

he was impressed to ask if any other LDS were there. He was told of an elderly grandmother awaiting her first surgery for a brain hemorrhage. She had no family or friends present, no one to encourage her. She was terrified! President Barnett sat with her for two hours. His hand was white from her strong grip. She said she loved him at least twenty times.

### Be faithful in Christ

Brethren, we are the sons of God. We have been commissioned of Jesus Christ to bear His holy priesthood

and to build up His church. We must expand our awareness as quorums and as individuals, and increase our caring capacity. Let us live righteously and extend the healing power of the priesthood, through loving quorum service, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

In his last tender letter to Moroni, Mormon concluded, "My son, be faithful in Christ" (Moroni 9:25). I believe that would be the loving counsel of every father or mother to a son: Be faithful in Christ. So may we be, and honor His priesthood. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Jacob de Jager

Brethren, it's good to be with you. To speak in priesthood meeting of general conference is for me literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity because I have never before had this privilege in the fifteen years that I have belonged to the Quorum of the Seventy, and it is not likely that I will have another chance to do so. I therefore consider it a personal blessing to address such a vast audience of worthy men holding the priesthood of God.

### Change

A great number of you are still single, and many of you are married. To those who are married, I would like to testify, based on my personal experience, that a loving, supportive wife at home is a great source of strength. You probably have heard the saying, "Behind every great man stands a great woman." In the Church we have changed that adage somewhat by saying, "Behind every great man in the Church stands a surprised mother-in-law," because she may say, "Is this the boy who married my daughter? Is he a

bishop now? I can't believe it." Yes, Mother, that boy has matured, has gained experience by taking upon himself greater responsibilities, and has learned to serve the Lord while serving others. In short, he has *changed!*

I would like to talk tonight about *change* because everything around us seems to be changing at an accelerated pace. In the last two years we have observed tremendous changes in Eastern Europe. Also, the recent events in the Persian Gulf region have, understandably so, changed the lives of many people in a dramatic way. It was inevitable that our personal lives as well were influenced by the events around us, and maybe we experienced the discomforting feeling that these changes in the world are beyond our control.

### Commitment to priesthood duties

Yet there are important changes everyone should be able to make through proper preparation—changes over which we do have control. Brethren, as priesthood holders we should ask ourselves these questions: Am I

giving enough attention and time to personal change, which will make me a better person in the eyes of the Lord? And am I, as a father and spiritual leader in my own home, giving enough attention and time to my basic duties and responsibilities? These are:

Number 1. To lead and direct my family in regular family prayer and study of the scriptures.

Number 2. To prepare my sons to receive the priesthood and the other members in my family to honor the priesthood.

Number 3. To encourage my family to be worthy to receive the temple ordinances and be faithful to the covenants made.

Number 4. To assist my family members to develop their personal talents and divine gifts to strengthen and serve others.

Number 5. To inspire my family members to keep the commandments of God and endure in faith until the end.

When we really understand, accept, and commit ourselves to these priesthood duties, we prepare ourselves for a miraculous change with eternal consequences.

#### **“Partakers of the divine nature”**

Have we not been promised that we “might be partakers of the divine nature”? (2 Peter 1:4). This means that through personal change we develop a desire to live in harmony with the divine teachings of the Lord and to free our minds from all ill feelings toward other people. To do so will make us more worthy, even more perfect.

The old saying “Change is progress” then takes on a special meaning for all of us because repentance is change, conversion is change, perfecting is change. All this is in complete harmony with the desires of our Heav-

enly Father and the loving pleadings of the Redeemer.

As members of the Lord’s restored church, we have through divine revelation received a perfect knowledge of what the future holds for us. *The plan of redemption has been revealed to us in all its glory.* It perfectly covers our premortal existence, our earthly journey, and our life hereafter, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has made the following statement about the manner in which we should read the Book of Mormon: “For some Church members the Book of Mormon remains unread. Others use it occasionally as if it were merely a handy book of quotations. Still others accept and read it but do not really explore and ponder it. The book is to be feasted upon, not nibbled” (*But for a Small Moment* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], p. 28).

#### **Admonitions of Amulek**

Let us, therefore, today feast upon the words of Amulek, the missionary companion of Alma the Younger, as recorded in chapter 34 of Alma, starting with verse 30:

“And now, my brethren, I would that, *after ye have received so many witnesses*, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

“Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

“And now, as I said unto you before, *as ye have had so many witnesses*,

therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

“Ye cannot say, when you are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (34:30–34; italics added).

I pray, brethren, that we may be ever mindful of these admonitions of Amulek—at home, at work, in the community where we live, in our Church callings—and that we may answer the often-quoted question of Alma, “Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?” (Alma 5:14) with a resounding “Yes, we have!”

### Prepare for throngs of converts

Brethren, we have to do better, individually and collectively, to strengthen the priesthood base of the Church, to prepare ourselves to carry out our mandate in the next century, which may well show the most significant change in the history of mankind: the change of human hearts everywhere, the true conversion of people in ever-increasing numbers, the rolling forth of the kingdom unto the ends of the earth “as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2).

Our Heavenly Father has made the promise that He will put a new spirit in people and “take the stony heart out of their flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19). The dramatic changes we have experienced in recent years are the beginning of a new era.

In the Regional Representatives’ seminar of April 1987, the following vision was shared by Elder Maxwell:

“All these things [must be] done in wisdom and order.” (Mosiah 4:27.)

“... Our pioneers have been noted in times past for Mormon irrigation in arid regions. However, our ultimate success in irrigation will be when this Kingdom has grown to a point, numerically and spiritually, when gospel truth and righteousness shall ‘sweep the earth as with a flood.’ (Moses 7:62.)

“We are in an interlude in Church history when we must grow numerically and spiritually. This interlude precedes a special era when the gospel will be taken to those in the third world. Their response may overwhelm us, unless things are in order where we are already established. We must make ready for these brothers and sisters, because they are ready for us! Even now—in Alma’s words—‘they [are] in a preparation to hear the word.’ (Alma 32:6.)

“God bless us to be ‘in a preparation’ to take the word.”

Brethren, I bear solemn witness that the lines and precepts that I have shared with you tonight are true, that the Book of Mormon is indeed the word of God and the most correct book on earth pertaining to the salvation and exaltation of man.

I know that God lives and that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I also testify that President Ezra Taft Benson is the Lord’s prophet on the earth today. That we all may go out into the world to testify of these simple truths, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just listened to Elders J. Richard Clarke and Jacob de Jager of the Seventy. I hope you will pardon a little justifiable pride that I take in