

No, no, I will praise and adore at  
the mercy seat,  
Until at the glorified throne I kneel  
at his feet.

(Hymns, no. 80.)

May each of us adequately play our role in the final accomplishment of God's declared work and glory, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), by striving for perfection and by being obedient to all the laws and ordinances of the gospel—all of us strengthened by our compliance with

the great commandments to love God and our neighbors, I pray as I bear witness that this is His work, that He loves us all. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Romney

Elder David B. Haight, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

Bishop J. Richard Clarke, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now speak to us.

## Bishop J. Richard Clarke

### My soul delighteth in the scriptures

One of the most beautiful and inspiring passages in the Book of Mormon is often referred to as "The Psalm of Nephi." It begins with these stirring words: "My soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.

"Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord." (2 Nephi 4:15-16.)

These words have special meaning to me. I grew up in a small Mormon community. I was raised in a fine Latter-day Saint home. I was taught to love the Lord, to reverence His name, and to communicate with Him in prayer. I was very young when I learned that the Father and the Son had appeared to Joseph Smith. I believed as a boy and I have never doubted as a man.

However, until I enlisted in the navy, I had not experienced the shock of meeting so many people who had never seen a Mormon or who had never heard of Mormonism. I soon realized how limited was my knowledge of the gospel. I was asked some pretty tough questions about the Church that I had difficulty an-

swering. I was the only Mormon in our outfit and so there was no one with whom I could counsel. The only scripture I had was a small military copy of the Book of Mormon. I am ashamed to confess that I left Lehi and his family somewhere in the wilderness on a number of occasions.

While I had grown up as an active member of the Church, I had felt no special need or urgency to study the scriptures and the writings of the prophets. When asked a question or when strong ridicule was directed at me and the Church, I could only state the personal beliefs I had learned from my family and teachers. I tried to compensate for my knowledge deficiency by being a good example of the principles I professed.

### To know eternal truths

After leaving the navy, I received a mission call. I still had not developed a real appetite for gospel knowledge. I had not equated understanding the holy scriptures with being a good Latter-day Saint. Following some brief training in the old mission home in Salt Lake, my companions and I were exposed to a few weeks of tracting in Texas while waiting for the ship that would take

us to South Africa. That exposure expanded my vision of what I was going to be doing for the next two years. I gained a lot of humility in a hurry.

### A quirk of fate

An unusual quirk of fate changed my whole life as we sailed toward Cape Town. It was to be a twenty-eight-day voyage, but our ship developed boiler problems crossing the equator. Limping into the port of Recife, Brazil, we hit the rocks, gashing the ship's hull. A tugboat rescued us; but before we finally arrived in Cape Town, we had spent eighty-four days on board ship. I was fortunate enough to share quarters with a fine companion, Roy Stevens, who was a dedicated student of the gospel. His father had also been a missionary and had sent a large box of Church books with his son. It was during this confinement that a whole new world of gospel knowledge opened up to me.

It was a time to study, to ponder, to pray. I read all the standard works from cover to cover, as well as *Jesus the Christ* and several other Church books. On this voyage I received my witness from the Lord that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. It was here that I came to know that Jesus is the Christ. It was here I developed an insatiable appetite to know the eternal truths. What a pity I had waited so long. I had wasted so much time during military service. What a priceless treasure I had ignored! I am persuaded that we will be held accountable for how we use our discretionary time.

### Examples of Joseph Smith and Spencer W. Kimball

There is so much we can learn from the example of the young Prophet Joseph Smith, whose per-

sistent, prayerful study of the Holy Bible compelled him to seek the God of Heaven for divine guidance. This brought him to the threshold of the greatest revelation ever given to man since the mortal ministry of the Savior Himself. Throughout the Prophet's life, he continued to probe and ponder until he gained a mastery of the scriptures.

### President Kimball labored to gain insights

Another young man, Spencer W. Kimball, was about fourteen when Susa Gates spoke at their stake conference. He recalls: "She gave a rousing talk on the reading of the scriptures; . . . then she stopped . . . to ask . . . us, 'How many of you have read the Bible through?'"

" . . . My accusing heart said to me, 'You, Spencer Kimball, you have never read that holy book. Why?' I looked around me . . . to see if I was alone in my failure to read the sacred book. Of the thousand people, there were perhaps a half dozen who proudly raised their hands. . . . When the meeting closed, I . . . rushed home . . . gritting my teeth and saying to myself, 'I will. I will.' "

He went home, got a coal-oil lamp, and climbed the stairs to his attic room. "There," he said, "I opened my Bible and began [with] Genesis . . . and I read well into the night with Adam and Eve . . . and through the flood even to Abraham." (*President Kimball Speaks Out*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, pp. 92-93.)

He continued to read a little each night. Although he didn't always understand what he was reading, he had made a commitment to himself. At the end of a year, he had finished. This achievement set a pattern for his life. The sermons and the writings of President Kimball convince us that he has labored long

hours to gain his profound insights into the holy scriptures.

### Examples of Bruce R. McConkie and Marion G. Romney

I am convinced that families, even young children, can learn to love the scriptures. A few years ago when I was in Colorado Springs for a conference, I called on Mark McConkie, son of Elder and Sister Bruce R. McConkie, to address the question: "How did you develop a love for the scriptures?"

As I recall, he said: "I first developed a love for the scriptures from my mother. I remember she would teach me while she did her ironing. I felt how she loved the scriptures by the way she would speak about the prophets. How much she loved them! As I grew older, I would listen to the recordings of the scriptures. I wanted to know the scriptures like my father. Sometimes he would enter the room while I was listening and it would take him just a moment to identify the exact scripture I was listening to. I wanted to be able to do that."

You may remember the sweet experience shared by President Romney, who had been reading the Book of Mormon with his son. He related: "I remember reading it with one of my lads when he was very young. . . . We were each reading aloud alternate paragraphs of those last three marvelous chapters of Second Nephi. I heard his voice breaking and thought he had a cold, but we went on to the end of the three chapters. As we finished he said to me, 'Daddy, do you ever cry when you read the Book of Mormon?'"

"'Yes, son,' I answered. 'Sometimes the spirit of the Lord so witnesses to my soul that the Book of Mormon is true that I do cry.'"

"'Well,' he said, 'that is what happened to me tonight.'" (In Conference Report, Apr. 1949, p. 41.)

Some time later, I was reading a Jack London book with our youngest son Brandon, before going to bed. I recalled President Romney's story and thought, What an experience we're missing by not reading the standard works together. Before he leaves on his mission, I want him to become intimately acquainted with the great heroes of sacred literature and to pattern his life after them. We began to read just fifteen minutes or one chapter each day. What a choice experience! I commend it to you.

### Search the scriptures

All of our sacred records have come to us at high cost. When we consider the fiery furnace of conquest and persecution through which the Bible has passed, the great wonder is not whether it is complete or translated correctly, but a miracle that it has survived at all! Surely the Lord has preserved it for the salvation of his children.

Laban's life was taken by divine command that the Nephite nation not "dwindle . . . in unbelief." (See 1 Nephi 4:13.) Think of the travail of the Nephite prophets who kept the records of their people so future generations might profit from their experiences. Think of the millions of people who have lived at a time when there was no printing or translating capability or who, because of political oppression or illiteracy, have been denied access to the scriptures. Think about the blessings of living in this dispensation, when the holy scriptures are available to us. In 1981, the United Bible Societies distributed 444,000,000 complete copies or portions of the Bible throughout the world. By the end of 1982, the Book of Mormon or selected portions will be available in fifty-seven languages.

We are the beneficiaries of great sacrifice. What excuse do we have for not taking advantage of this?

Brothers and sisters, you don't have to be a natural student to read the scriptures; you just need to love the Lord.

The value of sacred records was indelibly taught by the Savior as he ministered among the Nephites. He declared: "A commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; . . .

"Give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you; . . .

"Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.

"And now . . . after [Jesus] had expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had received, he said unto them: Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not. . . .

"How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?

"And . . . Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written.

"And . . . Jesus commanded that it should be written; . . .

"Now . . . when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them." (3 Nephi 23:1, 4-6, 11-14.)

I concur with the strong counsel of President Romney, given to a group of seminary and institute coordinators in 1973. He told them, and I quote: "I don't know much about the gospel other than what I've learned from the standard works. When I drink from a spring I like to get the water where it comes out of the ground, not down the stream after the cattle have waded in it. . . . I appreciate other people's interpretation, but when it comes to the gospel we ought to be acquainted with what the Lord says. . . . You ought to read the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants;

and . . . all the scriptures with the idea of finding out what's in them and what the meaning is and not to prove some idea of your own. Just read them and plead with the Lord to let you understand what he had in mind when he wrote them." (Address delivered at Coordinators' Convention, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 13 Apr. 1973.)

### Admonition of Joseph Smith

I fear there are far too many Latter-day Saints who do not have a testimony of the gospel from their own diligent efforts. Is it possible that you are living on the reflected light of others who have prayed and pondered the revelations of God? A testimony comes from personal endeavor. The Lord has provided us the means of salvation, but our success is dependent upon individual effort.

I conclude with this admonition of the Prophet Joseph Smith, given in 1832:

"Search the scriptures—search the revelations which we publish and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. . . . For when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them. . . . Again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, pp. 11-12.)

To this I add my witness. The holy scriptures are the word of God. If we are to know God, we must

read His words, for therein He stands revealed to the honest in heart. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The Choir sang "Arise, Shine, Thy Light Is Come" without announcement.

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### President Romney

The Tabernacle Choir has sung "Arise, Shine, Thy Light Is Come."

We welcome those who have just joined us on television or radio for this, the first session of the 152nd Semiannual General Conference of the Church.

We are grateful to the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker, following which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

The benediction will then be given by Elder Richard G. Scott, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, after which this conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

## Elder Mark E. Petersen

### Christ—our dearest friend

We are thankful for this, another opportunity to bear testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His divine Sonship, for truly He is the well-beloved and Only Begotten Son of our Heavenly Father.

Again we testify that He is our Savior and our Redeemer. He is our Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth.

But He also is our Friend—our dearest Friend. He died for us. Is not that the ultimate measure of friendship?

And He provided for us a resurrection from death, which is given freely to every person who has lived on the earth or ever will.

What a gift! What a Friend! What a mighty Personage He is!

But marvelous as will be our resurrection, joyfully as we will welcome our victory over death, salvation in His kingdom is quite another matter. It comes only to those who faithfully obey His commandments and accept all of His ordinances.

### Measure of complete salvation

Have you ever thought of the process by which the gospel saves people? Faith, repentance, and baptism come first, of course. But there is more, much more.

The meaning of complete salvation is that we become like the Savior in word and thought and deed. We can measure our progress toward salvation merely by determining how Christlike we are. If we are not becoming more like Him in our everyday living, we are not advancing toward salvation as we should.

Becoming Christlike is a matter of daily spiritual growth. As a flower develops from a seed, as a mature adult develops from a tiny child, so we can grow spiritually day by day, eventually into Christlike personalities.

As one of our poets described it:

Heaven is not reached at a single bound;  
But we build the ladder by which we rise