

### President Hugh B. Brown

To many it will be of great interest to know that this is the centennial anniversary of the Salt Lake Tabernacle, which was first used for General Conference in October 1867. This building has since become acknowledged as one of the great auditoriums of the world, renowned for its acoustics, looked to as a center of spiritual guidance, and used and appreciated as a place for cultural and civic events, where eminent artists, statesmen and others have appeared and have acclaimed its excellent characteristics world-wide; a place built by our

pioneer forebears in their poverty. Thank God for the faith of our fathers.

Three songs were sung one hundred years ago at that first session of conference held in the tabernacle. One of these songs was, "An Angel From On High, the long, long silence broke." The Tabernacle Choir will now sing that same song in commemoration of that event in October 1867. Following the singing President Nathan Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency will speak to us.

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The Choir sang "An Angel From On High."

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### President N. Eldon Tanner

#### Of the First Presidency

President McKay, brothers and sisters everywhere, it is a joy indeed to be here today in this historic Tabernacle, here on this beautiful Temple Square, where members of the Church have been meeting at these regular conferences during the past hundred years; where, as did those who have preceded us, we enjoy the Spirit of the Lord, listen to words of wisdom, and are instructed in gospel principles; where we can have our faith renewed and our testimonies strengthened; from where, as radio and television have made it possible, the great messages of the leaders of the Church have gone out to all the world. We wish to extend a warm welcome to our radio and television audience today.

#### Centenary of the Tabernacle and of the Choir

We have just heard the beautiful rendition of this great Tabernacle Choir, which was organized in 1847, and which, with the "Spoken Word" by Richard L. Evans, has been heard weekly by millions of people since 1929. The latest tour, which was made about a month ago, made it possible for thousands and thousands of people in Canada at the exposition, in New York, Michigan, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, and Rhode

Island to enjoy its magnificent concerts.

On behalf of the First Presidency, those assembled here, and, I feel sure, all members of the Church, we wish to express our sincere and deep appreciation to President Isaac M. Stewart; to the conductors, Richard P. Condie and Jay Welch; to our organists, Alexander Schreiner, Robert Cundick, and Roy Darley; to every dedicated member of the choir, and to others who have contributed to its outstanding success. May the Lord continue to bless them with success.

#### One hundred years of conferences in the Tabernacle

As we reflect on the many conferences that have been held under the direction of prophets and inspired leaders, all of whom have been dedicated servants of God, many of whom were really giants of the Lord, it certainly makes one feel humble to occupy this position. I do earnestly pray and ask that I may have an interest in your faith and prayers, to the effect that the Spirit of the Lord will be with us while I stand before you, that what I may say will be in keeping with his Spirit and helpful to those assembled here and to those who may be listening in. I sincerely pray that

the Spirit and blessings of the Lord will attend you, that those things you desire in righteousness will be given you.

### Faith in prayer

I have great faith in prayer, and believe that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." (Tennyson, *Morte D'Arthur*.) In fact, I have chosen to talk on prayer and pray that the Lord may help us realize the importance and value of prayer, and what a great privilege and opportunity every one of us has of going to the Lord in thanksgiving and supplication.

It is because I have had my prayers answered so many times throughout my life, and because I feel so keenly the great need of calling upon the Lord, and because I have experienced the strength and blessings and guidance of the Lord in the position which I now hold, that I have chosen to discuss this subject with you today. I pray that those who doubt might be helped to see and understand that God is our Father, that we are his spirit children, and that he is really there, and has said: "Ask, and it shall 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.)

I often wonder if we really realize the power of prayer, if we appreciate what a great blessing it is to be able to call on our Father in heaven in humble prayer, knowing that he is interested in us and that he wants us to succeed.

As Richard L. Evans has said so beautifully: "Our Father in heaven is not an umpire who is trying to count us out. He is not a competitor who is trying to outsmart us. He is not a prosecutor who is trying to convict us. He is a loving Father who wants our happiness and eternal progress and who will help us all he can if we will but give him in our lives an opportunity to do so with obedience and humility, and faith and patience."

To pray effectively, and to feel that

one can be heard and have his prayers answered, one must believe that he is praying to a God who can hear and answer, one who is interested in his children and their well-being. The first record we have of anyone praying to the Lord is that recorded by Moses in these words: "And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; . . .

### What hath prayer wrought?

"And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. . . ." (Moses 5:4, 16.)

Great and influential men have always prayed for divine guidance. Even this great nation was founded on prayer. U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond reminded us of this in May of last year wherein he said:

"The Mayflower Compact, written in November of 1620, begins with a prayer, 'In the name of God,' and goes on to state: 'We . . . having undertaken, for the glory of God, . . . do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic.'

"Thus our nation began founded on prayer. The kneeling figure of George Washington through that bitter winter in Valley Forge is a part of this country that should never be forgotten. . . .

"The Constitutional Convention in June of 1787 had been meeting for weeks without agreement, when Benjamin Franklin rose to his feet and addressed George Washington:

"'Mr. President: The small progress we have made after four or five weeks close attention and continual reasonings with each other . . . is a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the human understanding. . . . We have gone back to ancient history for models of government that now no longer exist. And we have viewed modern states . . . but find none of their constitutions suitable to our circumstances. . . . How has it happened, Sir, that we have not, hitherto once

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thought of humbly applying to the Father of Light to illuminate our understandings?

"In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for divine protection.

"Our prayers, Sir, were heard; and they were generously answered. . . .

"I, therefore, beg leave to move:—

"That henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business." ("A Priceless Asset," *Spotlight*, May 1966.)

### Prayer is not unconstitutional

This was done, and now we enjoy the fruits of their labors in answer to prayer. Prayer has never been outmoded in this great country. Lincoln, who prayed to the Lord continually for guidance, said:

"It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow . . . and to recognize the sublime truth that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, at the time of his inauguration, petitioned the Lord:

"Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and to allow all our works and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land . . . so that all may work for the good of our beloved country, and for thy glory. Amen."

Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, said that whenever he could not see his way clearly, he knelt down and prayed for light and understanding.

We have that sweet and simple prayer recorded by astronaut Gordon Cooper while orbiting the earth:

"Father, thank you, especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank you for the privilege of being able to be in this position, to be up in this wondrous place, seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that you have created."

### Prayer is finite communication with the infinite

I join with Senator Thurmond in his appeal to "our people to pray more, to examine the religious heritage of our country, and to see the benefit of seeking God's blessings. Prayer is the only way in which the finite can communicate with the infinite; . . . in which the visible may be in touch with the invisible. You may easily see, if you but examine the history of our Nation, that prayer and communication with God is the very cornerstone of our society. If you allow it to be abandoned now, you will be casting away the greatest asset this Nation, or any other nation, has ever known."

All of the prophets, from Adam to our present prophet, have prayed unceasingly for guidance, and even the Savior prayed continually to God the Eternal Father. We read, regarding the Savior: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke 6:12.)

The Lord has admonished all of us to pray, and through the prophet James has given us this promise:

### Pray for wisdom

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." (Jas. 1:5-6.)

This promise is given to every one of us—high and low, rich and poor. It is universal, unrestricted to you and to me and to our neighbors. He has told us that we must believe and have faith in God. We should know that the Lord stands ready to help his children if they will put themselves in tune through prayer and by keeping his commandments. In fact, the Lord has said: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." (D&C 82:10.)

The Lord has warned us that we must humble ourselves and not be as the ancient prophet said: Many men

"are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block . . . nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning. . . ." (2 Ne. 26:20.)

Paul said, concerning the proud man of the world:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:11.)

As that great student, the late President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said, if men are to learn of God and be guided by him, they "must put pride of their learning and their achievements from their hearts. And why not? For how like a drop in the ocean is the knowledge of the wisest compared with the fullness of the truth of the universe. Men must humbly confess Jesus as the Christ, 'for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.'" (*On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, p. 6.)

### Recognize the power of God

We must be prepared to recognize God as the Creator of the world, and that he, through his son Jesus Christ and his prophets, has given us in simple language man's relationship to God, information regarding our pre-mortal existence, the purpose of our mission here on earth, and the fact that our post-mortal existence, or our life after death, is real, and that what we do here will condition us for the world to come.

We must not be misled by the doctrines of men. All the studies of science and philosophy will never answer the question: "What is man and why is he here?" But it is answered clearly and simply in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we are instructed: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. . . ." (Jas. 1:5.)

Let us be prepared to do this and not be as those to whom the Savior referred, when he said: ". . . well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:7-9.)

### Humility and meekness foster the spirit of prayer

Yes, it is important, and the Lord emphasizes that we must humble ourselves and accept the teachings of Jesus Christ and keep his commandments if we would expect him to hear and answer our prayers. We should all be prepared to say truthfully, as Paul did, in speaking to the Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . . ." (Rom. 1:16.)

It is difficult to understand why some cannot believe, or find it very hard to believe, that God can hear and answer our prayers, and yet they believe that astronauts can leave the earth and travel in outer space at thousands of miles per hour and still be directed from home base; that they can keep in touch with home base and receive instructions and be led in their activities and then be brought back to a safe landing here upon the earth.

How can we question God's ability to hear and answer our prayers and direct us in all things if we will but keep in tune with him and at the same time have no doubt that Surveyor III, a mechanical instrument, can be sent out from the earth to the moon and there be directed by mere man here upon the earth? It followed instructions as it was directed to dig, to stop digging, to make a report, to send back pictures, and to dig again. As long as it was in tune, it could be directed.

We are as astronauts, or the Surveyor, sent out by God to fill our missions here upon the earth. He wants us to succeed. He stands ready to

answer our prayers and assures us a safe landing as we return if we will but keep in touch with him through prayer and do as we are bid.

As we pray, however, are we prepared to ask the Lord to bless us as we answer his call or acknowledge and serve him?

Are we prepared to ask the Lord to forgive us as we forgive one another? For the Lord has said: ". . . if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (3 Ne. 13:14-15.)

### Prayer in emergencies

We may well stop and analyze our own situation. Do we wait until we are in trouble and then run to the Lord? As we pray, do we give orders to the Lord by saying, "Bless this," and "Bless that," "Give us this," and "Give us that," "Do this," and "Do that"?

Or do we pray that we might be led to do that which is right, or be blessed with those things which are for our best good? We should always pray for the desire and strength and determination to do the will of our Heavenly Father, and always stand ready to do his bidding.

Men pray for different reasons. Many are driven to their knees out of fear, and then only do they pray. Others go to the Lord when in dire need of immediate direction for which they know of no other place to go. Nations are called by their governments in case of a national tragedy, drought, or plague, famine or war, to call upon God for his blessings, for his protection, and for his direction. Some people ask to be healed, others to be strengthened. They ask for the blessings of the Lord to attend their families, their loved ones, and themselves in all their righteous endeavors. This, I am sure, is all good in the sight of the Lord.

### Pray to express gratitude

It is most important, however, that we take time to express our gratitude to our Father in heaven for the many

blessings we receive. I was deeply touched one day following our family prayer when one of our little daughters said, "Daddy, I don't think we ought to ask for more blessings. The Lord has been very good to us, but I do think we should ask him to help us to be worthy of the blessings we receive." Since then we have tried more diligently to express our gratitude to our Father in heaven and pray for guidance that we might be worthy of that which he has given us.

As we express our appreciation for our many blessings, we become more conscious of what the Lord has done for us, and thereby we become more appreciative. We all know what it means to hear or receive an expression of gratitude for anything we might have done. Our forefathers set aside a day of thanksgiving. I fear that some of us even forget that day.

I wonder if we are sometimes guilty of not expressing to the Lord our gratitude, even as the lepers who were healed. We all remember so well the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers, who cried: ". . . have mercy on us.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." (Luke 17:13, 15-18.)

And as Mark Antony said when referring to Caesar, who recognized his friend Brutus among his assassins:

"This was the most unkindest cut of all;

For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,

Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,

Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart. . . ."

(William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 3, sc. 2.)

### The will to do right

I am sure that the Lord expects us to

express our gratitude for our many blessings as we ask for his continued blessings, and to ask forgiveness for our failings and the desire and strength to do right.

When we pray, it is important that we set about to do all in our power to make it possible for the Lord to answer our prayers. As my father said to me when I was just a boy, "My son, if you want your prayers to be answered, you must get on your feet and do your part."

I often think how much more effective it would be, when the country's president calls upon his people to set aside a day of prayer, if we were all living righteous lives and were prepared to acknowledge God as our Creator and to keep his commandments. It seems that many have lost belief in God entirely, and others question his ability to answer our prayers. Others have faith and confidence in their own learning and in their own strength and power.

Then there are those who are as the chief rulers referred to in John:

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42-43.)

### Serve "the God of this land"

Let us all pay heed to the warning of the Lord himself, wherein he said, regarding the American continent:

"Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ. . . ." (Ether 2:12.)

With this warning from the Lord, we have this promise: ". . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33.)

We should all have the courage and determination to say as did Joshua: ". . . choose you this day whom ye will

serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15.)

The Lord has instructed parents to teach their children to have faith in Christ, the Son of the living God, and to pray and to walk uprightly before the Lord. There is no doubt that our children, if they are taught to pray to a living God in whom they have faith, can more easily walk uprightly before the Lord.

I shall never be able to express fully my appreciation to my parents for teaching me to pray secretly and to participate with them in family prayer. My mother taught me at her knee. She made me feel and know that I was talking to the Lord, to our Maker, our Father in heaven, and that he was conscious of my acts and my wishes and my needs. I was taught that I should express my sincere thanks, ask for forgiveness, and ask for strength to do the right. This has always been a great strength to me throughout my life, and today I pray even more diligently than I ever did before that the Lord will guide and direct me in my activities, that whatever I do will be acceptable to him.

As I think back to when we used to kneel as a family in prayer every morning and every evening, I realize what it meant to us as children to hear our father call upon the Lord and actually talk to him, expressing his gratitude and asking for the blessings of the Lord on his crops and flocks and all of our undertakings. It always gave us greater strength to meet temptation when we remembered that we would be reporting to the Lord at night.

### The power of family prayer

Family prayer in any home will draw the family closer together and result in better feelings between father and mother, between parents and children, and between one child and another. If children pray for their parents, it makes them more appreciative of their parents, and as they pray for one another, they feel closer to one another and part of each other, especially as they realize that they are talking to their Father in heaven while on their knees in family or secret prayer. Then is when we forget our

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differences and think of the best in others, and pray for their well-being and for strength to overcome our own weaknesses. There is no doubt that we are better people when we try to tune in to the spirit of our Father in heaven so that we might communicate with him and express our desire to do his will as we pray for his blessings.

The Lord has admonished us to "pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward.

"Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father." (D&C 31:12-13.)

The Lord has also said: "... the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16.)

I have often asked myself and tried to answer the question, "Why do some people refuse to pray? Is it because they feel they have not the time?" I remember very well a father coming to me one day regarding his oldest son, with whom he was having some difficulty. The boy was a good boy, but he was getting out of hand. I asked the father if they had regular family prayers in their home. His answer was, "Well, no, but sometimes. You know, we are too busy and we go to work at different times, and therefore it is most difficult for our family to get together for family prayer."

I asked: "If you knew that your boy was sick nigh unto death, would you be able to get your family together each night and each morning for a week to pray that his life might be spared?" He said, "Why, of course."

I tried then to explain to him that there are other ways of losing a boy than by death. I also explained that where families pray together, they usually stay together, and their ideals are higher, they feel more secure, and they have a greater love for one another.

Next, do they feel too independent, too smart, and that they can go it alone? Or are they ashamed to call upon God? Do they think it shows a weakness? Or do they not believe or have faith in God? Or is it that they do not appreciate their many blessings? Or do they not feel worthy?

If one does not feel worthy, he should acknowledge his weaknesses, express regret, repent, covenant to do right, and ask for guidance.

Is it because some do not know how to pray? If that is true, I suggest that you go to your Heavenly Father in secret. Pour out your heart to him. Pray regularly so that you can feel at home and comfortable while communing with him. All one needs to do is express his feelings, which the Lord understands. He has invited all of us to call on him regularly and has promised that he will hear our supplication.

### The promise of Moroni

The ancient prophet Moroni, referring to the Book of Mormon, said:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." (Moro. 10:4-5.)

This promise applies to all of us if we will but repent and go to the Lord, knowing that he can hear and will hear and answer our prayers. We should all realize that we are God's children and that he is still as interested in us as he ever was. He still answers the prayers of the righteous and those who diligently seek him.

This is my testimony to you. May we all humble ourselves and diligently seek him through prayer, and then walk uprightly before him, that we may be led to immortality and eternal life, I sincerely and humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President Hugh B. Brown

President Nathan Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency has just spoken to us.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings." Following the singing Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy will speak to us.