

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Maybe a second would be from Luke 6:35:

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

And in James 1:27 we read:

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Finally, display one of the great scriptures from the Book of Mormon, Moroni 7:47:

"But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."

I love the gospel of our Lord and Savior. It has brought into my life the

greatest peace of mind, joy, and happiness I could ever hope to find on this earth. I pray that each of us might be willing and able to share this pearl of great price—a pearl of lasting and singular beauty—with all of our Heavenly Father's children, that we may go forward armed with the gospel of our Lord and Savior. This is His work in which we're engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. This is my solemn witness to you, in His holy name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. Following Elder Wirthlin, we shall hear from Elder Victor L. Brown, an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

My beloved brethren and sisters, I pray for that same Spirit that we have enjoyed so much during this conference. I should like today to address my remarks to the youth, to those of you who still have before you the greater part of this journey we call life. I hope you have decided to follow the course marked by our Savior and his teachings. Following that course requires great effort and the help of the Lord at each step along the way. I promise you that his help always is there.

The marathon

In recent years, running has become a popular form of exercise throughout the world. Many run primarily for the exercise, but others run to condition themselves for well-publicized races of various

distances. Perhaps the premier endurance race is the marathon, a modern-day race that has its roots in ancient Greece. Today, the meaning of the word has been broadened to include any contest or activity of great length that requires extraordinary effort and endurance.

A young friend of mine, whom I will call Alan, recently ran his first marathon—a distance of 26.2 miles. He had set his goal several months in advance, learned what preparation was required, and disciplined himself to follow a rigorous training schedule. He sought the advice of experienced runners and read articles on running a marathon. He practiced running the marathon route and planned a strategy for traversing the hilly course.

Finally, the day of the marathon arrived; it would be the culmination of months of training, discipline, and sacrifice. He got off to a good start in a large crowd of runners. He felt strong and confident, following his predetermined strategy. About eight miles into the race, on a downhill part of the course, he caught up with an experienced runner, Brent by name, who had given him sound advice during his training. Alan decided to match his stride to Brent's disciplined and experienced pace.

As they passed the eighteen-mile mark, Alan struggled to stay with Brent so someone he knew would be by his side if he began "hitting the wall." Hitting the wall means feeling a sudden urge to quit, encountering an almost tangible barrier that requires a tremendous effort to overcome. It often comes at about the twenty-mile mark.

For the next two miles, Alan kept pace with Brent. Then it hit him. He felt a sudden loss of energy, an almost overwhelming desire to stop or walk. "Stay with me," Brent said. "We all feel it at some point. You can get through it. I'll help pull you through."

Somehow, Alan continued. He and Brent began to pass spectators. He knew his wife, children, and other family members would be watching about one mile ahead. Drawing on the strength provided by thoughts of his family, he was able to hang on until the desire to quit left him.

As they finally neared the finish, Alan found the last mile to be the hardest of all. Alan and Brent crossed the finish line just five seconds apart. Alan was more exhausted than he ever had been but was elated because he had beaten his goal by more than fifteen minutes and had finished among the top twenty-five runners.

Life is like running a marathon

In some respects, progressing through life is like running a marathon. You young people are nearer the beginning of your earthly sojourn. You chose to come to this earth and to be tested and proved. The end may seem too far away to concern you now. But life, like a mara-

thon, requires a good start and a strong, consistent effort all of the way to the finish.

Set goals

Marathon runners set explicit goals. You should look ahead now and decide what you want to do with your lives. Fix clearly in your mind what you want to be one year from now, five years, ten years, and beyond. Receive your patriarchal blessing and strive to live worthy of its promises. A patriarchal blessing is one of the most important guides in life that members of the Church enjoy. Write your goals and review them regularly. Keep them before you constantly, record your progress, and revise them as circumstances dictate. Your ultimate goal should be eternal life—the kind of life God lives, the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Prepare

After you visualize yourself as you would like to be in twenty years from now, identify the preparation you will need. Determine to pay the price in effort, money, study, and prayer. Be sure you understand the course or path you will be taking. The ideal course of life is not always easy. Comparatively few will find it and complete it. It is not a well-marked freeway, but a narrow path with only one entrance. The way to eternal life is straight and narrow. When I think of staying on the right path, I am reminded of Lehi's dream about the tree of life. In it, the love of God was likened to a tree that bore delicious fruit, fruit that was desirable above all others. As Nephi recorded his father's words: "And I also beheld a strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree. . . . And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree" (1 Nephi 8:20–21). Many of these people later "fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (8:28). But those who ignored the scoffing and ridicule of the world and held tightly to the rod of iron enjoyed the

fruit of the tree. The rod of iron represents the word of God, that leads us to the love of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25). You must hold firmly to the rod of iron through the mists and darknesses, the hardships and trials of life. If you relax your grip and slip from the path, the iron rod might become lost in the darkness for a time until you repent and regain your grasp of it.

Remember that success results when preparation meets opportunity in your lives. You will not always know precisely what opportunities will come or when they will come. But you can be sure they will be valuable only to the extent that you are prepared to respond to them. You can see the equation of preparation plus opportunity equaling success in the lives of leaders in the Church, government, business, professions, and, hopefully, in your own lives.

Preparation is vitally important in the Church so you can do your part when called upon and so the Lord can use you when he needs you.

Seek help and give help

In life, as in a marathon, you should seek the help you need. Do not depend on your own strength alone. You have never done all you can to finish a task until you have sought help from the Lord, loved ones, Church leaders, and friends.

I'm sure we've all been impressed by a miracle that has occurred recently in this valley. Joshua Dennis, age ten, is alive today because of his own fervent prayer, faith, and overwhelming optimism, and, in addition, because of the fact that he listened to his mother and obeyed her counsel. In addition, we remember the feeling, and I call it inspiration, given to John Skinner, who led the search party to Joshua. I hope our youth will remember this great lesson of prayer as they pass through life's journey.

Relying on only your own abilities can lead to the sin of pride. In the opening section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord described the wicked condition of many in the world, and I quote: "They

seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god" (D&C 1:16). If we boast in our own strength and "walk in our own way," we can slip easily from the straight and narrow path to the broad roadways of the world. Do not be misled by the occasional easiness of the way, like the downhill part of a marathon. Keep close to the Lord and trust in him during the easier times, just as you do in your uphill struggles.

Marathon runners pass aid stations located along the course; they provide water, encouragement, and assistance. Without this help, many runners could not carry on. You young people also have "aid stations" to help you keep moving along your course. They should include your parents, other family members, ward leaders, and teachers who have "run more races" and are farther along the path of life. Benefit from the experience they have accumulated. Trust them; seek their advice, counsel, and support; and then listen to them. They will help you stay on your course.

You young men should be grateful for the great privilege and blessing you have of bearing the Aaronic Priesthood. Be faithful in your priesthood duties; they will help you prepare for greater service. I urge you teachers and priests to be faithful home teachers, which is a lifetime calling for all of us. You young women should participate in the Young Women program. Learn the values of this program and apply them personally in your lives. Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women leaders support your parents in helping guide you through this critical part of your lives when the decisions you make have such far-reaching effects.

Always be willing, even anxious, to help others. Nothing else you do will give you the same genuine satisfaction and joy within because, and I quote, "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiiah 2:17). Ignoring the needs of others is a serious sin. Think of the words of Alma to the people of the Church in Zarahemla. He asked:

"Will ye . . . persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?"

"Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another; . . .

"Yea, and will you persist in turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?" (Alma 5:53-55).

King Benjamin taught that we must care for those in need—the poor, hungry, naked, and sick—both spiritually and temporally if we are to receive a remission of our sins from day to day or, in other words, if we are to walk guiltless before God (see Mosiah 18:29).

Hitting the wall

I suppose some of you, at one time or another, feel that you are "hitting the wall," feeling an almost compelling urge to quit, give up, or give in to temptation. You will meet challenges, adversities, and temptations that seem to be more than you can bear. In times of sickness, death, financial need, and other hardships, you may wonder whether you have the strength, courage, or ability to continue.

You young people face the same temptations that have been common throughout history, plus many others that were unknown to earlier generations. However, be sure you understand that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability to resist (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). He does not give you challenges that you cannot surmount. He will not ask more than you can do but may ask right up to your limits so you can prove yourselves. The Lord will never forsake or abandon anyone. You may abandon him, but he will not abandon you. You never need to feel that you are alone.

The reason to stay on course in a marathon is obvious. The reason to stay on a course that leads to a righteous life may be less obvious but is much more important. In simple terms, a righteous life is the way—the only way—to happiness, joy, and peace. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

"Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God. . . .

". . . In obedience there is joy and peace, . . . and as God has designed our happiness . . . , he never has—He never will . . . give a commandment to His people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which He has designed" (*History of the Church*, 5:134-35).

We read in the Book of Mormon, "Men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

Our Heavenly Father knows the way for you to enjoy happiness and peace; the principles of the gospel mark the way. They are a gift to you, his children.

On the other hand, Satan will try, at every step of the way, to lead you off course. His objective is to make you unhappy and miserable like he is (see 2 Nephi 2:27). Vast sums of money are spent each year to package and disguise sin and evil to make them appear enticing, attractive, even harmless. However, regardless of appearances, "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10) and never will be. Never find yourselves in the position of the Nephites just a few years before the birth of the Savior. They "sought . . . for that which [they] could not obtain; . . . for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head" (Helaman 13:38). You cannot find happiness in sin and iniquity.

The Lord has given you the gift of agency (see Moses 7:32) and instructed you sufficiently to know good from evil (see 2 Nephi 2:5). You are free to choose (see 2 Nephi 2:27) and are permitted to act (see 2 Nephi 10:23; Helaman 14:30), but you are not free to choose the consequences. With absolute certainty, choices of good and right lead to happiness and peace, while choices of sin and evil eventually lead to unhappiness, sorrow, and misery.

Endure to the end

An obvious parallel between life and a marathon is the necessity to run diligently and endure to the end. Among his final words to his people, Nephi told them: "And now, . . . after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; . . . Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ . . . and endure to the end" (2 Nephi 31:19-20). I think of this promise of the Lord: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). You have that promise.

My dear young friends, I pray that the Lord will guide and strengthen each of you in running your personal marathon. Then you can say, as Paul wrote to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have

finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). I know that you *can* live righteous lives and, with the help of the Lord, *do* all that you should do. I bear testimony that our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ love each of you and want you to be happy. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the restoration of the gospel in these latter days, and President Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet today. This is the Church of our Lord and Savior; I am one of His witnesses. I bear this humble testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Victor L. Brown, who will speak as one who has received emeritus status in this conference.

Elder Victor L. Brown

Serving with prophets of God

Twenty-eight years ago today, to my total surprise, my professional life took a completely different direction. I had spent twenty-one years in the commercial aviation industry, and I enjoyed it. We had just moved into a new home in Chicago when a call came from Church headquarters inviting me to come to Salt Lake City for an interview with President David O. McKay. All my prior plans were discarded as I was called to be a Counselor to the new Presiding Bishop, John H. Vandenberg. I had never thought nor aspired to become a General Authority, but there was only one answer possible when President McKay, a prophet of God, called me to this work.

These twenty-eight years following that experience in October of 1961 have provided opportunities for service I never could have dreamed of. I have been blessed with dedicated associates in many countries and at headquarters who have worked faithfully to help build the kingdom of God, often at great personal sacrifice.

I was privileged to serve very closely under four Presidents of the Church — Presidents David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Spencer W. Kimball. As a member of the Presiding Bishopric for twenty-four years, I sat in weekly meetings with the First Presidency and was privileged to be taught by these prophets of God. Prior to President Ezra Taft Benson's call to be the President of the Church, I was released from the Presiding Bishopric. Although I have not had regular opportunities to meet with him, I have appreciated his leadership and have greatly benefited from his challenge to each member of the Church to study and ponder the truths of the Book of Mormon. Each of these five Presidents under whom I have served as a General Authority has had his own personality and style; yet I testify each is a prophet of God. Through my association with them, I have come to understand why we sustain them as prophets, seers, and revelators.