

## Elder Robert E. Wells

### The spirit of adventure

I love the spirit of adventure in life, but I love more the adventures of the spirit. I am comfortable with the positive connotations of the word *adventure*. I like Webster's definition of *adventure*: "An exciting or remarkable experience"; and of *adventurous*: "disposed . . . to cope with the new and unknown" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*).

In my life I have enjoyed many so-called adventures, such as hunting exotic game—jaguars, alligators—waterskiing on rivers full of man-eating piranha fish—an expedition into the danger-filled Amazon jungle—looking for gold plates with a religious history on them—single-engine flights in my own airplanes the length of the hemisphere, the width of the continents—even this Miss America year has been an exciting, Cinderella-like adventure.

One modern philosopher says, "It is an amazing adventure to be born upon this wandering island in the sky and it is an adventure to leave it when death calls. To go to school, to make friends, to marry, to rear children, to face through life the swift changes of circumstances that no man can certainly predict an hour ahead" (*Vital Quotations*, comp. Roy Emerson West [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], pp. 203–204).

### New horizons through the scriptures

I am grateful that the scriptures encourage us to discover new horizons, to have adventures of the mind and study things "in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; . . . the perplexities of the nations . . . ; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms" (D&C 88:79).

And why should we have an adventurous mind or an adventurous spirit? The Lord says, "That ye may be prepared in *all things* . . . [1] to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and [2] the mission with which I have commissioned you" (D&C 88:80; italics added).

### Missionary adventures

Of the many adventures I have enjoyed in my life, the greatest have been the soul-stirring missionary adventures.

Let me encourage you faithful married couples without children at home to go on missions. The Lord needs you out in the mission field. Forget your fears. We don't expect you to do everything the young missionaries do. In fact, I was in Idaho trying to eliminate the fears of some high priests, and I said, "You retired couples don't have to memorize scriptures like the young missionaries, you don't have to memorize any presentations unless you want to." I told them, "You don't have to get up early in the morning like the young missionaries do to study, and if it is raining or snowing, you don't have to go outside until you feel up to it. . . ." At that point a fellow down in the middle shot up his hand and said, "When can I go? That's a better life than I've got now!"

Joe and Zella Wendel went on a mission. Her legs were bothering her, and they got worse in the mission field instead of better. She wrote home, "I thought we were just to work in the office, but now we find we are to proselyte also. But my knees are so bad we just can't go out looking for people, so we are praying very hard to find someone right here in our apartment building." In three months they had three baptisms—new move-ins from their apartment building! Those missionaries were my parents.

Walter and Ernestine Walser were called to Peru. Former Bishop Walser was soon called as a branch president in the remote interior mountains. With his limited Missionary Training Center Spanish, Elder Walser had to choose counselors, hold meetings, teach, train, reactivate, ordain, and so on. In fasting and prayer he received impressions from the Spirit and went about his work. Elder Walser wrote, "I learned that even with limited language, whenever it was needed, enough Spanish was given me to communicate, and I knew it was from the Lord."

Like many adventures, there were hardships and sacrifices, but the Walsers said that the genuine love and affection of those wonderful Peruvian people and the feeling of being needed more than compensated. They are grateful for their spiritual adventure in serving the Lord.

Now you young unmarried sisters from twenty-one to sixty-nine with good health, there is no obligation to serve, but you are certainly welcome and wanted if the Spirit encourages you to volunteer.

Let me tell you about two sister missionaries who called at a home one morning before the husband went to work. They were welcomed in, so they immediately told about Joseph Smith's first vision, the angel Moroni, the gold plates, and the restoration of the priesthood. Then the senior companion, noting that about forty-five minutes had gone by, said, "We would like to return next week to tell you more."

To which the husband exclaimed, "Next week?" He walked to the door, locked it, put the key in his pocket, and said, "You're not leaving here till you've told us all you know about Joseph Smith and this restored gospel!" They were there all day. The family asked for baptism that same evening.

Now you young men, unmarried, nineteen to twenty-six (eighteen outside the United States), healthy and worthy—from the time of the recent prophets the spiritual adventure of a mission has been emphasized as a

priesthood responsibility of such priority that again today we stress, *your mission comes before marriage, education, professional opportunities, scholarships, sports, cars, or girls.*

President Kimball said, "Should every young man fill a mission? The answer has been given by the Lord. It is *yes*. Every young man should fill a mission." President Kimball then equated this instruction of going on a mission with the commandments of paying tithing, of observing the Sabbath, of marrying in the temple (in Regional Representatives' seminar, 4 Apr. 1974).

In twenty-four months you will have twenty-four years' worth of spiritual adventures. You will see people change; soften; become more humble, more obedient; have their prayers answered; and come to a knowledge that our message is true.

Let me illustrate:

Two elders met and taught a professor with credentials from Heidelberg and the Sorbonne. His mind was not open to their message, but the man had to go to the hospital for surgery. While he was recuperating in the hospital, his yard and garden suffered. The two missionaries felt impressed to use their preparation day to mow his lawn, trim the hedge, and weed the flowers.

The wife told her husband what they had done. He sent for the elders to come to the hospital, and with tears in his eyes he said, "Never in my entire adult life has anyone ever gone out of his way to do anything for me."

His demeanor changed. He listened to the missionary discussions. Previously skeptical, he now paid rapt attention and visibly became more meek and humble. He prayed for the first time since he was a child, and he received a testimony and was baptized.

Two missionaries asked a new family to kneel in prayer, and the senior companion, not knowing why, asked the husband to move over by his wife and take her hand. He hesitated, and the missionary simply said, "That's what

my mom and dad do at home. Please take your wife by the hand."

After they were baptized, the husband and wife tearfully confessed that they were on the verge of divorce when they met the missionaries. The husband had already moved out of the home. He was just there to visit the children when the missionaries appeared. The husband said that as his hand touched his wife's, a healing spirit came over them. Love replaced the wounds and the misunderstandings; they forgave each other, and the husband came home.

Another man said that he would not go to church but that his family could go. The missionaries told him that they would always save him a seat right by the door in case he changed his mind. One Sunday he was prompted to go to church even though his family had left without him. From the foyer he could see his family seated with the missionaries and a space at the end of the pew vacant and easily accessible. He entered the little chapel, and his footsteps were heard. The missionaries turned their heads, and when they saw him, tears came to their eyes. After baptism the husband would say, "Never in my life had anyone ever cried out of happiness just to see me enter a room."

A new senior companion faced a sophisticated woman lawyer who was polite but very intellectual. When the missionary asked her who the boy prophet saw in the column of light, she answered, "I am an atheist." The elder didn't really understand the implication, so he repeated the question. She answered again, "I am an atheist. You want me to say that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son, but I do not believe in God."

The elder had never encountered an atheist before, and his first impulse was to give up and leave, but the Spirit said, "No, she will listen. Just answer the questions for her." So the elder proceeded and said, "You are right. He saw the Father and the Son." He continued with the presentation, but instead of asking questions directly, he asked

them indirectly and answered them himself for her.

At the end of the presentation he taught her how we pray, and then courageously asked her to kneel with them and to be the voice. She did kneel and did pray to her Heavenly Father. Never again did she say that she was an atheist. She and her family subsequently were baptized.

### **Adventures of the Spirit**

In the mission field, more than anywhere else, you can enjoy those adventures of the spirit we call "thin-veil experiences" and "liquid-fire experiences," the things so spiritual and miraculous that tongue cannot adequately confess nor the hand of man appropriately write.

The missionary has his own voyages of discovery into the realms of the Spirit, and he sees others uplifted with those heart-warming, peace-producing, mind-opening encounters of a spiritual kind which I choose to call "adventures"—adventures of the Spirit.

For example:

- A verse of the scriptures that glows in your mind, like Joseph reading in James;
- A prayer the Lord responds to with an outpouring of His love so intense that a yes or no answer doesn't really matter;
- A hymn with poetic words of condensed spirituality that causes the soul to soar heavenward;
- An unselfish act of service which leaves you feeling as if you were serving perhaps even the Savior Himself;
- The sacrament covenant to take Christ's name upon oneself pierces the soul so deeply that Christ's atonement truly becomes a personal, saving experience, a rebirth;
- A newly placed Book of Mormon causing an inquisitive person to read half the night in an exciting discovery of the newfound witness for Christ;
- The bad men who become good, the good men and women who become better, the great people who become

greater and more Christlike through the gospel.

Be instruments in His hands.

Build up treasures in heaven.

Discover the missionary adventures of the spirit.

God lives and loves us. He is in His heaven.

Jesus lives and loves us. Resurrected, glorified, exalted, He stands physically at the head of this church which bears His name. His spokesman is a living prophet, and everything that we teach is true.

As a witness, I testify of it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Benson

Elder Robert E. Wells, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Quest for self-mastery

If our faith be united in prayer that we may be edified together, I should like to speak about our quest for self-mastery. In so doing, I would converse as a loving father counseling one of my own children.

Before you can master yourself, my precious one, you need to know who you are. You consist of two parts—your physical body, and your spirit which lives within your body. You may have heard the expression “mind over matter.” That’s what I would like to talk about—but phrase it a little differently: “spirit over body.” That is self-mastery.

When you arrived as a newborn baby, your little body was master. You had what I call the “I-want-what-I-want-when-I-want-it” philosophy. No amount of discussion could postpone your impatient demands when you wanted to be fed—and *now!* Like all parents, we anxiously anticipated the first smile, a word, a glimpse at the potential of the spirit within your tiny body. Is there a mother who has not cradled her baby as your sweet mother did, in wistful wonder of the destiny of her dear little one? Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, might have asked such questions:

Baby, lyin’ in a manger,  
slumberin’ so sweetly,  
What you goin’ to be?  
Baby, all the world is watchin’, all  
the world awaits to see.  
What will you be?  
Baby, sleepin’ in a stable,  
underneath the heaven,  
What you goin’ to say? . . .  
Baby, lyin’ in a manger,  
Will you save the world one day?  
(Natalie Sleeth, “Baby, What You  
Goin’ to Be?” [New York: Carl  
Fisher, Inc.]

### Body, tenement for spirit

Through those early years, we parents are properly concerned with physical needs of our children, such as food, clothing, and shelter.

But as you grow older, our concerns shift more toward your spiritual growth, in order that you might achieve your full potential. “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . and becometh a saint” (Mosiah 3:19).

That requires self-mastery. Remember, “The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). Both are of great importance. Your physical