

Elder Marion D. Hanks

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

As I thanked Brother Hinckley this morning for his great sermon Sunday, I mentioned a recollection of two men, one of whom had just given a great talk. The other thanked him and commended him and said, "That was a great sermon. I wish I had given it." The other said, "You will."

I suspect many of us will be giving some of the great sermons we have heard at this conference.

Practicing what we preach

My theme this morning is practicing what we preach. I suppose everyone understands what that means. Last Sunday in Logan I heard a choice teacher report her conversation with a little girl in a class. She had asked the little girl, "What does it mean to practice what you preach?" "Oh," said the youngster, "that means writing your talk and saying it over and over again before you give it in church."

I would like to say a few words this morning about the more conventional interpretation of practicing what we preach.

I visited the hospital the other evening to see my desperately ill sister. Her husband and family were surrounding her bed, holding their family home evening, led by their fourth missionary son just returned from foreign fields. I joined them, and then went home rejoicing and thanking God for that kind of example, and met my own family who were waiting, and prayed that we might do a better job of practicing what we preach.

I visited her this morning and talked with her to the Lord, and in the spirit of that sobering experience offer my testimony this morning.

What do we believe that we should be practicing, or practicing more effectively, many of us? What is our

duty? What are we commanded? What do we preach?

Our duties as a family

Well, one important thing we preach is that parents are to love and teach their children and set an honorable example before them, and that children are to honor and obey their parents. Parents are to love and cleave to each other; and children, as Benjamin said, are to "love one another and serve one another." We are taught to meet together in a weekly family home evening, to pray together as families, to give an account together of the tithes we pay, to attend sacrament meeting and worship together as a family. We are expected to fast together and to give an amount equivalent to the cost of what we did not eat to the bishop for the care of those who have needs.

As a family we are to greet the home teachers and respond to their instructions and inquiries. Motivated by the lofty stature of the family in Church belief, we should be reading and learning together, working together, having pleasant, happy occasions at our mealtimes, supporting each other in school, church, and civic involvements. We should be planning and enjoying projects together, building our customs and traditions into a continuity of generations.

All of this we are taught and encouraged to do.

The blessing of home

But it is not of duty or commandment or admonition that I wish to speak this morning, cherished and holy as those words are. I would like instead to speak of invitation, of opportunity, of privilege, of love, of gratefully taking time while there is time to enjoy the blessing of our family and home.

How much joy are we missing that we could be having and are meant to have, joy that we could experience only in our own home and no other place, only with our own family and with no other group?

It is instructive to look at the music we sing. Our little ones sing "I am a child of God, and he has sent me here, Has given me an earthly home With parents kind and dear." Our wonderful young people sing as they have sung in testimony this morning, and they sing other songs: "We'll build on the rock they planted . . . The rock of honor and virtue, Of faith in the living God." From our singing mothers comes the great strain "Love one another," and all of us sing "Love at home."

Home a sanctuary

Our ties with God and each other are everlasting. Our homes are sanctuaries from the things and cares of this world. Our family is the heart of our eternal hopes. Our love is the tender thread that ties us to an endless, creative, increasing union. These are the things we believe and preach. Can we do more to enjoy the blessings of such concepts in our lives, in our homes, in our families? Can we do better while there is time at practicing what we preach?

Matthew Arnold wrote, in *Empedocles on Etna*:

"We would have inward peace
But will not look within."

A happy example

May we for a moment this morning, each of us, look within himself and home and family as I offer a happy example or two of what I am talking about.

About twelve years ago I had a call early in the morning from a beloved friend who is a physician. He asked me to come to the hospital to administer to his infant son, just born and fighting for his life. We reached our hands into the incubator

and laid them on this tiny boy and prayed, and then sat and waited with Larry's mother while he took a turn for the better. We were there when the pediatrician came to announce that he was going to make it. He came through that difficult ordeal with a fine mind and a strong, indomitable spirit. Only a pair of legs that are not quite as strong as they one day will be remain to remind Larry how blessed he is to be alive.

Letter to Larry Ellsworth

Recently this little boy's big brother returned from having served an honorable mission for the Lord abroad. A perceptive uncle, observing the reunion at the airport, wrote a letter to Larry that I had the privilege of reading. I asked if I might have permission to quote it and have been given that permission. I would like you to know about a Latter-day Saint boy just ordained a deacon who tries to practice what we preach.

"Dear Larry," the letter said. "Yesterday I got a lump in my throat without even swallowing a frog; and I got a tear in my eye without even inhaling a hippy's breath! More than that, I got a picture tattooed on my memory that I'll never forget.

"It's only right that I thank you for the lump, the tears, and the picture, for a handsome boy named Larry Ellsworth gave me all three of them . . . and he didn't even know it or ask me for a receipt.

"It started when he stood waiting for his brother to return from serving our Heavenly Father as a missionary for two years in a far-off land named Chile. You could see that the two years had been longer for this boy than for anyone else. He was so intense, so pale, so absorbed with just watching and waiting.

"Then to see his face light up when he saw his brother again! It was like a flashlight in a dark room.

"Someone whispered that this wonderful boy had been saving his nick-

els, dimes, and quarters for two years to buy his big brother a basketball . . . a more than \$30 'best there is' basketball because he loved him! He wouldn't let anyone else contribute. It was his idea and his gift . . . the best way, out of money he could have spent for himself but chose not to because he loved someone else so much!

"Then I watched this fine boy stand, without saying a word, at the side of his brother, happy just to look way up at his face, hold on to his leg, and see him home again.

"I have a special love and admiration for both of those boys: the giant who went far away all alone to do what was right and the little brother who waited and planned and remembered.

"Larry, you're a fine boy. I'm sure that you'll be a great man . . . for you have a big heart and a tender conscience. Some can run faster, jump higher, walk farther, play longer just because they had an easier time getting born into this world. That's no credit to them. But you have more than most to be thankful for, because Heavenly Father sent one of his favorite sons to live in your body . . . and it's who lives in a house that makes all the difference. Thanks, Larry, for the lesson an old dumb uncle learned yesterday just by watching. Love, Uncle Dick."

A family skiing trip

A few weeks ago I listened to a stake president exhort his people to build strong families and to enjoy them. It was a great sermon, and the high point of it for me was his account of the family skiing trip when a four-year-old wanted to go to the top with the rest of the family and ski down. When they arrived it was discovered that he had to snowplow all the way down because it was just a bit too tough a run for his age and experience. The mother started to accompany her four-year-old son down the hill, but her teenage son voluntarily took

over and lovingly shepherded his little brother down instead of swooping down himself as he could have done. He cheerfully sacrificed one swift run down the mountain and blessed a whole family with a sweet spirit of love and concern and appreciation.

Home teachers

Among many who do wonderfully well at practicing what we preach, there is one other I would mention for a moment this morning. To our home periodically over the past several years has come a special kind of man as our home teacher. He has brought with him a dear son who, like Larry of the letter, had a difficult time getting born and has had some major problems to contend with. The father and son have sat many times side by side in our home, hands gently clasped or arms intertwined, or a hand on a knee, communicating, always expressing without language, an exchange of love. How we admire this man and his beloved son.

Values that make a happy home

These are some of the simple chords of melody that make a home harmonious and happy. Kindness, consideration, courtesy, care, laughter, unselfishness, prayer, thoughtfulness, doing things for each other, forgiving each other, sustaining each other, loving each other—these are notes that form a family symphony happily enjoyed and eternally remembered.

If a family loses its cherished human values and deteriorates into only the form of a family, it has lost what a family is for. Whatever changes are said to have occurred in our time, there is left to the family the most important purpose of all—the satisfaction of the basic emotional and spiritual needs of its members. In any era, one has written, society is a "web of which the family forms the central strands." In home, family, and love lie the resources that fulfill the life of the

individual and the life of the community; indeed, the resources that would redeem our troubled world and bring it lasting peace. Children must be safeguarded and reared. Only in the home can children be assured of the love and direction they need to live life, and only parents who genuinely love can meet those needs. But it must be more than a preached or pronounced love; it must be love that takes time, makes the effort, listens patiently, gives freely, forgives generously, "provides the amenities that will grace and adorn and make beautiful the relationships of family life."

Speaking with authority

But I must add today that I do not speak *by* authority or *from* authority, but *with* authority, for I myself know these things to be true. I know them to be true because I have experienced them, I have lived them, I have been there.

The home I grew up in had the kind of love of which I speak, though it had little of material things. I hope and pray that our happy home has done as well. Of course, I have said what I have said today in part for myself and our own family, for we still have the privilege and blessing of seeking to improve. I am grateful

to thank the Lord for that. I do not know a greater accolade in this life, and believe there is none, than a note from a six-year-old who writes: "Guess what, Mom, I love you," or a teenager's gracious gift: "Dad, you are my friend and I will love you forever," or from a dad or mom to a choice son or daughter: "I love you. I am proud of you."

Does not this motivate us to want to be what we can be?

Jesus said, "As I have loved you . . . love one another."

God help us, parent and child, to accept the opportunity, while there is time, in our homes and families, to practice what we preach.

I know the gospel is true, and I know the gospel includes that which he has taught us of relationship to each other in our homes and families. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

President Harold B. Lee

Elder Marion D. Hanks, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

Elder James A. Cullimore, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James A. Cullimore

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren and sisters, as I stand before you here today I seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I deliver the things that I have in my heart.

Marriage for time and eternity

Marriage in the temple for time and eternity should be the goal of every member of the Church, for marriage is ordained of God. Marriage

is a commandment. Marriage was instituted by divine edict.

The Lord said: "And again, verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man.

"Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation;