

find in our eternal pathway. Of course, there are many more. We could mention, for example, the lack of self-control that leads many people to break the Word of Wisdom; the various excuses for not complying with the program of personal and family preparedness; the lack of encouragement and the apathy with regard to our genealogical responsibilities; the failure to return often to the temples of the Lord to do the necessary work for our kindred dead; in some cases the lack of interest, in other cases the fear, that precludes many from participating in missionary work. These are only examples of a list that goes on and on.

It is highly probable that we will never lose our status as members of the Church simply for not adhering to one or more of the aforementioned commandments. Nevertheless, whether individually or collectively, these little "butterflies" affect our spiritual development and, fundamentally, the real capability of each individual.

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do

good they shall in nowise lose their reward." (D&C 58:28.)

The Lord hasn't sent us to the world to fail. We have been invested with all of the talents and abilities necessary for the journey to arrive, to be once again in His presence. Our greatest challenge is to use faithfully and decidedly all that He has given us to reach our exaltation. If such is our accomplishment—if we "live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God" (D&C 84:44)—at the end of our journey we will once again be part of a glorious experience such as we had at the start, when "all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:7.)

I know that the Lord has made this possible and that he blesses us and will continue to bless us as we progress to our glorious destination. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Romney

We shall now hear from Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Dean L. Larsen

"Kingdom of God is within you"

On one occasion a group of Pharisees confronted the Savior and demanded to know when the kingdom of God would come upon the earth. (See Luke 17:20.) Their tradition had taught them that God's kingdom would be impressive in its demonstration of power and in its earthly dominion. Their question, therefore, was a challenge to the Lord's assertion that when the kingdom of God was established on the earth, it would not be as other earthly kingdoms. (See John 18:36.)

The Master's response on this occasion teaches a significant lesson regarding the real source of power and

influence within his kingdom. He answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

"Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21.)

The Savior attempted to impress his questioners with the fact that the real power in the kingdom of God is not represented in outwardly observable things. Its strength is in the quality of the lives of its members. It is in the depth of their purity, their charity, their faith, their integrity, and their devotion to truth. This great lesson escaped the perception of the Pharisees. It has significance for us today.

Today our chapels and congregations dot almost every land in the free world. Our temples will soon be within easy traveling distance of almost every member. The percentage of members who attend meetings and activities is at an all-time high. These are encouraging signs. We hope that they are indicators of inward strength. We rejoice in the growth that has marked the development of the Church in this century, and particularly in the last decade or two. We take encouragement from our missionary successes, as rightly we should, but in all of this outward manifestation of increasing strength, we cannot forget the Savior's injunction to those who looked for the kingdom of God to manifest itself in ways that would be impressive by earthly standards. "Behold," he said, "the kingdom of God is within you."

Assessing spiritual vital signs

Several months ago I attended a conference in a stake that had compiled an impressive statistical record. By all observable standards, this was a stake composed of devoted, faithful Latter-day Saints. As I met with the stake president in our first interview, I was not surprised that he was anxious to review with me the excellent statistical record that his people were making. The reports had been arranged on his desk to facilitate this review. Before looking at them, I asked the president, "Tell me, how do you feel about your people? Generally speaking, in their spiritual qualities, are they standing on higher ground this year than they were a year ago?" I wanted to assess the president's personal discernment regarding the spiritual strength of his members. He immediately seized this opportunity to direct my attention to the reports. Sensing that he had misunderstood the intent of my question, I explained, "I will be pleased to review the reports with you, but before we do, would you

tell me how you *feel* about your people?"

My insistence on his making this kind of assessment apart from the information in the reports was both frustrating and perplexing to the president. I was sensitive to his frustration, and without further discussion we went through the statistical information. It indicated considerable progress in many areas that are amenable to a quantitative evaluation. I believe the reports were significant indicators of the spiritual quality of the people. However, I had failed to draw from the president the kind of discerning evaluation I had solicited. At the same time, I sensed that he was a little perplexed and somewhat pensive at the conclusion of our interview. His pensiveness continued throughout the meetings of the afternoon and evening and caused me some concern.

On the following day, as the president delivered his address in the general session of the conference, he surprised me by telling the members about his experience with me the previous day. He acknowledged his frustration over my apparent reluctance to go into an immediate review of his correlated reports, and this frustration had remained with him into the night. As he was pondering these things, there came into his mind an experience he had had during the week prior to the conference.

He had visited a member of the stake who was in a hospital recuperating from surgery. During this visit a nurse had entered the room, making her regular calls on the patients. She had gone to some charts that were hanging at the foot of the patient's bed, carefully perused the notations, and then added some of her own. She had then stepped to the side of the patient, felt her pulse, placed a hand on her forehead, asked some questions, and received some responses. The president said, "It occurred to me that the nurse was attempting to assess some of the patient's vital signs—

some that were not reflected in the notations on the charts."

The president said that it was then in his reflections that the purpose of my questioning the day before had registered with him. "I realized," he said, "that Elder Larsen was asking me to assess your spiritual vital signs in ways that the reports may not have revealed."

He then continued, "Today I am going to talk with you about those spiritual vital signs—those that go beyond the information on the charts." He proceeded to give one of the finest talks I have heard a stake president give. Interestingly, he made no reference in his remarks to the statistical reports.

What of the kingdom within?

We have good reason to feel encouraged and optimistic today as we observe the rapid growth of the Church throughout the world. We are pleased with the level of participation of the members, even though we acknowledge it can be improved. The willingness of the people to serve and to sacrifice for the sake of the Lord's work is commendable.

But what of the kingdom that is within our own souls? There are evidences that we are not completely free from weaknesses within. Family problems multiply. Divorce becomes more common. Signs of preoccupation with worldly, material concerns are apparent on every side. Questionable compliance with principles of trust and integrity in business dealings is too frequent. Courtesy and kindness are too often replaced by abruptness and rudeness in human relations. Growing evidences of promiscuity and infidelity to marriage covenants beset us.

While acknowledging that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, . . . speaking unto the church collectively and not individually," the

Lord expressed a reservation about the individual members and explained, "For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance." (D&C 1:30-31.)

At another time he warned those of his church:

"Behold," he said, "vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth. . . .

"And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

"First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord." (D&C 112:24-26.)

Personal blight diminishes power and influence

In this time of impressive Church growth, it is well for us to look within our own souls to assess our individual spiritual vital signs. Too frequently Latter-day Saints of all ages yield to the temptation to explore and sample forbidden things of the world. Often this is not done with the intent to embrace these things permanently, but with the knowing decision to indulge in them momentarily, as though they hold a value of some kind too important or too exciting to pass by. While some recover from these excursions, an increasingly large number of tragedies occur that bring a blight and a despair into many lives.

The cumulative effect of this is devastating. The reverberations will affect the lives of those who indulge, as well as the lives of those who have loved and trusted them, in unfortunate and unforeseen ways for indefinite periods of time. As a consequence of these things, humanity slips inexorably to a lower level, the real power and influence in the Church and kingdom of God are diminished, and all mankind will inevitably feel the loss. Furthermore, as a collective

church, we jeopardize our capacity to merit and claim the preserving and protecting blessings from the Lord.

Enduring strength in Christian service and obedience

For those who keep the trust placed in them and who do not yield to the pattern of the times, and for those who have made or are making their way back from dark paths, I have the most profound admiration and gratitude. You are our shining hope. You are our real strength. You will make a significant difference in the final outcome of things. You are the last great counterforce against the evil that is engulfing the earth. God bless you for this!

As I view the days that lie ahead, I am hopeful because of the Lord's promise, and I know his kingdom will prevail, but I tremble as I read his declaration to us:

"For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days." (D&C 63:58.)

Elder LeGrand Richards

Brothers and sisters, in the many times that I have spoken from this pulpit in a general conference of the Church, being a missionary, I have usually spoken to the nonmembers of the Church to try to convince them that we have the only true church upon the face of the earth today—not built upon the wisdom of men, but committed directly from heaven by heavenly messengers.

"Many don't know what this Church stands for"

Today, as I have thought of what I would like to say, I thought I would like to speak to the inactive members

The enduring strength of the kingdom is not to be found in the number of its members, the rate of its growth, or the beauty of its buildings. In God's kingdom, power is not equated with body count nor with outward routine compliance with prescribed performances. It is found in those quiet uncharted acts of love, obedience, and Christian service which may never come to the attention of official leadership, but which emulate the ministry of the Lord himself.

It is a time for us to assess our own spiritual vital signs in those essential areas that take us beyond the information on the charts. "For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Romney

Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just addressed us.

Elder LeGrand Richards, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker.

of this Church, those who ought to be active because many of them come from good Latter-day Saint families; and then to those of you who have inactive family members in the Church.

The Lord, speaking through Moses, said, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.) This being so, the Lord should provide a way for us, his spirit children, to know what his program is, in order that we may be able to obtain immortality and eternal life—and he has: that is the mission of this great Church.