

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brethren and sisters, I am honored, but humbled on this sacred occasion. A week ago Thursday, President Kimball called me on the phone and said, "Would you have time to visit with me, along with your wife?" I thought to myself, "Imagine! Do I have time to visit with the prophet?"

Actually, I would come from the four corners of the earth to visit with him, and so would you. I was shocked when he told me about my assignment, but of course, readily accepted.

As I left his office, I was in shock. I could hardly believe what had happened to me. Then, just 3 hours and 27 minutes after that, the earthquake came. (There was an earthquake that day, centered in Malad, Idaho, but felt in Salt Lake.) This soon brought me back to reality.

Appreciation for family

Bryant S. Hinckley, one of the great men of the earth, wrote of my father some years ago, "No sounder piece of manhood was put together in this century of time." (From Thomas Carlyle.) I think this applies to President Kimball as well.

I was taught at my father's knee to be humble, diligent, trustworthy, and to honor the servants, the General Authorities of our Church. He loved the Constitution of the United States and its free enterprise system. I trust that I will bring nothing but honor to his name.

My life has been encircled by two wonderful women: my mother, who gave me life itself and who reared me in the paths of truth and righteousness. Our home was one of spirituality, love, and refinement. She never permitted a shoddy performance; and in so doing, she taught us not to take too long to accomplish it. My beloved Elisa, my companion and wife, whom I love and revere, is one of the most noble of our

Heavenly Father's handmaidens. She has sustained me with an unflinching devotion; her character is similar to Rebecca of old and to her grandmothers, who were pioneers. She is a positive, stoical person, full of faith, and possesses a great love of the gospel. She has been an inspiration to me. I pay tribute to her mother and father for having reared her.

I appreciate and love each of our eight children. Their righteous lives have brought nothing but joy and happiness to us. I honor my brothers and sisters for their service in the Church and their communities.

Influence of associates

I think of my coaches who taught me to play—really the game of life—and the many fine teachers in school, and especially in the Church. Sister Marion G. Romney was my Primary teacher, and President Romney was the bishop who recommended me for my mission.

Today I reflect on the many fine brethren, my associates in the Church, with whom I have worked, and I honor them for the uplifting influence they have had upon me.

The Sunday School organization of the Church is near and dear to my heart. Under the able leadership of President Russell M. Nelson, his fine counselors, and a talented and inspired board, this organization will do much to carry out and to help and assist the missionary effort in the Church.

I loved my mission in Switzerland and Germany. As I left on the train from Basel, Switzerland, tears flowed down my cheeks because I knew then that my full-time service in the Church had ended. I love the German and the Swiss people for their many fine traits of character. I love their language that is so exacting and yet so expressive.

Pledge of service

My life really is anchored to the testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ. I honor the priesthood that I bear, and I have seen its great power in healing the sick. I know that the Lord's Spirit does whisper to his servants, and it is up to us to listen to these whisperings. I testify to you today that Joseph Smith is a prophet and that through him this great Church was restored and organized through revelation.

President Kimball, in the love that I bear for you and all these Brethren who sit on the stand and constitute the

General Authorities of the Church, I give you my life and my service. I'll go where you want me to go, and I'll do my best to build up the kingdom of God here upon the earth, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Marion G. Romney

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, newly sustained Assistant to the Twelve, has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Of the Council of the Twelve

I am conscious, my brethren and sisters, that concluding this meeting will be President Kimball. Prior to the meeting I told him that I had three talks of varying lengths prepared. During the singing I received a note from him asking that I use the longest version.

I was reminded of an experience we had in Colorado when we were reorganizing a stake. The meeting was nearly over, there were about ten minutes left, and neither of us had spoken. The stake president announced me. President Kimball leaned over and said, "Please, you take all of the time."

I bore a one-minute testimony and returned to my seat. As the stake president was announcing President Kimball, I noticed him writing a note. As he stood, he handed it to me. On it were five words, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." And so, obediently, I proceed.

As we come now to the close of another great conference, my brethren and sisters, our hearts have been touched by the sermons, the virtue within us has been stirred, and constantly my thoughts have gone out to those who do not have in their lives a substantial spiritual influence.

Prospective elders

Among them is a large body of men in the Church who have missed some of the spiritual advancements that are so important in their lives and who are designated as prospective elders.

The office of an elder is a calling of dignity and honor, spiritual authority and of power. The designation "prospective" implies hope and optimism and possibility. Now I speak to them today, knowing there are perhaps many others to whom this message will apply.

Am I right to say that occasionally, deep within, you yearn to be a part of the Church? You don't quite know how to get started, and perhaps in moments of deep thought you say, "If I just hadn't got off the track."

"If I just had a chance when I was younger."

"I've missed too much."

"It's too late for me."

"There is just too much water under the bridge."

You want to draw close, but you pass over with the feeling and the thought "Well, it's just too hard, and I just don't have anything to begin with."