

## President Thomas S. Monson

How our beloved prophet and President, Ezra Taft Benson, would enjoy standing at this pulpit to open a glorious conference of the Church. President Benson, we love you; we pray for you; we are anxious to follow your inspired direction.

This morning I pray for heavenly help as I respond to President Benson's assignment to speak in his behalf. I shall attempt to express his thoughts and counsel, largely in his own words.

### Tribute to women

This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Relief Society. Women of the Church rejoice as they reflect on past achievements of their organization and, with foresight coupled with faith, meet today's challenges and plan for future accomplishments.

President Benson has singled out two members of the Relief Society for his personal tribute. He said: "I pay grateful tribute to two elect women who have influenced my life—my mother, and my own sweetheart and eternal companion. I thank God that they have used their womanly attributes of compassion and charity to bless my life and the lives of all their posterity."<sup>1</sup>

Reminiscing of boyhood days, President Benson recalls:

"Mother was Relief Society president in the ward, a small but solid country ward. I remember how important Father considered her work in that assignment.

"Father gave to me, as the oldest [child], the responsibility of harnessing the horse and getting the buggy ready for Mother's . . . weekly Relief Society meetings. . . .

"At that time I was not tall enough to buckle the collar or put the bridle on the horse without getting on the fence or [standing on] a box.

"In addition, I was to take half a bushel of wheat from our granary and put it in the back of the buggy. In those days the Relief Society sisters were building up a storage of wheat against a time of need. . . .

"When Mother was called to visit the sick in the ward or to help mothers with new babies, it was always by horse and buggy. As the buggy rolled down the dirt road, the circling wheels left a track that stayed even after the buggy disappeared. Mother's influence has also stayed—in my life and in the countless lives she blessed through compassionate service and example."<sup>2</sup>

I find it interesting that Ezra Benson, the boy who helped his mother and the Relief Society gather and store wheat for a future day of hunger, was Ezra Benson the Apostle, who years later directed a massive distribution of wheat and other essentials to the famished of Europe following World War II.

Of his companion, Flora, President Benson has said: "I honor and acknowledge my precious wife. . . . Her loving devotion, inspiration, faith and loyal support have contributed to whatever success may be ours."<sup>3</sup>

### Suggestions for guiding children

Thinking of the example of his own mother and that of his beloved and faithful wife, Flora, President Benson has offered ten specific suggestions for mothers as they guide their precious children:

1. Take time to always be at the crossroads in the lives of your children, whether they be six or sixteen.

2. Take time to be a real friend to your children.

3. Take time to read to your children. Remember what the poet wrote:

You may have tangible wealth untold;

Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be—  
I had a mother who read to me.<sup>4</sup>

4. Take time to pray with your children.

5. Take time to have a meaningful weekly home evening. Make this one of your great family traditions.

6. Take time to be together at mealtimes as often as possible.

7. Take time daily to read the scriptures together as a family.

8. Take time to do things together as a family.

9. Take time to teach your children.

10. Take time to truly love your children. A mother's unqualified love approaches Christlike love.<sup>5</sup>

Though President Benson has addressed these suggestions primarily to mothers, I am confident he would expect those of us who are men and fathers bearing the holy priesthood to do our part, along with each son and daughter, to implement them and bring to fruition their divine objectives.

### Each chair is filled

President Benson leaves us this counsel:

Brothers and sisters, "make it a family objective to all be together in the celestial kingdom. Strive to make your home a little bit of heaven on earth so that after this life is over, you may be able to say:

We are all here!

Father, mother, sister, brother,

All who hold each other dear.

Each chair is filled—

We're all at home. . . .

We're all—all here.<sup>6</sup>

God bless you, President Benson, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Elect Women of God," in *Woman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979), p. 74.
2. "To the Elect Women," pp. 74-75.
3. "To the Elect Women," p. 75.
4. Strickland Gillilan, "The Reading Mother."
5. Ezra Taft Benson, *To the Mothers in Zion* (pamphlet, 1987), pp. 8-12; see also Ezra Taft Benson, *Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990), pp. 32-36.
6. "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, p. 107; poem quoted from *The Writings of Charles Sprague* (New York: Charles S. Francis, 1841), p. 73.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder James E. Faust

### Healing spiritual sickness

I humbly come to this pulpit today to speak about a sure cure for heartache, disappointment, torment, anguish, and despair. The psalmist stated, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). The healing is a divine miracle; the wounds are a common lot of all mankind. Shakespeare has said, "He

jests at scars that never felt a wound" (*Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2, line 1). It seems that no one escapes the troubles, challenges, and disappointments of this world.

In today's overloaded society, some of the healing agents that our parents enjoyed seem not to be at work in our lives. Fewer and fewer are able to relieve stress by working with their hands and by tilling the soil. The in-