

(1 Nephi 4:1). We know and can testify of His omniscience, and with Lehi we can say, "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 2:24).

Based on that knowledge, cemented in a strong testimony of the attributes of our Heavenly Father, the faithful Latter-day Saint—instead of despairing because a goal on his or her agenda was not realized, because his or her timetable does not bring a solution to the problems, or because comfort does not come to calm the troubles of today—waits patiently for fulfillment of promises, according to the Lord's timetable, the Lord who "knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man" (Alma 40:10). The faithful Latter-day Saint waits patiently because, certainly, faith, "the assurance of things hoped for" (JST, Hebrews 11:1), is exercised with the conviction that the promises will be fulfilled "in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68).

"Stand fast, ye Saints of God"

God does live and He does fulfill His promises, and to the many testimonies given, I wish to add mine. I know that even in times of affliction and tribulation, if we patiently endure in faith, blessings of comfort and hope will come into our lives, and we will be able to partake of that "incomprehensible joy" of which Ammon and his brothers received (see Alma 27:17-18; 28:8).

Therefore, in the words of Joseph Smith, "Stand fast, ye Saints of God, hold on a little while longer, and the storm of life will be past, and you will be rewarded by that God whose servants you are, and who will duly appreciate all your toils and afflictions for Christ's sake and the Gospel's" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 185).

These things I say in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

William R. Bradford

"I want my life back!"

On our present assignment, my wife and I live a long way away from our children. This means the letters go back and forth. I would like to read a paragraph from a letter one of our daughters recently sent:

"I've become a nurse. Four of the six kids have the flu. I'm changing my ambitions from psychiatrist to nurse. Anyway, nobody in this family is sick in the head; we are just all sick. I hate it when the kids are sick." Then in capital letters, "I WANT MY LIFE BACK!"

When we read the letter, we gave each other a knowing smile. All of our children are caught up in a very busy life. It is what they call "the fast lane."

But those last words, "I WANT MY LIFE BACK," have stuck in my

mind, and the more I have thought about them the more concerned I've become. This concern has persuaded me to say something about uncluttering our lives and getting back to basics.

Problems of a cluttered life

The story is told of a boy who arrived home from school and found his father standing at the open door looking into a very cluttered house. "Is Mother home?" asked the boy. His father answered, "I can't see her, but I know she's in there somewhere. I can hear sobbing."

This would be funny if it were not true in so many cases. I believe that a cluttered life can create a great deal of sorrow and sadness and be the cause of

much sobbing. I also believe that there are a great many people in the so-called "fast lane" that want their lives back.

A cluttered life is a life that you do not have control of. It is a life in which the things you have surrounded yourself with and allow to use up your time are controlling you and negatively influencing your happiness and eternal progress.

Material clutter

Our lives can become cluttered by many things. Some are obvious, such as material things, the stuff we collect. I really wish I were able to give a lesson on how to prioritize the material things—how to sort them, dispose of some, and put the rest in order—but I'm not qualified.

The last time I worked on that kind of a project, I spent nine hours moving things around, changing them from one box to another, stacking some here and some there. When I was finished I was so proud of myself. Then I realized that all I had really done was move them from one place to another.

My wife says that I have a subconscious rule that I must move things from one place to another at least a hundred times before I can bring myself to give them away. Suffice it to say, if you need help in this, there are better experts than I to teach you.

But how well I know that we can surround ourselves with the material things to the extent that we have no time for the spiritual. Look around and you will see all the gadgets and toys and the nice and the fun things that cause us to squander and pay and to wander and play.

Subtle clutter

Other things that clutter our lives and use up our time are not as obvious

as the material. They are more subtle and just seem to evolve, taking control of us.

Whenever I think of something subtle—you know, kind of hidden, something we know is there if we stop to think about it but do not suspect it of cluttering up or negatively influencing our lives—whenever I think of something subtle like this, I know that Satan is busy at his work.

Nothing suits the devil better than to become a silent partner with us. He knows that we have agency and are at liberty to make choices for ourselves. He also knows that while in mortality we are subject to time. If by his subtle means he can become our silent partner, he can then influence us to make wrong choices that use up our time unwisely and prevent us from doing that which we should.

We give our lives to that which we give our time. As I have said, while here in mortality we are subject to time. We also have agency and may do what we will with our time. Let me repeat: We give our lives to that which we give our time.

How to unclutter our lives

I have learned that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to unclutter one's life by starting at the top of the pile with the idea that the solution is to just get things sorted and better organized. It is nice to get better organized, but that is not enough. Much has to be discarded. We must actually get rid of it.

To do this we need to develop a list of basics, a list of those things that are indispensable to our mortal welfare and happiness and our eternal salvation. This list must follow the gospel pattern and contain the elements needed for our sanctification and perfection. It must be the product of inspiration and prayerful judgment between

the things we really need and the things we just want. It should separate need from greed. It must be our best understanding of those things that are important as opposed to those things that are just interesting. It should have nothing to do with trying to stay in the fast lane.

We need to examine all the ways we use our time: our work, our ambitions, our affiliations, and the habits that drive our actions. As we make such a study, we will be able to better understand what we should really be spending our time doing.

The family comes first

At the top of our list of basics, we will surely have the family. Next only to our devotion to God, the family comes first. Their temporal and spiritual well-being is of vital importance, and so there must be work to provide for it. This means hard work. Although there has to be a balance and time for the fun things, they cannot outweigh the need for a cooperative effort by all the members of the family to provide for their spiritual and temporal needs. To work is a commandment from God. It is the pattern for the happiness of individuals and the family and is the strength of both the Church and society.

A mother should never allow herself to become so involved with extras that she finds herself neglecting her divine role. A father must not let any activity, no matter how interesting or important it may seem, keep him from giving of himself in the one-on-one service and close, constant care of each member of the family.

The titles of Mother and Father will persist after this life. All that we may acquire and any titles we may earn which are worldly will pass away. In the meantime they may be cluttering up our lives and affecting our eternal outcome.

Young people must learn that none of the exciting and entertaining and fun things are worth it if they take you off from the path that will lead you back home to your Heavenly Father.

Living the basics of the gospel

We must remember that a person who is not living the basics of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not living them, no matter who or what has caused it. We must also remember that a family divided is a family divided, no matter who or what divides it.

There are, then, some serious and soul-searching questions that we must ask ourselves. One of these questions would surely be, Do I have time for prayer? I don't mean just an occasional, quick, repetitious prayer that is like giving a wave of the hand to your Father in Heaven as you pass Him on your way to something important. I mean sincere, honest, "from the depths of a contrite spirit and a broken heart" prayer; kneeling in humility, demonstrating to the Holy Father that you really love him; private prayer which involves you in the process of repentance and pleading for forgiveness and allows time for pondering and waiting for the answers to come.

As you examine your list of basics, the next question would be, Do I study the scriptures? If you do, you know that Lehi saw a rod of iron, which, interpreted, means the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:1-23). Those who held to the rod, using it as a guide at all times, came safely through the mist of darkness and arrived at the tree of life and partook of its glorious fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:19, 30).

Now the question again: Do you study the scriptures? I solemnly testify that the holy scriptures are the word of God. Constant study of them is the act of holding to the iron rod. They will guide you to the tree of life. If you are

one who has said, "I want my life back," I exhort you to go to the tree of life, where you will find the pure love of God.

God's path is simple and straight

With an uncluttered life, you will not be so busy doing terrestrial things that you do not have time to do those things which are celestial. God's plan is a plan of simplicity. It involves being obedient to simple laws—laws that have within them an automatic blessing and happiness for obedience and an automatic punishment and unhappiness for their disobedience.

I urge you to clear away the clutter. Take your life back. Use your willpower. Learn to say no to those things that will rob you of your precious time and infringe upon your agency to choose to live in exactness to God's plan of happiness and exaltation.

Don't let the subtle influences of Satan take away any part of your life. Keep it under your own control and operated by your own agency. This life is a probationary period. It is a marvelous gift of time during which we can learn to be like our Heavenly Father

by following the teachings of His Son, Jesus Christ. The path He leads us on is not a cluttered path. It is simple and straight and lighted by the Spirit.

It is my humble prayer that by our choices we may preserve our individual agency from the subtleness of Satan and live our lives bright and clear and on the path that leads us back to the presence of our Holy Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have listened to Elder Angel Abrea, who is a native of Argentina, and to William R. Bradford, who presently presides over the work in the northern part of South America with headquarters in Quito, Ecuador. We thank these brethren.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation." Following the singing, Elder Adney Y. Komatsu of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

Elder Adney Y. Komatsu

An invitation to come back

My brothers and sisters, I would like to recall to your minds the statement of invitation made by the First Presidency in December of 1985, and I quote:

"At this Christmas season we rejoice in the blessings that come of membership and *activity* in this Church whose head is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. In deep sincerity we express our love and gratitude for our brethren and sisters everywhere.

"We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become

critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men' (D&C 64:10).

"We encourage Church members to forgive those who may have wronged them. To those who have ceased *activity* and to those who have become critical, we say, 'Come back. Come