

My brothers and sisters, it has been a humbling experience for me to speak to you in this great conference. I want you to know that you have my love, my faith, and my prayers. I know that no people on earth have more capacity to be what the Lord wants them to be than those of you who are members of this great church.

I also want you to know that my life was changed more than forty years ago as I read the Book of Mormon. There is nothing on earth that has influenced me more profoundly than my testimony of

this sacred record and the work to which it belongs. It has burned within my soul over the years with ever-increasing brightness, and I find great joy and satisfaction in walking in "newness of life" in my search for the "more excellent way."

And I find great joy and satisfaction in walking that journey with a beloved companion, and now with a posterity who seem to have caught the same vision.

May you have this experience, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

Communications affect the soul

Heavenly Father has given us a priceless gift in our capacity to communicate with each other. Our communications are at the core of our relationships with others. If we are to return home safely to Heavenly Father, we must develop righteous relationships with His children here in mortality.

Our communications reflect in our countenance. Therefore, we must be careful not only *what* we communicate, but also *how* we do so. Souls can be strengthened or shattered by the message and the manner in which we communicate.

Accountable for all communication

We will be held accountable for all that we say. The Savior has warned "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36). This means that no communication shall be without consequence. This includes the slight slips of the tongue, the caustic communications that canker the soul, and the vain, vulgar, and profane words which desecrate the name of Deity.

Un-Christlike communications

There are certain kinds of un-Christlike communications which destroy relationships and are not for our development

but are for our destruction. They result in a diminished opportunity of returning home safely to Heavenly Father. One of the major ways that Satan uses to retard the development of righteous relationships is in the use of gossip, rumor, and slander on his communication network. Perhaps the more common un-Christlike communications are those of lying, blaming, criticizing, and anger.

1. Lying. The first of these communications is that of lying. To lie is to be untruthful, deceptive, deceitful, and dishonest. This is a basic communications problem which is not new; it goes back to the Garden of Eden.

Satan introduced the first recorded communications problem in the form of lying in his conversation with Eve. He asked recorded history's first question: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

Eve responded, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

"But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, . . . lest ye die" (vs. 2-3).

Satan, in a spirit of deception and defiance, responded, "Ye shall not surely die" (v. 4). He distorted the truth, denied the word of God, and planted the seeds of doubt about the word of Deity. Thus, Satan became the father of lies, deception, and doubt.

It is a serious sin to lie. The scriptures teach us that "lying lips are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 12:22) and that "he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out" (D&C 42:21). They also teach us that to lie about a person is a form of hatred, for "a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it" (Proverbs 26:28). The Apostle Paul gave us counsel concerning this matter: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25).

Integrity is the core of our character. Without integrity we have a weak foundation upon which to build other Christlike characteristics.

2. *Blaming.* A second un-Christlike communication is that of blaming. This is a condemning communication. It is interesting that when the Lord confronted Adam in his fallen state, Adam began to place the blame on Eve for his actions. He said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). When Eve was confronted, she placed the blame on Satan. She said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (v. 13).

It has been from the beginning and it will be till the end that the natural man will have a tendency to rationalize and to blame his behaviors on others or on certain circumstances. When we attempt to place responsibility for our choices on others, we are responding in a less than Christlike manner. Blaming is an unrighteous form of communication.

3. *Criticizing.* A third un-Christlike communication is that of criticizing. Positive criticism is feedback given with the purpose of helping another person to grow and to develop. This is both helpful and needful and is generally accepted and appreciated.

Negative criticism is intended to hurt and often to defame and to destroy. This caustic communication is cruel, and it tends to crush the character of all of those about whom it is directed. King Benjamin urged his people not to "have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably" (Mosiah 4:13). We should surely follow

this counsel and defend those who are defamed by these denouncements.

4. *Anger.* A fourth is anger. This is perhaps the most common form of un-Christlike communication. Anger causes anguish to the souls of all of those who experience the feeling as well as to those who are the recipients of this emotional explosion.

Anger shows a lack of self-control and an inability to relate in a righteous way to others. It is a senseless substitute for self-control. It is sometimes used as a selfish strategy to gain control of a relationship. President Wilford Woodruff counseled that "the moment a man or a woman becomes angry they show a great weakness" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:98).

We are instructed to "let all bitterness, . . . and anger, . . . and evil speaking, be put away" (Ephesians 4:31). The implication is clear: we have the capacity to control this carnal communication.

Counsel

Much counsel has been given concerning our communications with others. The counsel given by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Saints seems to be most appropriate for the Latter-day Saints. He cautioned, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good" (Ephesians 4:29). He further counseled to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (v. 32).

Christlike communications

May we be found communicating with each other in a manner in which the Savior would communicate. Christlike communications are expressed in tones of love rather than loudness. They are intended to be helpful rather than hurtful. They tend to bind us together rather than to drive us apart. They tend to build rather than to belittle.

Christlike communications are expressions of affection and not anger, truth and not fabrication, compassion and not

contention, respect and not ridicule, counsel and not criticism, correction and not condemnation. They are spoken with clarity and not with confusion. They may be tender or they may be tough, but they must always be tempered.

The real challenge that we face in our communications with others is to condition our hearts to have Christlike feelings for all of Heavenly Father's children. When we develop this concern for the condition of others, we will then communicate with them as the Savior would. We will then warm the hearts of those who may be suffering in silence. As we meet people with special needs along life's way, we can then make their journey brighter by the things that we say.

Christlike communications will help us to develop righteous relationships and ultimately to return to our heavenly home safely. May we treasure the divine gift of communication, and may we use it wisely to build and to assist others on this marvelous journey through mortality. May

Heavenly Father bless us to this end, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "How Firm a Foundation" without announcement.

President Monson

Elders Robert E. Sackley and L. Lionel Kendrick, members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, have just addressed us, followed by the choir singing "How Firm a Foundation."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall be pleased to hear remarks from Elder John K. Carmack, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder John K. Carmack

I am sure I speak for all of you when I say how much we have been inspired by this great choir. I think I speak for all of you and especially the Brethren in welcoming these four new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and sustaining our new leaders, Elder Clarke and Elder Scott.

What does it mean to bear testimony? A testimony is an open declaration or confession of one's faith. To bear is to give or bring forward. So as I bear testimony, I am giving a declaration of my faith.

Most of you would gladly bear testimony if called upon. I wish we could yield a minute to each one of you. The real power of the Church is not financial or political, but the quiet testimonies of its members.

Keep testimonies growing

Members may describe their testimonies as growing. A few say they have

lost their testimonies. In bearing testimony, some use the term *know*, some *believe*. Some say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

I desire to edify all, no matter what the status of their testimonies.

When Shirley and I returned from the marriage of our son in the Oakland Temple last month, we strolled into the backyard. The lawn had looked particularly healthy and green this summer. To our horror, we discovered that the lawn had withered and turned as if to straw in the few days we had been gone. The automatic sprinkler had failed, and the hot summer sun had scorched the lawn.

Testimonies are like our lawn. They may be green and growing, but the heat of summer can change all of that. I shudder when I hear anyone declare, "I will never deny my testimony of the gospel." I seem to hear another standing by and answering quietly, "Well, we shall see."