
The Choir sang "We Ever Pray for Thee" without announcement.

President Romney

We have just listened to Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the Choir singing "We Ever Pray for Thee."

The Choir will continue by singing "Lord of the Hills," after which the Choir and congregation will join in singing "High on the Mountain Top."

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President Romney

To those of the television and radio audience who have just joined us, we are convened in the historic Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in this fourth session of the 152nd Annual General Conference of the Church.

Elder John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder John H. Groberg

My dear brothers and sisters, I ask for your faith and prayers as we consider a vitally important key to our happiness and success in life. I speak this morning on the importance and power of family prayer.

Pray in your families

Our Father in Heaven wants us to have strong, loving families. One of the great helps he has given us to achieve this is family prayer.

All of us, single or married, are eternally part of some family—some way, somewhere, somehow—and much of our joy in life comes as we correctly recognize and properly develop those family relationships. We come to this earth charged with a mission: to learn to love and serve one another. To best help us accomplish this, God has placed us in families, for he knows that is where we can best learn to overcome selfishness and pride and to sacrifice for others and to make happiness and helpfulness and humility and love the very essence of our character.

We learn that friends and neighbors come and go but family is forever, and as we learn this, we find that we are eternally our brother's keeper and we begin to realize how much help we need. How we should thank God for the opportunity of family prayer!

Listen to the admonition of the Savior in Third Nephi: "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed." (3 Ne. 18:21.)

Unifying families

Can you detect that if we do not pray in our families always they may not be blessed—or at least not so fully? If we truly love our families we will constantly pray for them and with them. I know of no single activity that has more potential for unifying our families and bringing more love and divine direction into our homes than consistent, fervent family prayer.

Think of the power for good as you gather your family together and thank God for all of his blessings.

Think of the eternal significance of daily thanking him for each member of your family and asking him to guide and bless and protect each one. Think of the strength that will come to your family as, daily, one member or another pours out his or her soul in love to God for other family members.

Of course, our prayers must be more than words, for as President Marion G. Romney has so clearly stated, "The efficacy of our prayers depends on how we care for one another." (ENSIGN, Nov. 1980, p. 93.) Family prayer is fully effective, then, only as we rise from our knees and, with increased love and understanding, take better care of each other.

Regular family prayer

We all want more love and unity in our families. We all need more help with some who may be wayward or in special need. We all desire more assurance of divine guidance and direction.

I promise you that as you consistently and fervently pray as a family, and as each member takes his or her turn and sincerely prays for others, impressions will come as to what you individually should do to help others. Thus, you can, in family prayer, receive personal and family revelation as to how to love and serve one another.

Now, Satan will do everything he can to keep us from family prayer, or at least to see that our prayers are only intermittent and mechanical and without sincerity. In Daniel's day, Satan influenced evil men to pass laws against praying. In our day, Satan's efforts seem a little more subtle (although he is trying a little of that law business, too).

But remember, the greatest schools on earth are individual homes. Yet how many homes voluntarily give up family prayer by allowing other less important things to take priority.

If Satan can get us thinking that our children are too young or too old,

or if he can get us angry with one another or preoccupied with TV programs or over-crowded schedules or caught up in some other aspect of the press of modern life so that we do not have family prayer, he has effectively won on that point—even though many of the other things we do may be good in and of themselves.

Satan doesn't care how he stops us—just so he stops us. Ask yourself: How many times did you have family prayer this last week? Who is winning in your home? What's the score? Don't let the evil one win. You can overcome him with God's help.

I appeal with all the fervor of my soul to every family in the Church, every family in the nation, every family in the world, to organize your priorities so that God is first in your lives and to show this by having regular family prayer. There may be extenuating circumstances occasionally; but as a rule, we should have family prayer every morning and every evening.

Power in family prayer

Oh, if we would do this, if we would show our families and our God on a regular basis how much we love them, how much we appreciate them, how much we need their help, and how much we rely on His protection, one of the greatest changes for good to ever take place in the Church, in the nation, and in the world would occur. Don't let anything stand in the way of consistent, fervent family prayer! Think of what you teach by having family prayer. Then think of what you teach by not having family prayer.

I testify to you that there is real power in family prayer. I testify that families can be brought together and can help and strengthen one another through family prayer.

Missionary in Tonga

Let me illustrate this with an incident that happened some years ago.

As a young man I was called on a mission to Tonga. Through a series of unusual circumstances, such as ship strikes, and so forth, it took three months to get to Tonga from Salt Lake. As I was the only one assigned to Tonga at that time, much of the journey was made alone.

Finally, in Samoa, the mission president put me on a boat to Fiji and assured me that he would telegraph ahead, and when I arrived in Suva two elders would meet me and put me on a boat to Tonga.

Even though I had been in transit for two and a half months at that time, that several-day voyage to Suva seemed extra-filled with trepidation. How I looked forward to seeing those two missionaries!

The boat arrived in Suva early in the morning. I looked and looked, but could see no elders. An hour went by, then two, then three—still no elders. The captain kept telling me to get off the boat as they were leaving soon. I kept telling him that I would be met soon by two young men, but they didn't come.

Finally, noon arrived and the captain was ready to leave. "Get off," he said, "you only have a ticket to Suva. I'm leaving, and you're staying here."

With great fear I started down the gangplank only to be met by the immigration officials. "Let us see your visa, your onward ticket, and the money to keep you while here," they demanded.

I had no visa. I had no onward ticket. I had not sufficient money. But I assured them that two young men would be there right away with whatever was needed. How I prayed! But they didn't come.

"Back on the ship then," they insisted.

"Not on my ship," bellowed the captain.

I can remember standing in the middle of the gangplank, looking up at the folded arms and glaring eyes of the

stern captain, and then looking down at the equally determined faces and set jaws of the immigration men.

I looked at the ocean under the gangplank. I should have wondered how long I could tread water, but I was too scared to think of anything right then.

In the end, the captain proved to be the toughest; and amidst cursing and yelling and banging of bags, the gangplank went up, the ship departed, and I found myself in the not-too-friendly hands of the immigration officials.

There was a long discussion among them, most of it in a foreign tongue. Finally, one of the younger men, who seemed more friendly, came over and explained that for now I should move with my things into the "customs shed." That's where things go that aren't really allowed into the country until duty or tax is paid on them. He assured me that he, too, felt that the two young men I referred to would soon be along and everything would be fine.

The afternoon wore on. I tried several times to contact the missionaries every way I knew how, but to no avail. I know missionaries are supposed to be brave, but right then I was scared and tired and hungry.

The sun was getting low, and it seemed the lower it got in the sky the lower my spirits became. I knew I wasn't really in danger or in prison, but to one used to lots of freedom it seemed like it.

The pungent odor of curry and copra and drying fish and the myriad other sights and sounds and smells of an oily tropical wharf seemed so foreign to the cool, fresh smells of my Idaho home. I knew I was homesick. I wanted to cry, but I knew that wouldn't do any good.

Finally, the whirring of winches, the groaning of blocks and cables, the banging of cargo, and the sputtering of machines ceased. The dock workers began to leave, then the immigration

people, until just a few watchmen and supervisors were left. It was silent now. I don't know when I have felt more alone.

I tried to lie down on the dirty, uneven cement floor. I prayed to know what to do. There seemed to be no answer. I watched the last rays of sunlight as they broke through the clouds and blazed across the ocean and through the holes of the metal customs shed.

"How long will the light last?" I thought. Then I wondered, "What will happen when those last rays disappear and fold into the night?" (Have you ever wanted to just sort of close your eyes and disappear—or have things around you change?) "But, no, I must have hope. Things *must* turn out all right."

Once more, I closed my eyes in prayer, when suddenly I felt almost transported. I didn't see anything or hear anything, in a physical sense; but, in a more real way, I saw a family in far-off Idaho kneeling together in prayer; and I heard my mother, acting as mouth, say as clearly as anything can be heard, "And bless John on his mission."

Warmth of security

As that faithful family called down the powers of heaven to bless their missionary son in a way they could not physically do, I testify that the powers of heaven did come down, and they lifted me up and, in a spiritual way, allowed me, for a brief moment, to once again join that family circle in prayer. I was one with them. I was literally swallowed up in the love and concern of a faithful family and sensed for a moment what being taken into Abraham's bosom may be like. (See Luke 16:22.) I was given to understand also that there are other circles of love and concern unbounded by time or space to which we all belong and from which we can draw strength. God does not leave us entirely alone—ever!

Tears of joy flowed freely as I had restored to me the warmth of security, the light of love, and the strength of hope. And when I again felt the hard, uneven cement beneath me, there was no fear, no sorrow, no trepidation, only deep gratitude and certain assurance.

To conclude the incident, within a half hour I saw the young immigration man who had befriended me coming towards the shed with two young elders behind him. It seemed that on his way home he just happened to run into two young Americans with white shirts and ties and told them about one just like them down at the wharf. Apparently the telegram never arrived, but they followed him down to the shed, and soon all was straightened out, and within a few weeks I landed in Tonga and was ready to begin my mission.

Family prayers—top priority

Brothers and sisters, I testify that there is great power in loving, consistent, fervent family prayer. Don't deny your families this blessing. Don't allow the strength that comes from family prayer to slip away from you and your loved ones through neglect.

No matter what other inheritance you leave your family, give them the inheritance of knowing through experience that, forever, you will be praying for them and they for you.

Call your families together. Make your family prayers a top priority item. It may be awkward at first, if you aren't doing it now; and since Satan doesn't want you to do it at all, he will throw all sorts of excuses and roadblocks at you; but just proceed and be persistent, and I promise you great blessings.

Love and serve one another

Remember, all that we are commanded to do in this life is patterned after that of a better life. Do you think it a strange thought that maybe part of

the power of family prayer is in the fact that we are part of a heavenly family, that they are interested in us, and that by tying in with them some way we get hold of something much bigger than ourselves?

Think of the power of the thousands of prayers of parents and grandparents and back and back even to Jacob and Isaac and Abraham and beyond, all requesting essentially the same thing: "Bless my children. Bless my children. Bless my children." Can you hear it as it rolls and echoes throughout all eternity?

Let us all be part of that great power for good.

I testify that time and space are no barriers to these righteous influences, and no matter where we are or what our situation is—even in the depths of discouragement, far from our loved ones—we too can feel and be strengthened by those soul-stirring words, "and bless John or Jane or whomever on his or her mission," for indeed life is a mission. We are all here on assignment to learn to love and serve one another; and we can't do this as well as we should unless we have consistent, fervent family prayer.

I testify that God is our Father, that he lives and loves us, that he is the

giver of all good things. I testify that Jesus lives and loves us, that he is the Son of God, the Christ, the Savior of the world, the head of this, his church. I testify that as we pray to the Father, in his name, all things are possible.

May we all gather our families around us and consistently and fervently pray for one another and thus, in righteousness, feel the needs of others and then fill the needs of others, thereby fulfilling much of our mission in life, I do humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "Come, We That Love the Lord" without announcement.

President Romney

We have just listened to Elder John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Come, We That Love the Lord."

We shall now hear from Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Interest in family

The assignment we were given for Saturday evening sessions of stake conference during the first half of 1982 was directed toward the theme "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." (Isa. 2:3.) The objective of these meetings has been to inspire the members to obtain their own temple blessings, attend the temple in behalf of their deceased relatives and others, complete their four-generation records, extend research on family lines, and

organize and strengthen the family organizations. The first instruction after the glorious First Vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the act of restoring the gospel of Jesus Christ, was concerning the family unit. History records this account in the words of the Prophet:

"A messenger [was] sent from the presence of God to me, . . . that his name was Moroni; and God had a work for me to do. . . .

"After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. . . .