

and you should be in your places by 9:15.

We express our appreciation to the combined men's choir who have sung so beautifully tonight. Following

my remarks they will conclude by singing "God of Our Fathers," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Horacio A. Tenorio of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we have had an excellent meeting. Much has been spoken worthy of remembrance and application in our lives. I endorse and commend to you what the Brethren have said. I hope that every man and boy, wherever you may be, may leave this meeting tonight with a greater desire and a stronger resolution to live more worthy of the divine priesthood which each of us holds.

Two anniversaries

I speak to you in a somewhat personal tone, not to boast but by way of testimony and in a spirit of gratitude.

This conference marks two personal anniversaries for me. Thirty years ago at the October conference I was sustained a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Ten years ago I was sustained as a Counselor in the First Presidency. I am deeply grateful to you and your families for your sustaining hands and hearts and prayers. Thank you. I confess I have never felt adequate to these tremendous callings. I suppose that every man and woman in this Church has those feelings in whatever office or calling he or she may be asked to serve.

Growth of the Church

I received a letter the other day from a grandson serving a mission in Poland. He is laboring with Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander in an area where they are trying to open the work. It is difficult. He wrote, "I am presi-

dent of a branch with four members, and I feel so inadequate."

I need not remind any of you, even you who are deacons, that it is an awesome thing to be clothed with the holy priesthood and to have the responsibility, great or small, to assist God our Eternal Father in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His sons and daughters of all generations. No one of us can comprehend the magnitude and full meaning of that responsibility. But with our limited knowledge, we know we must be faithful and diligent in carrying forward our duty.

Remarkable and miraculous things happen when we do so. May I remind you of the rich and wonderful fruits of your labors over a period of years. I hesitate to use statistics, but these represent the results of your service and the mighty blessings of the Lord.

In the thirty years since I was ordained an Apostle, the membership of the Church has grown from 1,800,000 to a present estimated membership of 8,040,000, or an increase of 441 percent.

The number of stakes has grown from 345 to 1,817. That represents a 527 percent increase. Admittedly, we are creating smaller stakes and more of them in an effort to improve efficiency of administration. Nonetheless, in the time during which many of us have served, we have seen a miracle.

I have seen in the season of my Apostleship the corps of full-time missionaries grow from 10,000 to approximately 45,000, for an increase of 425

percent, with a comparable growth in missions from 67 to 267, or a 398 percent growth.

Now these are statistics, not particularly interesting in table form, but tremendously significant in the lives of millions of the sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father who live in 135 nations and territories scattered across the earth where the Church is established.

When I think of these things, I feel like standing and shouting hallelujah. But more appropriately, I feel to kneel and say in humility, thanks be to God and His beloved Son, our Redeemer, for the growth of this Their work, and thanks be to my brothers and sisters, young and old, you who have been faithful and diligent in your duty in causing this to happen. This has been a joyful thing to observe.

Experience with sorrow

But during these ten years that I have served in the Presidency, I have also experienced much of sorrow. It is out of this experience that I wish to speak a little further. For a full decade now I have participated in the task of sitting in judgment on the worthiness of those who plead to come back into the Church after having been excommunicated. In every case there had been a serious violation of Church standards of conduct. In most cases there had been adultery, and in the majority of cases, husbands were the offenders. Disciplinary action had been taken against them. As months passed they longed for what they previously had. A spirit of repentance came into their hearts.

As one of these men said to me, "I really never understood nor appreciated the gift of the Holy Ghost until it was taken from me."

Unhappiness of women

I have spoken on three or four occasions to the women of the Church during the past ten years. I have received in response to these various talks a substantial number of letters. I have kept some of them in a file marked "Unhappy Women."

These letters have come from many areas. But they are all written in the same tone. I wish to read you a portion of one of them which was received only last week. The writer has granted me permission to do so. I will not disclose any names.

Said she: "I met my husband when he was a freshman. He was from a very active family with many years of service in the Church. He was so enthused about serving a mission. I thought we shared the gospel as our most important value in this life. We both enjoyed music and nature and had a high priority on gaining knowledge. We dated a few months, easily fell in love, and wrote to one another while he served an honorable mission. When he came back home, he got back into school and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. We followed the counsel of Church leaders and began our family. I had been attending [the university] on an Honors at Entrance scholarship, but I became pregnant and sick and left school to devote my time and energy to my husband and infant son.

"For the next eighteen years I supported my husband while he finished school, got some work experience, and started his own business. We both served in leadership positions in the Church and community. We had five wonderful children. I taught the children the gospel, how to work, how to serve, how to communicate, and how to play the piano. I baked bread; canned peaches, apples, tomatoes; sewed dresses and quilts; cleaned house; and

tended my flowers and vegetables. In many ways it seemed that we were an ideal family. Our relationship was sometimes sweet and sometimes difficult. Things were never perfect because I am not a perfect woman and he is not a perfect man, but many things were good. I did not expect perfection; I just kept trying.

"Then came the crash. About a year ago he decided that he never loved me and that our marriage was a mistake from the beginning. He was convinced that there was nothing in our relationship for him. He filed for divorce and moved out. 'Wait,' I kept saying. 'Oh, no. Stop! Don't do this. Why are you leaving? What is wrong? Please, talk to me. Look at our children. What of all our dreams? Remember our covenants. No, no! Divorce is not the answer.' He would not hear me. I thought I would die.

"Now I am a single parent. What an enormous load of heartache, pain, and loneliness is behind that statement. It explains so much trauma and so much anger from my teenage sons. It explains so many tears from my little girls. It explains so many sleepless nights, so many family demands and needs. Why am I in this mess? What did I choose wrong? How will I ever get through school? How will I get through this week? Where is my husband? Where is the father of my children? I join the ranks of tired women whose husbands leave them. I have no money, no job. I have children to care for, bills to pay, and not much hope."

I do not know if her former husband may be in this audience somewhere. If he is listening, I may receive from him a letter justifying what he has done. I know there are two sides to every issue. But somehow, I cannot understand how a man who holds the holy priesthood and who has entered into sacred and binding covenants before the Lord could justify abandoning his

responsibilities for his wife of eighteen years and the five children who exist because of him and of whose flesh and blood and heritage they have partaken.

The problem is not new. I suppose it is as old as the human race. Certainly it existed among the Nephites. Jacob, brother of Nephi, speaking as a prophet to his people, declared:

"For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

"... Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:31, 35).

Discipline a violent temper

Permit me to read from another letter. Said the writer: "My husband is a good man with many outstanding qualities and character traits, but underneath it all there is a strong streak of authoritarianism. . . . His volatile temper flares up often enough to remind me of all the potential ugliness of which he is capable.

"President Hinckley, . . . please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is inexcusable, never acceptable, and a cowardly way of dealing with differences, especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder."

Now, I believe that most marriages in the Church are happy, that both husbands and wives in those marriages experience a sense of security and love, of mutual dependence, and an equal sharing of burdens. I am confident that the children in those homes, at least in the vast majority of them, are

growing up with a sense of peace and security, knowing that they are appreciated and loved by both of their parents, who, they feel, love one another. But I am confident, my brethren, that there is enough of the opposite to justify what I am saying.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger? How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation.

Said the writer of Proverbs, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

A violent temper is such a terrible, corrosive thing. And the tragedy is that it accomplishes no good; it only feeds evil with resentment and rebellion and pain. To any man or boy within the sound of my voice who has trouble controlling his tongue, may I suggest that you plead with the Lord for the strength to overcome your weakness, that you apologize to those you have offended, and that you marshal within yourselves the power to discipline your tongue.

To the boys who are here, may I suggest that you watch your temper now, in these formative years of your life. As Brother Haight has reminded you, this is the season to develop the power and capacity to discipline yourselves. You may think it is the macho thing to flare up in anger and swear and profane the name of the Lord. It is not the macho thing. It is an indication of weakness. Anger is not an expression of strength. It is an indication of one's inability to control his thoughts, words, his emotions. Of course it is easy to get angry. When the weakness of anger takes over, the strength of rea-

son leaves. Cultivate within yourselves the mighty power of self-discipline.

Sacredness of marriage covenants

Now I move to another corrosive element that afflicts all too many marriages. It is interesting to me that two of the Ten Commandments deal with this: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:14, 17). Ted Koppel, moderator of ABC's "Nightline" program, is reported as saying the following to a group of students at Duke University concerning slogans that were proposed to reduce drugs and immorality:

"We have actually convinced ourselves that slogans will save us. . . . But the answer is *NO!* Not because it isn't cool or smart or because you might end up in jail or dying in an AIDS ward, but *NO* because it is wrong, because we have spent 5,000 years as a race of rational human beings, trying to drag ourselves out of the primeval slime by searching for truth and moral absolutes. In its purest form, truth is not a polite tap on the shoulder. It is a howling reproach. What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not *The Ten Suggestions*" (address given at Duke University, 10 May 1987).

Think about that for a moment. What Moses brought down were Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Jehovah on tablets of stone for the salvation and safety, for the security and happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.

Altogether too many men, leaving their wives at home in the morning and going to work, where they find attractively dressed and attractively made-up young women, regard themselves as young and handsome and as an irresistible catch. They complain that their wives do not look the same as they did twenty years ago when they married them. To which I say, "Who would, after living with you for twenty years?"

The tragedy is that some men are ensnared by their own foolishness and their own weakness. They throw to the wind the most sacred and solemn of covenants, entered into in the house of the Lord and sealed under the authority of the holy priesthood. They set aside their wives who have been faithful, who have loved and cared for them, who have struggled with them in times of poverty only to be discarded in times of affluence. They have left their children fatherless. They have avoided with every kind of artifice the payment of court-mandated alimony and child support.

Do I sound harsh and negative? Yes, I feel that way as I deal with case after case and have done so over a period of time. Wrote Paul, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). In that same epistle, he said to Timothy, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).

Now I recognize that there may be some few cases where conditions of the marriage are totally intolerable. But these cases are in the minority. And even in these cases, where a marriage has been undertaken and children are brought into the world, there is a responsibility, binding and with accountability before God, to provide care for those for whose lives the father is responsible.

The complaint of a husband, after eighteen years of marriage and five children, that he no longer loves his wife is, in my judgment, a feeble excuse for the violation of covenants made before God and also the evasion of the responsibilities that are the very strength of the society of which we are a part. The finding of fault with consequent divorce is usually preceded by a long period in which little mistakes are spoken of in harsh and angry language, where tiny molehills of difference grow into great mountains of conflict. I am

satisfied that the more unkindly a wife is treated, the less attractive she becomes. She loses pride in herself. She develops a feeling of worthlessness. Of course it shows.

A husband who domineers his wife, who demeans and humiliates her, and who makes officious demands upon her not only injures her, but he also belittles himself. And in many cases, he plants a pattern of future similar behavior in his sons.

No enduring happiness without women

My brethren, you who have had conferred upon you the priesthood of God, you know, as I know, that there is no enduring happiness, that there is no lasting peace in the heart, no tranquility in the home without the companionship of a good woman. Our wives are not our inferiors.

Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood side by side in the garden. They were expelled from the garden together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.

Now, brethren, I know I have spoken of a minority. But the depth of the tragedy which afflicts that minority, and particularly the victims of that minority, has impelled me to say what I have said. There is an old adage that says, "If the shoe fits, wear it."

What I have spoken I have said with a desire to be helpful and, in some

cases, in the spirit of a rebuke followed by an increase of love toward those whom I may have rebuked.

Beauty of happy marriage

How beautiful is the marriage of a young man and a young woman who begin their lives together kneeling at the altar in the house of the Lord, pledging their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity. When children come into that home, they are nurtured and cared for, loved and blessed with the feeling that their father loves their mother. In that environment they find peace and strength and security. Watching their father, they develop respect for women. They are taught self-control and self-discipline, which bring the strength to avoid later tragedy.

The years pass. The children eventually leave the home, one by one. And the father and the mother are again alone. But they have each other to talk with, to depend on, to nurture, to encourage, and to bless. There comes the autumn of life and a looking back with satisfaction and gladness. Through all of the years there has been loyalty, one to the other. There has been deference

and courtesy. Now there is a certain mellowness, a softening, an effect that partakes of a hallowed relationship. They realize that death may come anytime, usually to one first with a separation of a season brief or lengthy. But they know also that because their companionship was sealed under the authority of the eternal priesthood and they have lived worthy of the blessings, there will be a reunion sweet and certain.

Brethren, this is the way our Father in Heaven would have it. This is the Lord's way. He has so indicated. His prophets have spoken of it.

It takes effort. It takes self-control. It takes unselfishness. It requires the true essence of love, which is an anxious concern for the well-being and happiness of one's companion. I could wish nothing better for all of you than this, and I pray that this may be your individual blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "God of Our Fathers."

Elder Horacio A. Tenorio offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 161st Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Truth Eternal" without announcement.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks:

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 161st semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this conference, has asked me to conduct this session.