

restored gospel, turn your hearts to Him and listen to His voice; He will whisper to you in the quiet of your hearts, as you seek Him.

God has spoken to man again in our day. The heavens are open. He does commune with man again, as in times of old, through His prophet. He has restored His priesthood authority, authorizing man to act for Him. He has restored His church which makes the saving ordinances available again to man.

You need not take our word alone for it, but He has prepared a way that you can know for yourselves.

His timeless message will bring real purpose and new meaning to your lives and a richness and peace you can enjoy in no other way. Thousands are seeking and finding each month. We invite you to seek and find too. We will be pleased to assist you, if you wish.

Yes, the answer and solution to all the challenges and needs we have, national or personal, is to turn our hearts to God, put Him first in our

lives, keep His commandments—and all things will work for our good, even those tests which seem so big and require so much. They, too, will bless our lives.

We should look to God; put Him first in our lives and especially in our hearts.

I testify that He does live! He is our Father! He loves His children! I also testify that Jesus is the Christ, and that He will be as close to us as we will let Him be by how we live and feel in our hearts.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

We have heard from Elder Rex C. Reeve, Sr., of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, also of the Council of the Twelve.

## **Elder L. Tom Perry**

### **A new era**

This conference marks the beginning of a new era for the Church in communications. The advent of the satellite affords us the opportunity of reaching more of the membership of the Church with general conference than we have ever had the privilege of doing before.

### **The office of bishop**

There is a subject I have wanted to address at general conference for some time. It seems appropriate to speak on this topic at this conference because of our larger membership audience. Some years ago I was assigned to a committee responsible for

reviewing all changes in bishops. We would bring forward our recommendations for consideration at a meeting in the temple attended by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. I became alarmed at the number of bishops recommended for release because of health reasons, family difficulties, or employment problems. Even though the number was not large as a percentage of the total, I felt any number was too high because these great men were not having the privilege of fulfilling their assignment with the joy and satisfaction that should accompany this sacred calling.

I have always had the highest admiration for the office of a bishop. I have been associated with bishops

all my life. When I was six months old, my father was called to be the bishop of our ward. He served until after my eighteenth birthday. Within a few years of my marriage, I was called into a bishopric. I soon discovered the love which is generated within a bishopric as they serve together. An employment opportunity came to me after about three years of service, and it seemed appropriate that I accept it. It was with deep sorrow that I left the association of this bishopric. On our final night in the community in which we were living, they held a party. To avoid saying good-bye, we slipped away from the party before it was over and went to stay at a friend's home. The bishop and the other counselor I had been serving with came over when the party concluded and sat up all night while we rested, awaiting our early departure, so that we would not leave without the proper farewell. With a big lump in my throat, I said good-bye to these two brethren as I went on to other assignments.

Some years later I was called to serve in another bishopric. Again this love developed as we had opportunity to meet so often to direct the affairs of the ward. A little over a year later, a change was to be made in our stake presidency. The bishop and I were called in to be interviewed by the General Authority who was making the change. The first question the General Authority asked was, "How do you get along with your bishop? Is he a good leader?" Then I started to express in glowing terms my love and appreciation for this man and all he had done for the ward. Suddenly I realized the purpose of the interview. They could call him into the stake presidency, and we would lose our association. I immediately stopped my compliments on his great service, and after a pause, I said with a little smile on my face, "The only difficulty he has is that when he is under pressure, he

goes home and beats his wife." The General Authority leaned back in his chair and said, "Isn't that peculiar? He was in here just a minute ago and said you have leadership capabilities but you too have a fault. You like to go out behind the barn on occasion and smoke a cigar." The strategy failed: I was called into the new stake presidency.

### **"For a bishop must be blameless"**

Even though I have never had the opportunity of serving as bishop, my two brothers have enjoyed this experience. One is presently serving in the Pacific Northwest. I also have a nephew whom I correspond with frequently, serving as a bishop in the northern plains area of the United States. So my opportunities to observe, watch, and appreciate the role of those who are called to serve as bishops in the Church have filled my heart and soul with admiration for this noble calling.

Paul, in his epistle to Titus, set forth some difficult requirements for one who is called to the office of a bishop.

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

"But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7-9).

The Lord added to this burden by revelation contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, appointing him also as a judge.

"And whoso standeth in this mission is appointed to be a judge in Israel, like as it was in ancient days, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children;

"And to judge his people by the testimony of the just, and by the assistance of his counselors, according to the laws of the kingdom which are given by the prophets of God" (D&C 58:17-18).

Prophets have counseled us on the importance of a bishop's role. President George Albert Smith told us:

"There is no position in the Church that will bring a greater blessing to any man than the office of a bishop, if he will honor that office and be a real father to the flock over whom he is called to preside. Do not forget that. . . . But I want to say to you that there is no bishop, nor has there been a bishop in the Church, who has given the time that the Lord expected him to give in looking after the flock and teaching his people and preparing them to do the work, that has not received one hundred percent of the blessings that he labored for, and they will extend to him throughout the ages of eternity." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1948, pp. 186-87.)

### Support and sustain bishops

Now, it is not my purpose here today to spend time on the role and commission of the bishops and making them feel more burdened. Instead, let me talk to you about what we can do to support and sustain them in their great responsibility.

*First, the wife of the bishop.* You are carefully evaluated before your husband is approached to be called as a bishop, to determine the type of support you will give to him. We assure you that his role as bishop is secondary to his eternal callings as husband and father. In order for him to be successful, you must sustain him completely. We know this puts added burdens on you. You run a telephone answering service and a mailroom, act as a receptionist, and have to fill in at home when he is

called out on emergencies. Often, just by being there, you are exposed to confidential information, which you must keep within yourself and never discuss with anyone. Nothing would destroy the credibility of a bishop more than having his companions reveal confidential information she happened to overhear or see pertaining to ward business.

You have the obligation, along with your husband, of being a role model for the young people and the young married couples of the ward. Yours should be an ideal marriage—one they are striving to emulate by following your example. Your contribution is deeply appreciated and understood. Nothing can relieve the anxiety and load of being a bishop quite like the aid of a supportive companion.

*Second, the children of a bishop.* I know it is sometimes like living in a fishbowl with everyone watching you to see if you will make a wrong move or say the wrong thing. I know resentment sometimes builds up in your minds when you have a vacation or a planned activity interrupted by a ward emergency.

I learned a great lesson the night before my father was released as a bishop. It was the first time I had really ever seen my father shed tears. He called the family together to announce that his term of service as a bishop was over. Then, with tears streaming down his face, he told us how he would miss the calling, even though it had been a burden at times and had occupied a great deal of time. He taught us a real-life lesson of the true joy of Church service. It was not until then that I fully appreciated the blessings we had had in our home as a family, by having the mantle of a bishop rest on the shoulders of our father.

Children, next only to your mother, your father needs your sustaining support as he fulfills his tremendous assignment.

*Third, quorums of the priesthood.* Quorums are placed in a most unique position. The Lord has revealed a structure in His organization which uses his priesthood holders to watch over and strengthen the Church. Quorum leaders are to visit quorum members in their homes to give commendation where deserved, to bless and encourage where needed, to teach the gospel, and to inspire all to keep the commandments and live righteous lives. They are to see that the families of the ward, through the home teaching program, are visited at least monthly.

Home teachers, then, are called to represent the quorum president and, through the quorum president, the bishop. Thus, they are priesthood representatives called to assist the quorum leaders in watching over and strengthening the quorum members, including fathers and their families.

Priesthood home teachers are to "visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties. . . .

"To watch over the church always. . . .

"And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty." (D&C 20:47, 53-55.)

The father is recognized and supported as the presiding leader of his family, responsible for teaching them the basic doctrines of the kingdom, seeing that they assist in building the kingdom, and for leading his family into eternal life.

When the home teaching program is functioning as outlined, problems in families are discovered and handled before they become so large they involve the judgment and time of a bishop. This relieves the bishop of a great burden, giving him

more time to spend on matters he cannot delegate to anyone else. Yes, the quorums must assume their full responsibility in taking care of the membership assigned to them.

*Fourth, the general membership of the Church.* I think you should understand that most bishops are not psychiatrists. Most are not social workers. Most are not trained financial advisers. But each bishop has been called under the inspiration of the Lord to serve you as members of your ward.

We need to be considerate of the time demands we make on them, so they can complete the assignments they have been given and have sufficient time to plan, to organize, to meditate, to ponder, and to be receptive to the inspiration and promptings of the Lord in their great stewardship. If we continually bring problems to their office that we could solve ourselves, it only takes their precious time which is needed in assignments they cannot delegate. Could I offer just a few rules to the membership of the Church in their dealings with their bishop?

### Five rules for Church members

First, never go to your bishop before you have been on your knees asking for inspiration and for solutions. Don't just come to the bishop's office to load him with problems. I know how people go to the office only wanting to *talk* about problems, not wanting to *listen* for solutions.

Second, never involve your bishop if your home teacher or your quorum can care for your needs. However, I know that problems sometimes develop in a person's life which require the personal attention and special consideration only a bishop can provide. In matters such as this, go to him, and then he will help you.

Third, never speak ill or gossip

about your bishop or his family. Respect this great and important calling.

Fourth, live your life in harmony with the gospel so that when your bishop calls you to serve, you will be ready and worthy to accept that call. Then serve with all the enthusiasm, vigor, vitality, dedication, and commitment you can. Faithfully respond to the call to which you have been assigned.

Fifth, remember your bishop in your family prayers. Pray for his welfare and for his strength, that he may be blessed of the Lord in this tremendous responsibility which has come to him.

### **Improve relationship with bishop**

I know of the great power there is in the office of a bishop. I know the peace, security, happiness, and contentment he can bring to a ward if we will only allow him to administer in the role to which he has been called and not keep diverting him to lesser duties. Let him have the power to organize his own time and not rob him of those precious minutes he needs. Remember, he has the same obligations as other heads of households: to, first, be a good husband; second, be a good father; and third,

discharge his responsibility to provide for his family. We should not interrupt his family time or prevent him from growing, accomplishing, and achieving in his professional pursuits. After these obligations to his family are met, then he has the opportunity to serve you in his great calling.

I promise you, my brothers and sisters, if we will sustain and support our bishops, learn to be concerned for their welfare, and pray for their success in all they have to do, it will bless our lives as we are placed under their leadership and have opportunity to follow their inspired direction, as they lead the wards of the Church.

May God bless us that this may be the beginning of a new and improved relationship with our bishops, is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Thank you, Brother Perry, for those instructive remarks.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, also a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker.

## **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

### **The Seven Christs**

May I speak of the seven Christs, or, rather, of the one Christ whose works and words are shown forth in seven ways?

We live in a day of contention and confusion, in which Christian people cry, "*Lo, here is Christ; or lo, there*" (see Matthew 24:23), meaning, "Lo, here is the way of salvation; or lo, there."

We hear voices of doom and voices of glory. The doctrines and dogmas of the contending sects are at

war one with another. We are exhorted to believe in tenets of disagreement and to walk in crooked paths.

The sounds are discordant; the babble is incessant; and the messages are at variance. Surely it is clear to even the most blinded fanatic that opposing religious views cannot all be true.

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions we raise a calm and reasoned voice, a voice that goes forth with the sound of a trumpet, a voice that is carried