tower he built to address the people, he guides them through the fundamentals of the gospel and commits them to the wisdom, power, and purposes of God, making this most important challenge: ". . . and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them." (Mosiah 4:10.) The sincerity of their belief must be demonstrated in the verity in their actions.

Action is one of the chief foundations of personal testimony. The surest witness is that which comes firsthand out of personal experience. When the Jews challenged the doctrine

Jesus taught in the temple, he answered, ". . . my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Then he added the key to personal testimony, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16-17.)

Do we hear the imperative in this declaration of the Savior? "If any man will do . . . he will know!" John caught the significance of this imperative and emphasized its meaning in his gospel. He said, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John 2:6.)

Merely saying, accepting, believing are not enough. They are incomplete until that which they imply is translated into the dynamic action of daily living. This, then, is the finest source of personal testimony. One knows because he has experienced. He does not have to say, "Brother Jones says it is true, and I believe him." He can say, "I have lived this principle in my own life, and I know through personal experience that it works. I have felt its influence, tested its practical usefulness, and know that it is good. I can testify of my own knowledge that it is a true principle."

Many people carry such a testimony in their own lives and do not recognize its worth. Recently a young lady said, "I do not have a testimony of the gospel. I wish I did. I accept its teachings. I know they work in my life. I see them working in the lives of others. If only the Lord would answer my prayers and give me a testimony, I would be one of the happiest persons alive!" What this young lady wanted was a miraculous intervention; yet she had already seen the miracle of the gospel enlarging and uplifting her own life. The Lord *had* answered her prayers. She *did* have a testimony, but she did not recognize it for what it was. Of such, Jesus said, ". . . they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." (Matt. 13:13-14.) The gos-

pel is the way of life. It is practical, plain, and simple. It is a gospel of action, even to the tiny day-to-day actions that make up the art of living.

Elder Adam S. Bennion, when he was with us, used to say, "Important as knowing is, there is a more important field, and that is the field of doing. Life is always bigger than learning. It is a wonderful thing to know, but it is better to do." This, of course, is the meaning of the biblical injunction, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22), which is another gospel imperative.

This gospel imperative expresses the very nature of Church education. The doctrine of making hearers into doers of the word extends to the point at which we believe that what we know and do in the gospel needs to become ingrained into the very nature of our being. Nels L. Nelson expresses this gospel imperative in one of his books defining the Mormon concept of education in these words: "The only kind of education which squares with the ideals of Mormonism is that which trains a man to do. If it be asked, to do what, the answer is, *to do the things that need to be done.* . . .

"True education is therefore training a man to do his part in the social world. . . .

". . . knowledge is only half of intelligence. To stop here is to be falsely educated. If, however, the truth perceived becomes a dynamic fact in a man's character; if it is incorporated into his mental attitude, and reacts immediately upon his life; if, in short, it ceases to be something in a man, and becomes the man himself, changing the very . . . [character] of his soul, then knowledge has passed over into power—or character—or wisdom—or, to adopt the term used by Joseph Smith, has passed over into intelligence; and it is such a process alone that represents true education." (Nels L. Nelson, *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism* [New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904], pp. 151-52.)

### Factors of action

If the gospel of Jesus Christ is truly to become a part of ourselves, then there are several things we must keep

in mind in putting the gospel imperatives into action.

First, it is essential to remember that it is more important to be able to *think* and hence to *act* in terms of gospel principles and teachings than it is to merely memorize gospel facts. Remember the injunction from Proverbs: "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7.) Solomon's great blessing was "an understanding heart." We should study gospel principles with the purpose of understanding how they apply and may be used in our life today, not just to be able to remember them.

Second, don't be afraid to put them into action. Courage—and this is as true of spiritual courage as it is of physical courage—is not acting in the absence of fear. Courage is acting in spite of fear. If we stood tall in the gospel, we would soon find that it is easier to act than it is to remain idle or to cower in a corner.

Third, remember that our attitudes are most important tools to success. Knowledge is power only when it is used constructively. We should extend a positive belief in the gospel into a positive belief in our own ability to live the gospel as an effective factor in our lives and in the lives of those about us. Businessmen have proven that the difference between the successful and the unsuccessful usually reduces down to a difference in attitudes. This is just as true of gospel living. "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" ought to be a prime tenet in every gospel lesson. (Prov. 23:7.)

Fourth, be assured that one kind of ability we must have is "stick-ability." No matter how good the beginning, success comes only to those who "endure to the end."

Fifth, whenever we tackle a gospel imperative, immediate goals will help us master it. Our decision to read scripture becomes quite practical when we decide to read a chapter at night before we go to sleep. We should set up long-range and eternal goals, to be sure—they will be the guides and inspiration of a lifetime; but we should not forget the countless little immediate objectives to be won tomorrow

and tomorrow and tomorrow. To win and pass these objectives marks our progress toward the greater goals and insures happiness and the feelings of success along the way.

Gospel imperatives are action words challenging every Latter-day Saint to gospel living. They are the active pathway to personal participation in the laws of the gospel, and every one leads to rewards and blessings. An example of this may be found in the blessing attached to one of these gospel imperatives. It reads, "And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." (D&C 89:18-19.) Such are the blessings promised, and there are many more, each to its own gospel imperative. They are imperatives because they call to action, and every positive action in the gospel plan makes better and happier men and women.

I never think of gospel imperatives without remembering the story of Mary Fielding Smith, that indomitable pioneer mother who was the wife and widow of the Patriarch Hyrum Smith, brother of the Prophet. I am sure you are all familiar with the story of her struggles to bring her little family to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Well, one of the highlights in that story for me is also the signature of gospel imperatives. One spring as they opened the potato pits she had her boys get a load of the best potatoes, which she took to the tithing office.

She was met at the steps of the office by one of the clerks, who remonstrated as the boys began to unload the potatoes. "Widow Smith," he said, remembering no doubt her trials and sacrifices, "it's a shame that you should have to pay tithing." He added a number of other things her son did not care to repeat, chided her for paying her tithing, and called her anything but wise and prudent; he said that there were others able to work who were supported from the tithing office. The little widow drew herself up

to her full height and said, "William, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing, I should expect the Lord to withhold his blessings from me. I pay my tithing, not only because it is a law of God but because I expect a blessing by doing it. By keeping this and other laws, I expect to prosper and to be able to provide for my family." (*Life of Joseph F. Smith*, pp. 158-59.)

This is the goal of gospel imperatives, "to be able to prosper and provide for our families." The abundance of the good and worthwhile things of life comes from following them. I bear you my testimony that in them lies the wisdom of eternity. It is my witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. My appeal is to each of us, and the hundreds of thousands of persons who joined with us by viewing this conference today, to catch the vision of and follow the admonition contained in the key to all imperatives: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." (3 Ne. 14:8.) This is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President Hugh B. Brown

We express our thanks and appreciation to the speakers this morning, especially to the Tabernacle Choir for their inspirational music.

We are most grateful for the warm response from the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations in offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout North America, South America, Africa, and many other areas of the world.

We shall conclude this sixth session of the conference with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Worthy Is the Lamb." Following the singing the benediction will be pronounced by Philip F. Low, president of the Indianapolis Stake, and then this conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

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Singing by Choir: "Worthy Is the Lamb."

Benediction by President Phillip F. Low, Indianapolis Stake.

Following the prayer the Choir sang, "I Need Thee Every Hour." Conference adjourned until 2:00 p.m.

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## THIRD DAY

### AFTERNOON MEETING

The concluding session of the Conference convened Sunday afternoon, April 9th at 2:00 p.m.

President N. Eldon Tanner, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the services.

The choral music for this meeting was furnished by the Tabernacle Choir, with Richard P. Condie and Jay E. Welch conducting. Robert Cundick was at the Organ.

#### President N. Eldon Tanner

President McKay is not with us this afternoon. He will be watching these services. He is presiding at this session and he has asked me to conduct, and to extend to all his heartfelt greetings.

Members of the Church are convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the seventh and concluding session of the 137th Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This afternoon many television and radio stations throughout the western part of the United States will carry the proceedings of this concluding session of the Conference.

The full proceedings of both sessions today will be rebroadcast to far-distant places by Radio Station KSL, KIRO Radio at Seattle, and WRFM at New York City, on Monday, April 10, beginning at midnight.