

And so they did! Sister Spafford took the gentle correction from that wise prophet, and the day came that she was president of that organization.

Now, I pass that same message to each sister in the Church. If you are absenting yourself from Relief Society because "you don't get anything out of it," tell me, dear sister, what is it that you are putting into it?

An inspired organization

I endorse the Relief Society without hesitation, for I know it to have been organized by inspiration from Almighty God. It has been blessed since its organization. I know that it is a rising, and not a setting, sun. I know that the light and the power that emanates from it will increase, not decrease.

I know that Relief Society today is led by wise and inspired and strong women. Through them the frustrations of the poorly trained, the lonely, the single will give way to security and happiness.

The bewilderment of the uninspired and the misled will be replaced with assurance and direction.

After months of prayerful concern over this matter, having inquired myself of Him whose organization it is, without

reservation, without hesitancy, I endorse and applaud the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and pray God to bless these, our sisters, to strengthen them, for this is His church and we are led by a prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following Elder Packer's remarks, the Choir sang without announcement, "How Long, O Lord, Most Holy."

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "How Long, O Lord, Most Holy."

The Choir and Congregation will now join in singing, "Hope of Israel," following which Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Quorum of the Seventy will speak to us.

The Tabernacle Choir and congregation sang the hymn, "Hope of Israel."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

Recently a friend of mine was returning to his home in Salt Lake City on a plane from Dallas, Texas. His mind was focused upon an important event that was soon to occur in his family. His only son would be leaving home in just a few days to serve as a missionary in a far-distant land. His great love for his son caused him to reflect, "If my son is going so far away to teach about our Church, this had better be the best church!" Then he took out a notepad and pen and began to list

the characteristics or qualities one would look for in the best church.

Purpose of Church programs

"There should be a program to build and strengthen youth," he wrote, "an athletic program, a wholesome activity program, a program for teaching and training children, a program for developing the skills and talents of women, a program to provide for the needy, for the ill, for the lonely, for the

victims of catastrophes and disasters, a program to provide opportunities for work and service, a program to assist families and individuals in spiritual development and progress."

His list became long and impressive, and he satisfied himself that his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, offered a program to meet the need of every individual. Truly, he determined, it is the best church his son could represent!

My friend felt so good about his list of attractive qualities of the best church that he decided to show it to the gentleman seated next to him on the plane. The man, an executive from a financial firm, responded with interest and respect. Together they reviewed the list, and as they concluded their conversation the businessman asked my friend, "Would you like to know what I would look for in a church? There is just one criterion: the members of that church would best exemplify the teaching of the Savior—'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

My friend said he learned an important lesson from that experience. He had taught this fine man about the programs of the Church without acknowledging that the purpose of these programs is to help members learn how to love God and their fellowmen. He has shared that experience with me and permitted me to share it with you today that we might all be reminded of this.

Love our fellowmen

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like [unto it], namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31.)

It is that love for the Lord and for our neighbors—all men everywhere—that is the motivating force which prompts my friend's son, and twenty-

seven thousand like him, to leave home, friends, family, security, and comfort to go among unknown neighbors throughout the world with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is because we love the Lord and our neighbor that we are willing to go to any length, sacrifice at any price, to share the message that has brought joy and happiness into our own lives. For Latter-day Saints declare that God lives. He loves all men. He will lead all who will repent and follow him to everlasting joy and happiness.

We believe the people of the world are yearning for a message such as this to believe in. A national survey conducted recently by a leading publishing company revealed that the people of the world are in desperate need of a religion that will "regenerate their underlying faith in Christian living, . . . that will help them find the strength within themselves which their forefathers had, . . . a religion that will bring back strong family relationships, . . . and a religion that reflects the pioneering strengths which built this great country." (Unpublished report, Littlepage Limited Advertising, 15 Aug. 1978.) This survey discovered that the basic concepts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints parallel the religious needs that people are seeking. The New York-based publishing company stated: "In a time of confusion, they (Mormons) give very clear and definite answers. . . . Their growth prospects for the immediate future seem very good . . . in that great world that is awaiting conversion."

The love of God

My eleven-year-old daughter, Kristen, expressed a concern to me a few days ago that I believe is felt by many who are seeking to find a better, more righteous way of life. She said, "Dad, I've been challenged to live just one day as Jesus would live, but I've tried for a week now and I just can't do it. Every day I think this will be that day. Then I

make a mistake, and I have to wait for another day before I can try again."

I am often asked to counsel with people who experience somewhat that same dilemma. They want to correct and change their lives. They feel, however, that they have made so many mistakes that there is no way to cast off the burdens they now bear because of those sins. They feel weighted down by sorrow and despair, with no hope of escape.

Kristen and all of us should remember that while we are commanded to love God, he has a perfect love for us. All the world needs to be taught of the great redeeming power of the Savior's love. He loves us so much he has promised to forgive us of those things we do that are wrong and remember them no more if we will only repent and come unto him (see D&C 58:42). He loves us so much that he was willing to pay the price for those sins. He suffered for us. He died for us. He said, Come follow me; cast your burdens on the Lord. His desire is to lift us, to help us, to guide us, to save us.

Henry Drummond, in his classic writing on the subject of Christ's love, tells of a man who went to see a dying boy. He put his hand on the boy's head to comfort him and said, "'My boy, God loves you.'" The boy soon arose "from his bed, and called out to the people in the house, 'God loves me! God loves me!' One word! It changed that boy. The sense that God loved him overpowered him, melted him down, and began the creating of a new heart in him. And that is how the love of God melts down the unlovely heart in man, and begets in him the new creature, who is patient and humble and gentle and unselfish. And there is no other way to get it. There is no mystery about it. We love others, we love everybody, we love our enemies, *because He first loved us.*" (*The Greatest Thing in the World*, Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d., pp. 47-48.)

It is this knowledge of his great love for us that influences our actions

toward him and others. He said, "Love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Sharing the gift of love

A few weeks ago someone gave me a gift. As I unwrapped the handsome package and discovered its contents, I was overcome with emotion. It was a precious item. I had seen it before in the office of the one who was now giving it to me. I had openly admired it for its unique capabilities and usefulness. It was finely crafted and very expensive. I was deeply touched as I received this generous gift—not because of its monetary value, but because I recognized the great love that the giving of this gift demonstrated to me. Here was an object I knew my benefactor could not afford to purchase for himself or for me. I knew that someone who loved him had bestowed that gift upon him. He was built up and made happy because of that gesture of love toward him. Now in his desire to bring me happiness, to express his love to me, he was sharing one of the finest material possessions he had.

How grateful I am for this example of Christlike love and for the many other gifts of love which I experience daily in my home and in my associations throughout this great church. These experiences lift me up and give me the desire to extend my love to others.

Now, may we as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints remember and live these first great commandments. May we love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and strength, and may we love our neighbors as ourselves. May we show that love by living all the commandments of God and by sharing with our neighbors our greatest gift of love, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which I testify is the truth and the best on the face of the earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.