

## Elder Jacob de Jager

My dear brothers and sisters: Thirty-one years ago today, the fourth of April, 1950, I left Holland on a three-year company assignment to Southeast Asia.

### Electric lighting in Southeast Asia

This assignment enabled me to make extended trips to various remote islands in that part of the world to assist in the planning and development of rural electrification.

It also gave me a chance to see firsthand after World War II how the people in that part of the world were going through a rapid development.

In their homes simple oil lamps with coconut oil and a wick were replaced by electric lighting. With the coming of electricity to their islands, for many, night turned into day with new possibilities for individual study and recreation after sunset. To make this possible, power stations had to be built. High-voltage power lines and electrical substations had to be installed in order to carry electricity into every home.

I remember the happy looks on the faces and the sparkle in the eyes of the youngsters, but also the tears of gratitude in the eyes of the elderly people, when the mayor of their native village switched on the electric lighting system for the first time. Well-planned festivities followed with music, singing, and dancing from sunset till sunrise the next morning.

There truly was great joy among the people!

### Gospel light in Southeast Asia

Twenty-six years later, again on the fourth of April, the Lord called me out of the world into his permanent service; and shortly thereafter, this time as a member of the

First Quorum of the Seventy of the Church, I once more departed for Southeast Asia, but now to spread another light—the light of the gospel. And so, for numerous people, another remarkable change came into their lives.

The light to be spread was carried by a group of dedicated young men and women who had taken upon themselves to bring the light of the gospel into every home that they were allowed to enter. Their power stations were the mission headquarters in Southeast Asia, and their power lines were the lines of priesthood authority, without which the system could never function.

These missionaries also witnessed joy and gratitude when the first glimpses of eternal light were brought into the lives of their converts and when the new members learned to sing in their own language during family home evening, "There is beauty all around, when there's love at home." ("There Is Beauty All Around," *Hymns*, no. 169.)

Every time a new mission is opened up, branches of the Church are established, or stakes of Zion are organized, bright lights start to shine forth, bringing to mind the words of the hymn:

*The morning breaks; the shadows  
flee;*

*Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!*

*The dawning of a brighter day*

*Majestic rises on the world.*

("The Morning Breaks; the Shadows Flee," *Hymns*, no. 269.)

### Sacred obligation

Brothers and sisters, is this spreading of the light to every nation not a miracle?

Is this charge to reach out to every household in order to bring

light, love, and happiness to our fellowmen not a sacred obligation? Especially when we know that the Savior said, "Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations." (D&C 115:5.)

Who are "you all" now, on this very day, the fourth of April, 1981?

As far as I can determine from the missionary recommendations that are daily received in the Missionary Department, the majority are still the nineteen-year-old elders and the twenty-one-year-old sisters who, by a long-established tradition, come forward to serve as full-time missionaries.

There are also faithful older sisters, who make such outstanding missionaries wherever they are called to serve.

And finally, there are a limited number of married couples of retirement age. I say a limited number because there are many, many more healthy couples between the ages of sixty and seventy who could happily serve in the mission field.

### **Increasing need for missionary couples**

As the work continues to expand into the many nations of the earth, there will be an increasing need for couples to serve as full-time missionaries. In addition to their basic assignment of teaching the gospel, they may be assigned to perform additional functions.

For instance, in missions where qualified leadership is not yet available, missionary couples may serve as leadership trainers.

We also have among the senior members of the Church retired office workers, bookkeepers, and even certified accountants. Couples with these qualifications may serve in the mission offices as mission secretaries, recorders, or financial secretaries. Moreover, there are among the

mature couples those who have acquired a great expertise in genealogy and they can use their knowledge and experience, when specifically assigned to do so, to teach genealogical skills to members in wards and branches.

Furthermore, there are also possibilities for giving faithful service to build the kingdom by teaching the gospel in a visitors' center or in opening up the work in international areas outside the boundaries of existing missions.

### **Come forward and ask for mission call**

However, there is still the mistaken idea among many couples that their missionary work would be proselyting only. I hope by what I have just said that they now have a better insight and will reconsider the possibility of service, especially when they hear that, contrary to the established policy for other callings in the kingdom, they can come forward and express their desire to go on a six-, twelve-, or eighteen-month mission.

But many say, "Elder de Jager, it is too hard to leave our grandchildren." Apparently, leaving their own children for a while seems no problem, but to leave little Billy and darling little Susie, oh, seems really difficult to them.

I have heard of truly great experiences of couples in the mission field.

Brother and Sister Ralph Lambert served their eighteen months' mission in the Oklahoma Tulsa Mission. While serving in a small branch they had a sister and her teenage son coming to church every Sunday. Although the father in this family was a member of record, he never came along.

Before his retirement in Oklahoma, he had lived in Utah, and as a young deacon he was so shy that he

did not attend church because he was afraid to be asked to pray or to carry out some other assignment.

From time to time he met young missionaries who talked to him about the Church, but they were never able to bring him back into activity. However, Brother and Sister Lambert, being of the same age and having great maturity, were able to develop a warm relationship with him.

He started coming to church with his wife and son, and he was never pressured to do anything he did not feel like doing. After a while, he started to ask how much money was expected as a contribution to the branch budget. When this was explained to him in a loving way, he made his first contribution.

About a month later, when fast Sunday was approaching, he asked what the present procedure was for paying tithing. It was explained to him that it hadn't changed in the fifty years since he had lived in Utah! He then started paying this voluntary contribution to the kingdom.

Shortly thereafter, he said that he would accept any call that would be extended to him in that small branch. He was ordained a priest, and this enabled him to ordain his youngest son a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

He later became a counselor in the branch presidency, and last year he was ordained an elder and his whole family was sealed together in the Salt Lake Temple.

### **Blessing of missionary work**

I testify that Brother and Sister Lambert, with thousands of faithful couples who have served in the past and those who are serving now, will be greatly blessed by our Heavenly Father and that they have gained a sound understanding of the true meaning of the scripture:

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repen-

tance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!" (D&C 18:15.)

Finally, I would like to share with you one more interesting experience, which Brother and Sister Edwin Q. Cannon, Jr., had on their mission in West Africa.

The story concerns an outstanding black Latter-day Saint family by the name of Sampson-Davis, who reside in Accra, Ghana.

In 1963 Brother Sampson-Davis graduated with a degree in electronics from Oxford University in England and was hired by the Philips Electronics Company in Eindhoven, Holland. Sister Sampson-Davis came over from Africa to join her husband in that Dutch town, and one day she met the Mormon missionaries, received a Book of Mormon, and had the first missionary discussion in the boarding house where she was living.

I feel somewhat embarrassed, however, to tell you that the Dutch landlady with whom Sister Sampson-Davis boarded told her in no uncertain terms to have no further contact with those Mormons.

The Sampson-Davis family eventually went back to Ghana, and fifteen years later, in 1978, Sister Sampson-Davis came in contact with the Church again and faithfully started to attend the Sunday meetings. The family was taught the missionary discussions, gained a strong testimony; and Brother Ted Cannon baptized the mother, two sons, and a daughter in a swimming pool in Accra.

The oldest boy, Crosby Sampson-Davis, started to prepare himself for a mission, which resulted in his mission call earlier this year. Two weeks ago Elder Sampson-Davis left the Missionary Training Center to serve in the England Manchester Mission. Interestingly enough, the father joined the Church

one month before his son left for his mission. So the whole family is now united in the faith!

Brother and Sister Cannon really have seen the fruits of their labors, and they have choice memories of the time they spent with our Heavenly Father's children in Africa.

I share the experiences of these two couples with you to let you feel the importance of missionary service for senior couples and the blessings that come to all who are engaged in the work of the Master.

I testify, as a convert to the Church, that no greater joy can come to men than being involved in carrying the gospel to all nations, kin-

dreds, tongues, and people.

I humbly pray that the missionary spirit will be with us all in the time ahead and that we may be an instrument in the hand of the Lord to build his kingdom here on earth prior to his glorious return, and do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Romney

Elder Jacob de Jager, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

## Elder Boyd K. Packer

The prophet Jacob foretold the destruction of a people because they were blind to ordinary things, "which blindness," he said, "came by looking beyond the mark." (Jacob 4:14.)

We often seek for things we cannot seem to find when they are within easy reach—ordinary, obvious things.

I wish to talk about an ordinary word. I have tried for months—really tried—to find some way to hold this word up in such a way that you would be very impressed with what it means.

### Marriage

The word is *marriage*.

I have wished that I could set before you a finely carved chest, placing it where the light is just right. I would carefully unlatch it and reverently uncover the word—*marriage*.

Perhaps then you would see that it is priceless!

I cannot show it to you that way, so I will do the best I can using other ordinary words.

It is my purpose to endorse and to favor, to encourage and defend marriage.

Many regard it nowadays as being, at best, semiprecious, and by some it is thought to be worth nothing at all.

I have seen and heard, as you have seen and heard, the signals all about us, carefully orchestrated to convince us that marriage is out of date and in the way.

### Counterfeit of marriage

There is a practice, now quite prevalent, for unmarried couples to live together, a counterfeit of marriage. They suppose that they shall have all that marriage can offer without the obligations connected with it. They are wrong!

However much they hope to find in a relationship of that kind, they will lose more. Living together without marriage destroys something inside all who participate. Virtue, self-esteem, and refinement of character wither away.