

President Kimball

The Tabernacle Choir will now favor us by singing, "The Morning Breaks." After the singing, Elder John H. Groberg of the First Quorum of the Seventy will address us.

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President Kimball

Elder John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and Supervisor of the Hawaii-Pacific Islands Area, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Sterling W. Sill of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder John H. Groberg

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

My dear brothers and sisters—and significantly that includes everyone—I ask for your faith and prayers, that that which is said and heard may be both said and heard under the influence of the Spirit of God, for I have long since learned that only as the Spirit conveys meaning does permanent good take place.

South Pacific incident

I would like to relate an experience and make an application for our day; for even though this event happened nearly twenty years ago to a small group in the South Pacific, the lesson learned there has become increasingly meaningful with the passage of time and is extremely important today.

I will speak in the first person for I would like to have you relive with me as much as possible this experience.

As a young missionary I was assigned as a district president to

administer the affairs of the Church and preach the gospel in a group of fifteen small, scattered islands. We traveled almost exclusively by sailboat and learned to rely not only on the winds and the currents of the usually friendly seas, but especially on the love of our Father in heaven, as we sailed week after week and month after month from island to island to island. It was a glorious time, full of the normal challenges of seasickness, becalmings, strange languages, foods, and customs. But mostly it was a time of spiritual closeness to our Father in heaven, whose love and goodness so far overshadowed any temporary pain or problems as to make the latter shrink into obscurity.

On one occasion we received word that a missionary was very ill on a somewhat distant island. The weather was threatening but, feeling responsible, and after prayer, we left to investigate the situation. Extra heavy seas slowed our progress, and it was late afternoon before we arrived. The missionary was indeed very ill. Fervent prayer was

Saturday, October 2

Second Day

followed by administration, during which the impression came very strongly to get him back to the hospital on the main island, and to do it now!

The weather had deteriorated to the point of a small gale. The seas were heavy, the clouds were thick, the wind was fierce, the hour was late, and the sun was sinking rapidly, betokening a long black night ahead. But the impression was strong—"Get back now"—and one learns to obey the all-important promptings of the Spirit.

There was much concern expressed and much talk about the darkness, the storm, and the formidable reef with its extremely narrow opening to the harbor we were attempting to gain. Some found reason to stay behind; but soon eight persons, including an ill missionary, a very experienced captain, and a somewhat concerned district president, boarded the boat and the spiritually prompted voyage to home base began.

No sooner had we made our commitment to the open seas than the intensity of the storm seemed to increase sevenfold. The small gale now became a major storm. As the sun sank below the horizon, bringing with it darkness and gloom, so also did my spirit seem to sink into the darkness of doubt and apprehension. The thick clouds and driving rain increased the blackness of our already dark universe—no stars, no moon, no rest—only turmoil of sea and body and mind and spirit. And as we toiled on through that fearsome night, I found my spirit communing with the spirit of the father of an afflicted child in the New Testament, as he exclaimed, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24.) And He did, and He does, and He will. That I know.

As we rolled and tossed closer and closer to the reef, all eyes searched for the light that marked the opening—the only entry to our home. Where was it? The blackness of the night seemed to increase; the fierceness of the raging

elements seemed to know no bounds. The rain slashed at our faces and tore at our eyes—eyes vainly searching for that life-giving light.

Then I heard the chilling sound of the waves crashing and chewing against the reef! It was close—too close. Where was that light? Unless we hit the opening exactly, we would be smashed against the reef and ripped and torn by that thousand-toothed monster. It seemed that all the elements were savagely bent on our total destruction. Our eyes strained against the blackness, but we could not see the light.

"There is the light"

Some began to whimper, others to moan and cry, and one or two even to scream in hysteria. At the height of this panic, when many were pleading to turn to the left or to the right, when the tumultuous elements all but forced us to abandon life and hope, I looked at the captain—and there I saw the face of calmness, the ageless face of wisdom and experience, as his eyes penetrated the darkness ahead. Quietly his weather-roughened lips parted, and without moving his fixed gaze and just perceptibly shifting the wheel, he breathed those life-giving words, "*Ko e Maama e*" ("There is the light!").

I could not see the light, but the captain could see it. And I knew he could see it. Those eyes long experienced in ocean travel were not fooled by the madness of the storm nor were they influenced by the pleadings of those of lesser experience to turn to the left or to the right. And so with one last great swell we were hurtled through the opening and into calmer waters.

The roaring of the reef was now behind us. Its infamous plan of destruction had been foiled. We were in the protected harbor. We were home. Then and only then did we see through the darkness that one small light—exactly

where the captain had said it was. Had we waited until we ourselves could see the light we would have been dashed to pieces, shredded on the reef of unbelief. But trusting in those experienced eyes, we lived.

A great lesson

And so the great lesson: There are those who, through years of experience and training, and by virtue of special divine callings, can see farther and better and more clearly—and can and will save us in those situations where serious injury or death—both spiritual and physical—would be upon us before we ourselves could see.

I sense in the world today an almost exact duplication of that voyage of nearly twenty years ago. We are in the midst of a major storm over moral values that will get worse before we arrive home.

Overpopulation

As just one example: We hear much of the so-called problem of overpopulation, of the possible future horrors it could bring. We hear claim and counterclaim, fancied fact and interpolated figures; we hear the call for so-called “planned families,” for “delayed families,” for “free” abortions, for personal aggrandizement in many ways. Now it is true that we have a sick world on our hands that needs help—but in delivering that patient to help we must not listen to the calculated plan of this or that professor, or to the pleading of some group, or to the hysterical screaming of some faction, or to any combination of manmade philosophies, but only to the calm voice of the prophet as he says, “Have your families in a normal way; accept all the spirits the Lord sees

fit to send you; do not delay your families; always be considerate of one another; have nothing to do with the sin of abortion.” Therein is safety. He will guide us through this or any storm.

Wisdom of Polynesian captain

As I think back, I thank the Lord for that wonderful Polynesian captain who saved my life and the life of the sick missionary I was charged with. I am eternally grateful for his experience (much of which, I am sure, was not pleasant). I am grateful for his wisdom, for his eyes, for his not yielding to the fury of the moment, but steadfastly holding the true course to safety.

I felt at the time that he was more than himself—he was more than the sum total of all of his experience. In some marvelous way at that moment of desperate need, he drew upon a power and a strength from generations of faithful, seagoing people that only those who know Polynesians well can begin to understand. My admiration and love for him and all other faithful descendants of father Lehi knows no bounds.

The strength of the Prophet

In like manner, and with even deeper meaning, I thank the Lord for our great prophet-leader of today. In our moment of great need the Lord has provided one tested and molded and trained and instructed and clothed with divine authority, who in addition to the total of all his experience, which is great, draws upon the strength and power of not only generations of faithful leaders but also of angels and of gods.

Testimony

I bear testimony that I know that God lives. I know that our Father in

heaven loves us. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. I know that He is our personal Savior, that He is our Friend—and I know He is our Helper: He will help us each personally and individually as we merit that help.

I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I testify that in our day Spencer W. Kimball is the man whose eyes see the light that can and will save us and the world. When all about us are sinking in darkness and fear and despair, when destruction seems close and the raging fury of men and demons ensnares us in seemingly insoluble problems, listen as he calmly says, "There is

the light. This is the way." I testify that he will so guide us safely home if we will but listen and obey. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder John H. Groberg of the First Quorum of the Seventy has just addressed us.

Elder Sterling W. Sill of the First Quorum of the Seventy will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Sterling W. Sill

Of the First Quorum of the Seventy

Two of the most important events in life are birth and death. And what a thrilling thing it is to be well born, to have goodly parents and live in a godly home! But it may be even more important to die well. Sometime ago in this general conference, I talked about the importance of birth and the life that follows it. This morning I would like to say something about the importance of death and the life that follows it.

To die well

Sometimes we miss one of our best opportunities—to learn to die well—because we think of death as unpleasant. And because we don't like to think about unpleasant things, we sometimes close our minds and turn away our faces. But death doesn't cease to exist just because it is ignored. The ancient Egyptians had a much more logical way of handling this situation when on their great festive occasions they kept constantly on display before the revelers the skeleton of a dead man. That is,

they held up this great image of death before themselves that each one might be continually and constantly reminded that some day he would die.

All shall die

Now I don't want to frighten anyone unduly in this audience this morning, but I would like to point out as gently and as kindly as I can that someday this tremendously important experience of our mortal estate will come to its end. Someone has said that judging by the past there will be very few of us who get out of this world alive. From the very beginning of life, each one of us lives under an irrevocable, unchangeable death sentence, with a guarantee that it will be carried out. The Lord has given us this maximum notice to enable us to adequately prepare for it. And one man indicated this certainty by an inscription on his tombstone saying, "I knew it would happen!"

The other night I reread the old