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### President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

He will be followed by the congregation and choir singing "O Say, What Is Truth?"

Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will speak to us.

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The congregation sang the hymn, "O Say, What Is Truth?"

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### President Kimball

For those of the television and radio audience who have just joined us, we announce that we are gathered in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the first session of the 144th Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now address us. Following Elder Maxwell, we shall hear from Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters, I should like to speak of and to a particular group of important individuals. These are they who fully intend, someday, to begin to believe and/or to be active in the Church. But not yet! These are not bad individuals, but good individuals who simply do not know how much better they could be. Such individuals often stay proximate to—but do not participate fully in—the Church. They will not come inside the chapel, but neither do they leave its porch. These are they who need and are needed by the Church, but who, in part, "live without God in the world."

### The will to commit

To such individuals, in the brief, imploring invitation which follows, be assured there is a real craving for your companionship and a genuine need for your unique strengths.

There are reasons for your commitment to be made now, for as the rush of hours, days, and months grows stronger, the will to commit grows weaker. Events to transpire soon on this planet will dry up the options for the lukewarm, for the issues raised by Jesus are irrepressible issues!

### Warnings

If, however, you really do not wish to commit *now*, then let me warn of the following:

Do not look too deeply into the eyes of the pleasure-seekers about you, for if you do, you will see a certain sadness in sensuality, and you will hear artificiality in the laughter of licentiousness.

Do not look too deeply, either, into the motives of those who deny God, for you may notice their doubts of doubt.

Do not risk thinking the unthinkable, lest you find yourself drawn with a deep and powerful pull toward the reality that God does exist, that he loves *you*, and that finally there is no escaping him or his love!

Do not think too much about what you are teaching your family, for what in you is merely casualness about Christianity may, in your children, become hostility; for what you have not defended, your children may reject angrily.

Do not reflect on the practicality of gospel standards such as abstaining from alcohol; for if you do, a surf of statistics will wash over you, confirming that abstinence is ultimately the only

cure for alcoholism that is both preventive and redemptive. You will also see that the living of one protective principle of the gospel is better than a thousand compensatory governmental programs—which programs are, so often, like “straightening deck chairs on the Titanic.”

Do not think too much, either, about other doctrines, such as the importance of love at home; because if you think about them very long—in a world full of orphans with parents—you will be grasped by a reality that will make your teeth chatter.

Do not think, either, about the doctrine that you are a child of God, for if you do, it will be the beginning of belonging.

Do not dare to read the Book of Mormon seriously, or you may suddenly realize that it is inlaid with incredibly important insights from a millennium of sacred history.

Do not overpack the luggage you plan to take with you when you leave this world, for we simply cannot get most mortal things by celestial customs; only the eternal things are portable.

Do not pray, for you will get answers from a listening and loving Father.

Do not think too much, either, about the possibility that there are living prophets in the world today. Think instead about how those who are so sustained seem quite ordinary in many ways. Forget that other prophets were fishermen and tentmakers—ordinary enough to scarcely be noticed—*except* for what they said and what they did! For the winds of tribulation, which blow out some men’s candles of commitment, only fan the fires of faith of these special men.

Do not let yourself reflect too much on the social, political, and economic indicators that suggest the gathering storm, lest you realize that there is an inseparable connection between the keeping of the commandments and the well-being of society.

Do not read what the holiest in-

habitant ever to live on this planet said about the necessity of certain ordinances, or you will see that he allowed for no exceptions, including himself.

Do not search the scriptures to see if good people still need the Church, for the best being who ever lived organized the Church—because random, individual goodness is not enough in the fight against evil.

Do not, if you have been offended, recall that while you may have been bumped by an ecclesiastical elbow, the chip was on your shoulder long before the elbow appeared.

Do not be fully honest about the hypocrisy of those in the Church who may pretend to be better than they are, or you will soon realize that there is also another form of hypocrisy—appearing to be *less* committed than one really is!

Yes, brothers and sisters, it is best to avoid all such things as these *if* you wish to continue to delay deciding about Christ and his church.

## Day of determination

However, Joshua didn’t say choose you next year whom you will serve; he spoke of “this day,” while there is still daylight and before the darkness becomes more and more normal. (See Josh. 24:15.)

When Jesus called his first disciples, the scriptures record that they left their ships and nets “straightway.” They didn’t ask to join Jesus *after* the fishing season; they didn’t even delay their response in order to make just one more catch. They left “straightway”! (See Matt. 4:20.)

Act, my brothers and sisters, for once the soul is tilted toward belief, and once there is even a desire to believe, then marvelous things begin to happen! Once one leaves the porch and comes inside the Church, then one not only hears the music more clearly—he becomes a part of it.

Act now, so that a thousand years from now, when you look back at this

moment, you can say this was a moment that mattered—this was a day of determination.

Never mind, therefore, that you have made an investment of self and time in inactivity. Never mind that there is an accumulation of pride that will make it difficult to acknowledge that you have been wrong, for it will never be easier to do than it is now.

All must know that feeling which is associated with a broken heart and a contrite spirit—by which we are cleansed by the hot, holy fire of a special shame, so that we might, thereafter, have a more pure love and a greater capacity to serve both God and man. Hearts “set so much upon the things of this world” are hearts *so set* they must first be broken.

### “Not yet” game

Indeed, one of the most cruel games anyone can play with self is the “not yet” game—hoping to sin just a bit more before ceasing; to enjoy the praise of the world a little longer before turning away from the applause; to win just once more in the wearying sweepstakes of materialism; to be chaste, but not yet; to be good neighbors, but not now. One can play upon the harpstrings of hesitations and reservations just so long, and then one faces that special moment—a moment when what has been sensed, mutely, suddenly finds voice and cries out with tears, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24.)

The truth is that “not yet” usually means “never.” Trying to run away from the responsibility to decide about Christ is childish. Pilate sought to refuse responsibility for deciding about Christ, but Pilate’s hands were never dirtier than just after he had washed them.

### “The holy present”

The past of each of us is now inflexible. We need to concentrate on

what has been called “the holy present,” for now is sacred; we never really live in the future. The holy gift of life always takes the form of now. Besides, God asks us now to give up only those things which, if clung to, will destroy us!

And when we tear ourselves free from the entanglements of the world, are we promised a religion of repose or an Eden of ease? No! We are promised tears and trials and toil! But we are also promised final triumph, the mere contemplation of which tingles one’s soul.

### Footprints to follow

My friends, there are footprints to follow where we must go—made not by a leader who said, safely from the sidelines, “Go thither,” but by a leader who said, “Come, follow me.” And our mortal leader is a prophet who is showing us how to lengthen our stride.

Yes, for those in the Church’s courtyard or on its porch, ask not “for whom the [Church] bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” (John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Meditation XVII.)

And, if you sense that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, why not do so now? For in the coming of that collective confession, it will mean much less to kneel down when it is no longer possible to stand up!

Meanwhile, may we be different in order to make a difference in the world. And may God hasten that time for all our sakes, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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