

In this revelation the Lord points out that children in their infant state are innocent before God but that Satan takes away light and truth from them because of disobedience and the tradition of their fathers. To prevent this, he commands parents to bring up their children in light and truth. (See D&C 93:38-40.)

Although the Lord chastised the leading brethren, and indeed all parents in Zion, for parental delinquency, he indicated that repentance is possible. But he also said that if we did not repent, we would be removed out of our place. (See D&C 93:41-50.)

Not only do the scriptures instruct us on when teaching is best done (see D&C 68:25-32; Deuteronomy 8:5-9) but also on what should and should not be taught (see Moroni 7:14-19; 2 Nephi 9:28-29) and who should and should not do the teaching (see 2 Nephi 28:14, 31; Mosiah 23:14).

### Essential part of God's plan

The early teaching of children by parents offers the solution to many problems which otherwise may afflict our lives. Is not this the ounce of prevention which will eliminate the need for many pounds of cure with respect to our youth? Is there a better way to create and promote marital harmony than for a husband and wife to fully cooperate in carrying out this their most important stewardship in time or eternity? What could bring greater satisfaction and meaning into the lives of grandparents or others than to establish the family tradition of training chil-

dren during their years of innocence? And finally, how can we more easily overcome pride than by teaching children, whose humility we must emulate in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? The proper teaching of children is truly one of the most essential parts of God's plan for our happiness.

When our Heavenly Father sends one of his spirit children into a home, it is as if he says to the parents: "John, Mary, here is my most priceless possession—the soul of a little child. As you can see, he is helpless and completely dependent upon you even for life itself. You are now given the privilege of molding his life as you think best. Please teach him that I am his Father and that Jesus is his Savior and that we want him and you to return and live with us when mortality is over. Remember that I am always available to guide you in rearing this child of ours if you will but seek my help. I hope you will do so often. Your Heavenly Father."

In a marvelous discourse given to the fathers in Israel, President Benson reminded us that our most important calling in time and eternity is that of husband and father (see *To the Fathers in Israel* [pamphlet, 1987]). I go now to spend my full time in the Andersen area of the Church, a calling from which I pray I shall never be released.

It is my prayer that each of us will recognize and fulfill well our sacred duty of bringing up children in light and truth that we may merit eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gardner H. Russell

### Elder Russell's mission call

The other day as I watched the videotape *Called to Serve*, my eyes moistened in instant tenderness as

each new missionary opened and read aloud with his family the official call to a full-time mission, signed by the President of the Church. I recalled my own mission call to Argentina. After sharing

the excitement of my call with my parents, I sought out my mentor, who was not a member of the Church, a former U.S. senator, to share the news of my call with him. He was not impressed and let me know in no uncertain terms that if I insisted on serving a mission, upon my return all the good jobs would be taken and I would never amount to anything. I was disappointed but realized that he saw my future only as the world perceives.

Years later I realized that my mission had prioritized my life toward family, service, and gospel principles. As an added bonus, I was far ahead of most of my former classmates in worldly achievements.

### **The call is an eternal miracle**

Somehow I understood even then that the call to full-time service in the Church is an unchanging, eternal miracle. Later I learned it is unique, and the call drives the Lord's Church, ever vitalizing and strengthening it every minute of the day.

The call to missionary service rarely comes when it is convenient or easy to serve. I never tire of hearing the testimony of President Ezra Taft Benson of his prompt acceptance of the call to serve a full-time mission, by letter from the living prophet of that time. The return address of the letter was simply Box B, Salt Lake City.

Married men were called to serve full-time missions even into this century. On the wall of my parents' bedroom, there hung a framed, faded newspaper clipping with a photograph of my father in the high collar and bowler hat of his time. "Married two-and-a-half years and never said a word to each other" was the caption. He left for the Australia Mission shortly after his wedding and had no verbal communication with my mother until he returned.

Among early converts who served missions in their mature years, leaving their families to do so, was my Great-grandfather Snow, who received a mission call to England and served well.

Yes, the call is an eternal miracle, never changing.

### **Mission calls are rarely convenient**

Joseph Smith, like Moses, Abraham, Jacob, and other prophets before him, was called by name by the Lord. He related, "One of them spake unto me, *calling me by name* and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17; italics added).

Shortly after he was called to restore the original Church, a small handful of priesthood holders, many of them heads of families, received calls to go into the mission field in the United States and the world to bring thousands unto Christ. From this effort came a solid and diversified base for the restored Church.

The Prophet did not ask any of those called if they wanted to serve or if it was convenient. Each received an official call as our Heavenly Father directed. They believed the call was from the Lord and that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

Mission calls are rarely made at a convenient time. When my call came to full-time service as mission president to the nations of Uruguay and Paraguay, there were commitments of civic and business nature. All were overcome miraculously. The call was accepted. As a member of the Seventy, after more than five years I can still, as the hymn says, scarcely take it in (see "How Great Thou Art," *Hymns*, no. 86). There is the same feeling of awe and humility today in the call as there was the day we were called. Let me pay

a tribute to Sister Russell. She shares this awe with me and has always been valiant in her love of Jesus Christ.

### Army of full-time missionaries

As a Church, we have been fairly obedient in accepting calls from our Heavenly Father, believing as we do that the call from him takes precedence over all others—witness the army of 45,000 full-time missionaries in several hundred missions worldwide.

Many young men and women decide at an early age to serve missions if called. Some follow family tradition. Others are recent converts who accept the call to serve full-time missions. They, in turn, set a pattern and tradition for future generations.

In many wards and stakes, the call is held to be so sacred that every young man and many young women accept the call to serve full-time missions. In others, the great majority of young men accept mission calls. These are true missionary wards and stakes. The only question their future missionaries ask is, “*When* shall I receive the call to serve a full-time mission?” and not *whether* I should or should not serve.

### Anything your Father asks

In several Saturday evening sessions of stake conferences in the United States, Mexico, and Central America, I have asked this question: “Please indicate by the raised hand if you would do *anything* our Heavenly Father asks you to do, no matter what, if you *only knew* that the Lord himself were asking you to do it.” A forest of hands shot up.

If it is true, and it *is* true, that all faithful members of the Church will do whatever our Heavenly Father asks them to do, perhaps the calls should be even more bold and direct. I have noticed that bishops the world over some-

times ask this kind of question of future missionaries: “John, have you thought about a mission?” The young man might say to himself, “Is it possible for a young man in this Church not to think about a mission?”

Whether it be to a young man, young woman, or married couple, the next question by the bishop often is, “Would you like to serve a mission?” This may be all right, but remember, nobody asked any of the early missionaries of the Church whether they would like to serve or if it would be convenient.

I thrilled at recently observing a good bishop arrange an appointment with a future missionary, a faithful young man, and in the ensuing interview get to know him and share the Spirit with him. He then asked if the young man would be willing to do whatsoever the Lord asked, then stated words to this effect: “In prayer my counselors and I have gone to our Heavenly Father, and he has indicated to us that you are to serve a full-time mission. What do you say to your Heavenly Father?” The response was positive. Then the bishop talked to the future missionary about what to do with his new car, his girlfriend, his education—questions that must be resolved before he is called.

### Embrace the miracle of the call

At present, less than half of our faithful young men from the United States and Canada serve missions; in the rest of the world one or two of ten are called. Once we as leaders and parents embrace the eternal miracle of the call in all its force and magnificence, untold thousands more will serve full-time missions.

Our Heavenly Father might not call us by name, but his called and ordained servants will call us to serve for

a period—by name and in *his* name and by *his* inspiration and revelation. May we all have a deeper insight into the divine nature and meaning of the call, this great eternal miracle, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

We have listened to Elders H. Verlan Andersen and Gardner H. Russell.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Asking the Lord for help

Life in today's world can be at times so complicated and the challenges so overwhelming as to be beyond our individual capacity to resolve them. We all need help from the Lord. Yet there are many individuals who don't know how to receive that help. They feel their urgent pleas for help have often gone unattended. How can that be when He Himself has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7)?

Such difficulty results either from not following His spiritual law for providing help or from not recognizing help when it comes. Well did James observe, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:3).

True, the Lord has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive" (D&C 4:7). But He also declared, "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me" (D&C 9:7).

It is evident that He intends that we do our part. But what specifically are we to do? No one would expect to receive a result from physical law without obeying it. Spiritual law is the same. As much as we want help, we must expect to follow the spiritual law that controls that help. Spiritual law is not mysterious. It is something that we can understand. The scriptures define it in significant detail. I will cite key

scriptures that teach how to ask for help, then summarize the spiritual law they clarify.

### Scriptural teachings

The Savior declared, "I, the Lord, am bound *when ye do what I say*; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10; italics added).

John taught, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments*, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22; italics added).

Nephi counseled, "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will *not harden your hearts*, and *ask me in faith*, believing that ye shall receive, *with diligence in keeping my commandments*, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11; italics added).

The Lord has the power to bless us at any time. Yet we see that to count on His help, we must consistently obey His commandments.

Enos recorded, "I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall *ask in faith*, believing that ye shall receive *in the name of Christ*, ye shall receive it" (Enos 1:15; italics added).

Mormon wrote, "Behold, I say unto you that *whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing*, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and *this promise* is