

their problems. Sometime ago a young lady came into my office concerned because she had fasted and prayed for two days to know if a certain young man should marry her, and she felt that she had received an answer in the affirmative. Shortly thereafter, the young man became engaged to another girl. Her question to me was, "How can this be, since I received an answer that he should marry me?"

Upon further interview it became apparent that there were a number of commandments of which she was certainly aware but was not keeping. It takes more than fasting and prayer. We must begin again; we must repent—confess and forsake our sins. We must study the scriptures, yea, search the scriptures; we must keep the commandments of God, and keep them precisely. For the commandments are calculated to get us in condition so that we can receive light and truth, even intelligence, which is communication from God, our Father, which we so desperately need and which is the only thing of real worth we can take with us when we go.

Heed to words of the Lord

May I bear witness to you, my brethren and sisters, that what you

have heard from this place in this conference is the mind of the Lord, the will of the Lord, and the word of the Lord for the salvation of his saints at this particular juncture in time, for he lives and speaks to his servants today. We must give heed to the word of the Lord; therefore, it is tremendously important that we give heed to these words, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling before him, as we precisely keep these commandments. May we do so, and may it be said of us when we depart that "he took with him a clean, free, enlightened and happy spirit, and a conscience void of offense to his fellowmen." That this may be our happy state, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Hartman Rector, Jr. of the First Council of Seventy.

Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Of the First Council of the Seventy

Consider these words of the Savior as he spoke to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14.)

Water to feed souls

What greater way to demonstrate the saving, healing principles of the

gospel of Jesus Christ than to relate them to life-sustaining water—water that is essential for every human being in order to live.

The Savior was telling the woman that if she drank from her well she would thirst again, but if she drank from his well and partook of the principles that he taught, she would never thirst again, but her soul would be nourished and she would have eternal life.

We live in a complex and challenging world. Young and old seem to be

going to and fro and in their own way drinking from different wells, searching for that water that will begin to feed their souls, that will quench some inner thirst.

Inner needs of youth

To youth who associate themselves with various causes, some popular, many designed to accomplish much good, and a few militant; to the adult who can find no satisfaction in his vocation and perhaps only frustration in his marriage and emptiness in his life; to the militant who spends his life bitterly denouncing what he is against but never quite certain what he is for; to the person who turns to drugs, perhaps even attempting to equate it with a spiritual experience, and then realizing that for every high there is some kind of dismal low—perhaps these people and many others seize upon special issues and act unpredictably more from an inner need to satisfy a yearning soul than because of the face value of that in which they are involved, however worthy it may be.

Religion in Russia

Even in Russia, where its people have drunk at the well of socialist morality for fifty years, there is an indication of a desire for something more nourishing. In studying religion in Russia today, journalist Paul Wohl states that "socialist morality has been accepted as the official yardstick of good behavior, but whether Soviet man is more harmonious than his predecessor is a moot question. A scientific outlook is there," says Wohl, "but so is religion. Its comeback," he says, "is a phenomenon which the ideologists of communism cannot explain and about which they prefer to remain silent." He states that the move toward religion is primarily sparked by young people.

The writer tells of a simple Russian woman who received the visit of her neighbor, a young engineer-physicist.

"I know you are a believer," said the engineer. "Can you tell me about God? The philosophy of dialectical materialism does not satisfy me. I would like to know the viewpoint of believers."

It is most interesting to note that there is something fundamental and basic in the makeup of man that will sooner or later turn him to his Creator, provided he does not completely strangle this inclination through evil works on chronic unbelief, and provided he doesn't condition himself to settle for less by insisting that what he doesn't know or hasn't experienced just isn't so.

Arms of mercy extended

Speaking of the Savior, the prophet Alma says:

"Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.

"Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely;

"Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ. . . ." (Al. 5:33-34, 38.)

Invitation to partake

And after Alma teaches the people those things relative to the gospel of Jesus Christ and what they can do in order to nourish their souls, and find peace, and prepare for eternal life, he then says:

"And now I, Alma, do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you.

"I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of invitation, saying: Come and be baptized

unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life." (Al. 5:61-62.)

As this last scripture indicates, it is possible for a person to have the fruit of the tree of salvation readily available to him, but to no avail if he does not partake!

Questioning of young men

I am reminded of two young men who came in to see me some months ago. They had been recommended by their priesthood leaders. From the moment they stepped into the office, they began in a very sincere way questioning certain doctrines and teachings and procedures of the Church. Their attitude, however, was not antagonistic, as they were sincerely looking for answers.

I asked them finally if their questions perhaps represented the symptoms of their problem and not the cause. Wasn't their real question whether or not this church is true? Whether or not it is actually the Church of Jesus Christ? And whether or not it is led by divine revelation? The young men agreed that perhaps if they were sure of the answers to these questions, they could take care of the other questions that seemed to arise in their hearts.

Participation in experiment

I asked them if they were willing to participate in an experiment. One of them appeared to be athletically inclined, and so I turned to him and asked, "If you wanted to learn about the chemical properties of water, would you go to the local sports stadium and run four laps around the track?"

He said, "Of course not."

I asked, "Why not?"

He said, "The two are not related."

We then turned to John, chapter seven, and read: "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 7:17.)

If we are going to experiment with the things of Christ, then we are going to have to put these things to a spiritual test—a test that the Savior himself has outlined for all those who wish to know, a test of doing.

I asked them if they read the scriptures.

They said, "No."

I asked them if they prayed.

They said, "Not often."

I asked them if they kept the Word of Wisdom.

They said, "Occasionally."

I asked them if they went to church.

They said they'd stopped.

I asked them if they would be interested in a three-month experiment. They said they would try but were not anxious to commit themselves until they found out what I had in mind.

Agreement to live gospel principles

"During the next three months will you attend all your church meetings and listen carefully to what is being said, even taking notes of the principal points being made by the teachers and how these points might apply to your lives?"

They thought for a moment and said they would.

"During the next three months will you reinstate in your personal life prayer, night and morning, thanking God for the blessings you enjoy and asking him to help you know if the Church is true and if the things you are doing are meaningful to your lives?"

One of these young men, who considered himself an agnostic, balked at this, but then he finally agreed to do it on the basis that for the sake of the experiment he would accept the premise that there is a God and would appeal to this God for the light and knowledge which he was seeking.

I asked them if in the next three months they would refrain from drinking, smoking, and drugs. Al-

though this created some anxiety, they resolved to do it.

I asked them if in the next three months they would resolve to keep themselves morally clean and in harmony with the principles of virtue which the Savior taught. They said they would. And then I suggested they establish a schedule, on their own, during the next three months to read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover—a few pages each day, with a prayer at each reading that the Lord would bless them to know if the book is true and actually from him. They agreed.

By-products of the experience

Anticipating what might happen, I said, "Now, if you feel disposed to tell your friends about this, probably their first comment will be 'Boy, has Brother Dunn snowed you.' You may even feel that way a time or two during this experiment, but don't let it keep you from doing what you have agreed to do. If you think that might be a problem, then keep it in the back of your mind, and go ahead and honestly experiment, and let this three-month experience speak for itself." I added, "If things go properly, you'll notice some by-products, such as a growing awareness and concern for your fellowman and greater appreciation and consideration for other people." They accepted the challenge and left.

Witness of the Holy Ghost

Of course, what was really hoped for was the experience that every member has a right to enjoy and everyone else has the right to receive, and that is the knowledge of a personal testimony. I think Brigham Young described it best when he said:

"There is no other experience known to mortal man that can be compared with the testimony or witness of the Holy Ghost. It is as powerful as a two-edged sword and burns in the breast of man like a consuming fire.

It destroys fear and doubt, leaving in their stead absolute unqualified, and incontrovertible knowledge that a principle or thing is true. . . .

"This same testimony has sustained faithful saints to the present day and will be a lamp to their path forever. The effect of this testimony reaches above and beyond all physical or earthly things and makes relationship with God the Father a literal, pulsing fact. Every fiber of both body and spirit respond to the witness of that testimony and the soul knows and lives the truth."

The water of life

And so to those who have tasted the water at many wells only to find that the unquenching thirst of the soul drives them on in search of that which will bring peace and nourishment to the heart—to you, whoever you are, member or nonmember—will you come and drink from this well, and taste and experiment and see if you have not found the waters of life where you can drink to your soul and thirst no more but be full with the joy of the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and his teachings and the purpose of your own life?

And to this invitation I bear you my witness that I know God lives. I know he lives and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and his Son. Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw, and we have a prophet of God sitting with us, presiding today. I bear you that witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

President N. Eldon Tanner

We have just listened to Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy.

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, Assistant to the Twelve.