

build and maintain your spiritual stamina and muscle tone. Make your priesthood fitness a priority, applying the constant dedication of a professional athlete until it consumes your life, until it flows from you with nerves and mind conditioned.

And as you too retire at night, your hearts and thoughts and prayers will automatically turn, once again, with great desire to the perfecting of your

performance on the Lord's great priesthood team. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Fyans.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Boyd K. Packer.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren, as a former counselor to Brother Nelson on two occasions, I add my gratitude for the call of Elder Russell M. Nelson, and affirm the nobility of his character and the greatness of his work in the kingdom. Likewise, I attest to the noble character of Elder Oaks.

### "Give me air!"

I would like to tell you a story of a young man who sought out a wise man who was recognized far and near for his good judgment. He asked for his expert advice on how to attain new heights of achievement in his field of endeavor.

"Come with me," said the wise man. Taking the youth to a nearby stream, he immersed him and held him under the water. When the young man was released, he was nearly drowned and came up fighting for breath, gasping, "Air, air, give me air!"

"There," said the wise man, "that's the first lesson. When you want to succeed as badly as you wanted air, you will attain your goal. You will succeed!"

### Desire essential for achievement

Desire, burning desire, is basic to achieving anything beyond the ordinary.

Why do I begin with this story? Because desire in everyone involved is the first step in the subject of my talk tonight, "helping inactive Church members to become active."

What I say, however, won't do any good unless what is said fits in with what the listener wants for himself and has a profound hunger to attain. In every instance, those who are successful love what they are doing. It is a well-known fact that the attitude, the thinking of each of us, must be right before we can do what's right.

Elder Dean L. Larsen beautifully summarized this idea in these words: "When we understand what is right and what is wrong, we are in a position to exercise our freedom in making choices. In so doing, we must stand accountable for our decisions, and we cannot escape the inevitable consequences of these choices. Such freedom to exercise moral agency is essential in an environment where people have the highest prospects for progress and development" (*Ensign*, May 1980, p. 76).

### Fundamental principles

Jesus concerned himself primarily with the teaching of fundamental principles, and these principles had to do with the spiritual and mental condition of the individual. For the Savior knew that if one's mental state is right, most

everything else would be right. But if the mental state is wrong, little can be accomplished in a person's life.

It is no wonder, then, that Nephi admonished his people to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"Enter ye in at the strait gate" (Matthew 7:13).

President Marion G. Romney expressed most clearly what is meant as follows: "It is not enough to do our best. Unless we do all we can, we do less than we ought. We must succeed in doing what is necessary. Unless we get the job done, it is not enough."

When I attended the university, I was involved in athletics, and since then have maintained my interest, even reading articles on the Winter Olympics. A sports editor wrote that for such a small country, East Germany, or as the world knows it, the German Democratic Republic, was doing exceedingly well. He said that they were not that much better trained than their competitors, but just a lot better prepared mentally, spending many hours in the preparation of the mind and the will. "Just good old-fashioned positive mental attitude" is all that is favoring the athletes from that country. (See Lee Benson, *Deseret News*, 16 Feb. 1984, p. D-2.)

### General groups of inactives

In seeking to strengthen the inactive, we are concerned with four general groups:

1. Lifetime members who have never been active and, as a result, oftentimes raise their families in inactivity.

2. New converts who become spiritually disaffected and fall away, usually in their first few years of membership.

3. Active members who slip into transgression or have other problems that cause them to fall away. Often their problems include lack of knowledge and testimony of the gospel, hurt feelings that result in attitudes of unworthiness and guilt, and sometimes fear of participation in Church assignments.

4. Youth who are caught up by the philosophies or behavior of the world and stray from their Church commitments. Some of these youth are persuaded by worldly attitudes of instant pleasure. Some are influenced by peer groups that take nothing seriously until the realities of life force them to.

### Spiritual conversion and social integration

This work of reclaiming the lost sheep, as Jesus so vividly expressed it, must receive top priority by every stake, ward, branch, and quorum leader. All inactive members should be considered candidates for activation regardless of their response to any previous approach. We must use kindness, patience, long-suffering, love, faith, and diligence. They must feel our genuine concern and untiring love.

For individuals to become fully active in the Church, they generally must experience a spiritual conversion and a social integration. We should strive to teach them the gospel and to extend warmth and genuine friendship and fellowship to them.

### Sawing logs, but much more

Recently, I attended a stake conference and heard a story of member activation that moved me deeply. The bishop of one of the wards in the stake took a keen interest in arousing inactive brethren to Church activity. He knew that the first step was one of communication, that he must have a meaningful visit with each inactive brother.

So he began by telephoning one of them. The wife answered the phone and said, "Bishop, I surely appreciate your

call. My husband is outside, but I will have him come to the phone."

When the husband heard that it was the bishop that wished to speak to him, his reaction was as expected. He attempted to sidestep this phone call and responded, "Tell the bishop that I'm out sawing logs," and with a humorous touch, "Tell him I'm dead."

The brother spoke the truth more literally than he realized. It was true. He was sawing logs, and tragically, he was dead to the spiritual things of his life.

A good wife, however, is a mighty force in any man's life, and, in a kindly manner, she persuaded her husband to come to the phone.

Then the bishop, using the power of suggestion and in a friendly voice, said, "I should very much appreciate having a visit with you for a few moments this evening in my office." The brother couldn't refuse so warmhearted an invitation, and a meeting took place.

The testimony of the bishop and his deep concern kindled a fire in the heart of the inactive brother, and he agreed to join the temple preparation class that was about to begin.

Each session, taught by a tactful teacher with a great knowledge of the truth and an inspiring testimony, motivated the inactive brother. He resolved to strengthen his family and bind them together eternally through the blessings of the temple.

This good brother may still be sawing logs, but there is now much more. He has added for himself an indescribable dimension of happiness, as well as joy to the lives of each and every family member.

### **Change of life-style**

In another ward, the bishop assigned his two best home teachers to work with one specially selected inactive family. The husband and father had been inactive for many years, even though he held the office of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood. The couple was approached and asked if the special

teachers could come and teach them the gospel in weekly visits to their home. The family agreed, and the teachers proceeded to bring gospel lessons tailored to the needs and desires of the family.

The bishop also helped by interviewing the couple every few weeks. The husband usually went golfing on Sundays and had no desire to change his life-style at first. During one interview, the bishop said to the husband, "You've got to get going on spiritual matters so that you won't lose your fine family." This caused the inactive brother to think deeply about important issues, and within a couple of weeks he asked for another interview with the bishop and said that he had started paying tithing and that he and his wife wanted to set a goal of being sealed in the temple.

As this family became active, their whole attitude changed, and they seemed to be very happy to embrace the gospel principles and make the necessary change in life-style.

### **Strong testimony and change**

In the case of yet another inactive family, the specially assigned teachers lived in the same neighborhood. The teachers first showed genuine friendship and neighborly concern until they felt they could talk with the inactive family in a serious manner. They sat down with the family one day and asked if they could begin teaching them the gospel in weekly sessions in their home. The teachers assured the family that they would not pressure them in any way and that their visits would be designed to teach the doctrines of the Savior and answer questions the family might have. Within a few weeks, the home teachers took the family to church, and soon the family began to attend on their own. The bishop interviewed the couple and helped them to set goals for the husband to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood and for them to be sealed in the temple.

The bishop reports that it was touching to see this family with their five children sealed for time and eternity. The sealing room in the temple was filled with friends and members of the ward.

The family now bears strong testimony to the truth of the gospel, and many in the ward say they have never seen people change so much. The husband now serves in the presidency of the elders quorum.

### Reactivation in Brazil

The president of an elders quorum in one of our outstanding stakes in Brazil—I love that great people, our members in Brazil—reported phenomenal success in reactivating fifteen elders in his quorum last year. I asked the question, “How did you accomplish this?” He said, “We and the home teachers visited them often. These inactive elders knew that we really cared for them.” Their testimonies were strengthened. They and their families are now active members of the Church.

### The gospel is everlasting

The Lord has promised great rewards for those who reach out to strengthen their brothers and sisters.

The Lord has said in modern revelation, “And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” (D&C 18:15).

I wish I could engrave on every heart what I so keenly know and feel. I bear unwavering testimony that our Heavenly Father and His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, rule and reign, and that we must all understand that the gospel is everlasting. It is forever and applicable to all, and each of us is to be held accountable.

May the Lord bless us in this important work, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you Brother Wirthlin. Elder Boyd K. Packer will now speak to us.

## Elder Boyd K. Packer

I want to talk to my young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood. And I begin with a parable; and then I have a test for you.

### A parable

Imagine that our bishop has appointed you and me to plan a picnic for all of the ward members. It is to be the finest social in the history of the ward, and we are to spare no expense.

We reserve a beautiful picnic ground in the country. We are to have it all to ourselves; no outsiders will interfere with us.

The arrangements go very well, and when the day comes, the weather is perfect. All is beautifully ready. The tables are in one long row. We even have tablecloths and china. You have never seen such a feast. The Relief Society and Young Women have outdone themselves. The tables are laden with every kind of delicious food: cantaloupes, watermelon, corn on the cob, fried chicken, hamburgers, cakes, pies—you get the picture?

We are seated, and the bishop calls upon the patriarch to bless the food. Every hungry youngster secretly hopes it will be a short prayer.