

leadership meeting provides a forum for the pretraining of potential leaders, to supplement the learning-by-observing method followed in established areas of the Church. What a blessing it is to be able to go to the scriptures to find the answers to virtually any challenge we face in our Church callings.

Let me close by expressing my love and gratitude for goodly parents, to my

choice wife and companion, and to our children and grandchildren, who sustain us so well with their prayers and the lives they lead. To them and to you I testify that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true, that Jesus lives and loves each of us with an unbounded love, and that Ezra Taft Benson is His chosen prophet today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder John R. Lasater

I am aware, more than at any other time in my life, of the great responsibility that rests on the shoulders of those who carry out assignments at this pulpit. Nevertheless, I rejoice in the blessing and opportunity that is now mine to add my personal witness regarding the divinity of this great work to which we have been called.

### Example of the Master Shepherd

The personal nature of the Lord's ministry as the Master Shepherd should be the pattern for all who shepherd the flocks of Israel. The depth of His love, His willingness to give freely of Himself, His undeviating loyalty and devotion to the cause shared so completely with His Father, and His constant attention to the needs of the one stand as hallmarks of the true shepherd's calling.

### A shepherd in Morocco

Some years ago, it was my privilege to visit the country of Morocco as part of an official United States government delegation. As part of that visit, we were invited to travel some distance into the desert to visit some ruins. Five large black limousines moved across the beautiful Moroccan countryside at considerable speed. I was riding in the third limousine, which had lagged some distance behind the second. As we topped the brow of a hill, we noticed that the limousine in front of us had pulled off to

the side of the road. As we drew nearer, I sensed that an accident had occurred and suggested to my driver that we stop. The scene before us has remained with me for these many years.

An old shepherd, in the long, flowing robes of the Savior's day, was standing near the limousine in conversation with the driver. Nearby, I noted a small flock of sheep numbering not more than fifteen or twenty. An accident had occurred. The king's vehicle had struck and injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd. The driver of the vehicle was explaining to him the law of the land. Because the king's vehicle had injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd, he was now entitled to one hundred times its value at maturity. However, under the same law, the injured sheep must be slain and the meat divided among the people. My interpreter hastily added, "But the old shepherd will not accept the money. They never do."

Startled, I asked him why. And he added, "Because of the love he has for each of his sheep." It was then that I noticed the old shepherd reach down, lift the injured lamb in his arms, and place it in a large pouch on the front of his robe. He kept stroking its head, repeating the same word over and over again. When I asked the meaning of the word, I was informed, "Oh, he is calling it by name. All of his sheep have a name, for he is their shepherd, and the good shepherds know each one of their sheep by name."

It was as my driver predicted. The money was refused, and the old shepherd with his small flock of sheep, with the injured one tucked safely in the pouch on his robe, disappeared into the beautiful deserts of Morocco.

### **The shepherd's call is personal**

As we continued our journey toward the ruins, my interpreter shared with me more of the traditions and practices of the shepherds of that land. Each evening at sundown, for example, the shepherds bring their small flocks of sheep to a common enclosure where they are secured against the wolves that roam the deserts of Morocco. A single shepherd then is employed to guard the gate until morning. Then the shepherds come to the enclosure one by one, enter therein, and call forth their sheep—by name. The sheep will not hearken unto the voice of a stranger but will leave the enclosure only in the care of their true shepherd, confident and secure because the shepherd knows their names and they know his voice.

The words of the Master Shepherd rang loudly in my ears:

“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

“To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:2–5).

### **Become true shepherds**

My dear brothers and sisters, there are great lessons to be learned from these stirring words of the Master Shepherd. Into our hands, as members of this great church, has been given responsibility to be the true shepherds unto the flocks of Israel. Do we understand the personal nature of the shepherd's call? Whether we

go as home teachers or visiting teachers, whether we serve as auxiliary leaders or teachers, or priesthood leaders at whatever level, we have received a divine injunction from God, through a living prophet, to become personal shepherds and ministers. No, it is not a new call; it has always been so.

Do we know our sheep, each one, by name? Do they know our voice, or must they hearken unto the voices of strangers? Do they know us as true shepherds who love them, who willingly and freely give time and attention to their needs, and, in that marvelous process, instill the confidence and security so greatly needed in God's children today? Are we then able to lead them into full activity in the Church and onward to immortality and eternal life? Do we go before them, constantly reassuring and building confidence because they know our voice?

Or are we strangers unto many? I promise you that you will not be a stranger, that you cannot be if you come to know the voice of the Master Shepherd, for that voice will confirm what a prophet has declared, and the Spirit will direct your efforts. And then, and only then, you will become a true shepherd in Israel.

There can be no greater example of the very personal nature of a true shepherd's call than the events of that Easter weekend nearly two thousand years ago—the depth of the Master Shepherd's love, His willingness to give freely of Himself, His undeviating loyalty and devotion to the cause, and His constant attention to the needs of the one. Those same qualities must mark our ministries as the shepherds of Israel.

I testify, with all the fervency of my soul, regarding the need we have to be true shepherds and to come to know the personal nature of the true shepherd's call. As one of His shepherds, I bear witness of the sacred responsibility that has been placed on our shoulders to be true shepherds unto the flocks of Israel and to know the personal nature of that calling. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Monson

Elders George R. Hill III and John R. Lasater of the First Quorum of the Seventy have just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and currently serving as president of the Hawaii Honolulu Mission.

## Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

My dear brothers and sisters, I bring greetings from the Saints and missionaries in the beautiful islands of Hawaii. I say to you, aloha!

Today, I would like to ask a question: My dear brothers, are we treating our wives as daughters of God? Are you treating *your* wife as a daughter of God?

*A daughter of God.* The words have a special feeling. Even as you say them, you feel a reverence. You may say, "Oh, Brother Kikuchi, of course I treat her as a daughter of God!" But my next question is, How *much* do you treat and honor her as a daughter of God? Let's stop and think of your lovely companion. She was entrusted to you by Heavenly Father as a special daughter of God.

I believe that in this lifetime, the closest person or neighbor that you can have in your life is your sweet wife. She is your sweetheart! She is your love! She is your best friend! She is your lover! And she is a daughter of God!

### Love thy wife

The Lord's teaching to the lawyer was very clear:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is *like unto it*, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-39; italics added).

Yesterday, our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, said that above everything we do in our lives, we must place the first commandment first—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

The second is also like the first. The Lord said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Brothers, among all the children of our Father in Heaven, don't you think your wife is the closest neighbor that you can have?

The Lord said, "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart" (D&C 42:22).

Truly, "marriage is ordained of God" (D&C 49:15). "Marriage is honorable in all" (Hebrews 13:4).

### Abraham's commitment

When the Lord told Abraham to offer his only son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah, Abraham took Isaac, two servants, and a donkey and built an altar (see Genesis 22:2-3). On the way, Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Though Father Abraham knew that Isaac was the one, he said, "My son, God will provide" (vs. 7-8).

When the time came, Abraham was willing to offer Isaac, and Isaac did not run away (see vs. 9-11). Brothers and sisters, in our marriages, we need both the commitment of Abraham and also the spirit of Isaac.

### Behold thy mother

At the time of his unendurable agony, the Savior looked down on his mother, Mary, and introduced John to her, saying, "Woman, behold thy son!" And to John he said, "Behold thy mother!" The scripture records that John "took her unto his own home" (John 19:26-27).

Are we worthy to be entrusted by the Lord to take care of one of our Heavenly Father's daughters?