

Elder Gene R. Cook will be our next speaker. He will be followed by

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Gene R. Cook

Thank you, Sister Smith, from all the sisters of the Church, and certainly all the brethren as well. We appreciate your service and that of Sister Cannon.

### The meaning of home

Some years ago a fire erupted in the middle of the night and completely destroyed a family's home. A neighbor came by to console a seven-year-old, not knowing that he was about to be taught a great principle. "Johnny, it's sure too bad your home burned down." Johnny thought a moment and then said, "Oh, that's where you're mistaken, Mr. Brown. That was not our home; that was just our house. We still have our home, we just don't have any place to put it right now."

What a great principle taught by a child about home. What does that word bring to your mind—*home*? To some, an edifice. To others, a place to sleep, a place to eat, a place where worldly goods are stored.

Yet to others more spiritually inclined, it might mean where family is, where my heart is, a sacred place, a peaceful place, an escape from a wicked world.

### Yet a deeper meaning

The still small voice whispers yet a deeper meaning. Home is heaven. We are strangers here on earth. My real home is not here, but there. My challenge is to learn how to bring about a home here on earth similar to the celestial one I left. The Lord said that we were taught "even before [we] were born." We "received [our] first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth . . . to labor in his

vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men" (D&C 138:56).

Thus, we were taught to labor in the vineyard, a good part of which, perhaps the most important part, was to know how to labor at home. We were taught by the Lord, by the best of all teachers. Perhaps, therefore, the re-learning here on earth, with our agency, is to largely experience and rediscover the teachings in the flesh.

How might I remember and rediscover what I once knew? The Lord answers, "Pray and I will make known unto you things from the foundation of the world according to your faith and holy works." (See Alma 12:30.) "I will bring all things back to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (see John 14:26 and Alma 12:30) "and will enlarge the memory of this people" (see Alma 37:8).

### All are members of a family

At times when one speaks of home and family, some who are single, widowed, a single parent, or a grandparent might be tempted to feel these teachings don't apply to them. But may I remind all that when the Lord sent us here for our individual growth, he sent us to live with and be nurtured spiritually and temporally by a family. The Lord organized the whole earth this way. There is no other way to enter mortality.

Yet some still say, "I don't have a family. I'm all alone." May I remind you that you always were and ever will be a member of the family of God. You are his son or his daughter. It doesn't matter if your *parents* or *spouse* or *brothers* or *sisters* are *members*, *non-members*, *living*, or *dead*, they are still your family. And if you are righteous

and faithful to the end, no matter what your present status, you ultimately will be blessed as part of a family unit. Thus, it behooves all of us to learn and live, to the degree we can in our present situation, the principles governing family life in preparation for exaltation, whether we're a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or a child—whether we are *single or married*. This is the Lord's pattern, His expanded view of the word *family*.

### Premortal family council

Thus, hearken all ye families of the earth, immediate and extended families, yea, every living soul, and the Lord will teach you of the sacredness of that heavenly organization called *family*, called *home*.

Brothers and sisters, for just a moment, please imagine yourselves as if you were in the premortal existence, in that council in heaven, yes, even a council of the Father's own family. Could the Father not have spoken words such as these to all of us: "My children, my children,

1. "Marriage on earth will be ordained of God unto man." (See D&C 49:15-16; D&C 131:1-4.)

2. "By divine decree, you will be copartners with God in bringing children to earth." (See Genesis 1:22, 28; 2 Nephi 2:22-23; D&C 132:63.)

3. "The family unit will be the principal agency for the spiritual and temporal nurturing of the individual." (See Mosiah 4:14-15; D&C 68:25, 28.)

The Father, perhaps continuing, might have said: "When you go to earth—

4. "Teach your children to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (see Deuteronomy 6:5-7),

5. "And to love and to serve one another" (see Mosiah 4:15).

6. "Pray in your families both morning, mid-day, and evening, and I will quicken your memory of these

teachings." (See 3 Nephi 18:21; Alma 34:21, 27; D&C 68:28.)

7. "On earth, teach them repentance, faith in Christ, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, priesthood covenants, and temple ordinances." (See D&C 68:25, 27; D&C 132:19.) Grandparents, uncles and aunts, you can help.

8. "Consecrate your family resources to the Lord. Be free with your substance." (See D&C 42:30-31; Jacob 2:17; D&C 119:1-7.)

9. "Provoke not your children to wrath" (see Ephesians 6:4),

10. "Neither suffer that they fight and quarrel one with another, thus sowing seeds of contention." (See Mosiah 4:14.)

Perhaps He continued, saying:

11. "*Fathers* to be, you will learn what *true spiritual leadership* is mostly at home, not so much in the world.

"*Mothers*, yours will be a sacred call unlike any other, to *raise these little children so that they will be like I am*. Unless you all become as little children, you will not be able to return home to me."

12. "*Learn your duty from living prophets and from the scriptures.*"

13. "Lastly, because of the sacred nature of parenthood, I will *personally* teach you, through the Holy Ghost, those things that matter most. Stay close to me; humbly ask for help."

### Cautions from the Father

Perhaps the Father continued, saying, "My children, there are also a number of cautions I would give you, because the influence of the world will be so strong.

1. "There will be *heavy influence to maintain families small*. However, remember, 'As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children. . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them'" (Psalm 127:4-5).

2. "On earth, remember to keep your family responsibilities as

a *priority*. There will be many who will want to encroach upon your responsibility for *teaching* and *providing activities* for your family. Never forget that yours is the primary responsibility and that your ultimate success in all other endeavors will be in direct proportion to the attention given these *divinely appointed relationships*." (See D & C 88:119.)

3. "*Strive to be together*. Avoid activities and those that would pull you apart. Remember, where love runs deep, so can hurt feelings and frictions, as love may become frustrated." (See 2 Nephi 1:14, 21.)

4. "As children, be sure to *give heed to your father and mother*, remembering that I, the Lord, have placed them over you. Honor them." (See Exodus 20:12.)

5. "When you go to earth, children, remember that *once you are a parent you will always be a parent*. Whether it be a grandparent, a great-grandparent, or a parent as I am. Your responsibilities to preside go on through the generations to assist in turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. Resist the temptation to be uninvolved, retiring from your family and doing your own thing. As grandparents, your wisdom and vision will allow you to draw together your whole family which I, the Lord, have given you." (See Mosiah 2:5.)

Brothers and sisters, perhaps he concluded,

6. "My children, don't be too concerned about remembering these things. You will find that when these things are taught to you they will seem strangely familiar, as if you always knew them. You did, because you experienced it all here in your heavenly home." (See 1 Nephi 15:8, 11.)

"You will suffer affliction with your children in allowing them to grow and develop, just as I have suffered affliction with you. (See D & C

133:52-53.) But don't be afraid; I have given mine angels charge concerning you. Those sent from my very presence to be round about you, to bear you up. (See D&C 84:42, 88; 133:53.) This is your opportunity to experience what we have taught you. Follow the promptings. We love you."

### Exalt concept of home

Brothers and sisters, in conclusion may I say, where possible:

Parents, whatever you are doing, *return home*.

Children, wherever you are, no matter what your failure, problem, or sin, you will always be loved by your family. *Go home*.

Grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, draw your families together. *Return home*. May the concept of home be exalted, because the Lord so organized it in the beginning.

I pay tribute to my grandparents, to my parents, especially to my wife, and to my children, in having made my home the best place in all the world. There's no place in all the earth I would rather be than at home.

And lastly, may the day come when these praises about home and family we will all sing:

O my Father, Thou that dwellest  
In the high and glorious place,  
When shall I regain thy presence,  
And again behold Thy face?

In the heavens are parents single?  
No; the thought makes reason  
stare!

Truth is reason, truth eternal  
Tells me I've a mother there.

When I leave this frail existence,  
When I lay this mortal by,  
Father, Mother, may I meet you  
In your royal courts on high?  
Then, at length, when I've  
completed

All you sent me forth to do,  
With your mutual approbation

Let me come [home] and dwell with you.

("O My Father," *Hymns*, no.139.)

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke without further announcement.

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## Elder Bruce R. McConkie

I rejoice in the call of Russell Nelson and Dallin Oaks to stand from this time forth as special witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were called by the Lord through the spirit of inspiration and will stand as pillars of righteousness in his house from this time onward forever.

### Gratitude for blessings

I am quite overwhelmed by deep feelings of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the goodness of the Lord to me.

He has permitted me to suffer pain, feel anxiety, and taste his healing power. I am profoundly grateful for the faith and prayers of many people, for heartfelt petitions that have ascended to the throne of grace on my behalf.

It is pleasing to that God whose we are when we fast and pray and seek his blessings; when we plead with all the energy of our souls for those things we so much desire; when, as Paul says, we "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

### Prayer moves mountains and saves souls

Prayer is the way and means, given us by our Creator, whereby we can counsel and communicate with him. It is one of the chief cornerstones of pure and perfect worship.

In prayer we speak to the Lord and he speaks to us. It is our privilege to have our voices heard in the courts above and to hear the answering voice of the Lord conveyed by the power of his Spirit.

Prayer changes our lives. Through it we draw near to the Lord, and he reaches out his finger and touches us, so we never again are the same.

Prayer is a great tower of strength, a pillar of unending righteousness, a mighty force that moves mountains and saves souls. Through it the sick are healed, the dead are raised, and the Holy Spirit is poured out without measure upon the faithful.

In prayer we bind ourselves by solemn covenants to love and serve the Lord all our days. In it we pay our devotions and offer our sacraments to the Most High.

Now, there are special prayers reserved and offered for those who drink the still waters and lie down in green pastures, prayers which are not uttered for those who yet dwell in the deserts of sin.

With these things in mind, may I tell you some of the prayers in my heart, prayers that I think will join with like feelings in your hearts, and will unite in one mighty chorus of praise and petition, of adoration and thanksgiving, as they ascend and are heard in the courts above.

### Patterns of prayer

We do not give memorized, ritualistic, or repetitious prayers. We seek the guidance of the Spirit and suit every prayer to the needs of the moment, with no thought of using the same words on successive occasions. But it would be appropriate for us to use words that convey such thoughts as these in our prayers:

Father, we ask thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to hear the words of our