

the Lord encourages us to ask, seek, and knock? (see Matthew 7:7).

Unfortunately many vital decisions are made when we are most inexperienced. Our desire for freedom can be dangerous if we have not followed the proper guidelines. The book *Mythology*, by Edith Hamilton, tells of a boy named Icarus and his father. Imprisoned on the isle of Crete, they made a pair of wings composed of feathers held together by wax. They hoped that they could use them to fly to their freedom, and the boy was given the chance to try them out. His father warned him not to fly too close to the sun lest the wax melt. But Icarus became exhilarated with his newfound freedom and flew too high. The wax melted, and the wings fell apart, and the boy fell to his death. Our future can be imperiled by freedom left uncontrolled (New York: New American Library, 1969, pp. 139-40).

Seek a testimony and build faith

Our foremost decision must be to seek a testimony of the gospel and to build our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a loving and concerned parent, as we see in these words from Doctrine and Covenants 67:1: "Ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard,

and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up before me." He will not leave us alone in our decisions, for He promised, "I will not leave you comfortless" (John 14:18). It is this Comforter, who is the spirit of revelation, that confirms all truths unto us.

I am grateful for the privilege to serve the Lord and for the spirit which has touched my heart and soul and for my wonderful companion and my faithful family. And I leave my witness with you and with them of the divinity of this work and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who leads and directs and presides over it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Robert D. Hales, a new member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Elder Gerald E. Melchin of the Seventy and president of the Toronto Ontario Temple.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Sweet Is the Work, My God, My King." Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Sweet Is the Work."

Elder F. Melvin Hammond

Trying to be like Jesus

The work is sweet. Just a few days ago in faraway Mexico, Sister Hammond and I picked up the telephone and heard the voice of a little child begin to sing, perfectly on key and angelic to our ears, "I'm trying to be like Jesus," and sweetly continue:

Love one another as Jesus loves you.
Try to show kindness in all that you do.

Be gentle and loving in deed and in thought,
For these are the things Jesus taught.
["I'm Trying to Be like Jesus," *Children's Songbook*, p. 78]

To that precious grandchild, one of many, and to everyone else who is trying to be like Jesus, we congratulate you and express our deepest affection for you. Today I desire to bring us nearer to Jesus. I would like us to love Him

more than we do now. Will you listen as I tell you about Jesus Christ and His infinite love?

The premortal Christ

It was Christ who in the premortal state presented Himself to become the Savior of men, saying, "Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first" (Abraham 3:27). From that time forth it was proclaimed that the Son of Man would come to earth to sacrifice Himself as an atonement for the sins of all men (see Mosiah 3).

Christ's birth

As the day of His mortal birth approached, Nephi heard the voice saying, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, . . . on the morrow come I into the world" (3 Nephi 1:13).

Thus, on the next day in Bethlehem of Judea, a tiny babe lay in a manger while an attentive mother gloried in the presence of her newborn son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, a God come to earth.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40).

Christ's mortal ministry

In succeeding years "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). At the age of thirty He began His ministry, teaching the great plan of happiness—faith, repentance, baptism by immersion, the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end (see 3 Nephi 27).

Being obedient to the commandment, He was baptized by immersion in the River Jordan by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3).

Later twelve men were called and ordained as His Apostles. Some of them were humble fishermen. He invited them to come "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Immediately they left their nets and followed Him, as all who are called should willingly do.

The fame of His glory and power spread throughout the land. To a father who mourned the death of his dear, young daughter, He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52), and He took her by the hand and she rose from the dead.

To a poor cripple He spoke, "Take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8). And miraculously it was done!

He rebuked all sinners. The guilty plotted to take His life. He reminded the Twelve of the awful fate that awaited Him: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2).

On that eventful last night in the upper room, He knelt meekly and humbly before each Apostle and tenderly washed their feet (see John 13:3-17).

He instituted the sacred ordinance of the sacrament. Blessing bread and wine, He gave it to each one and commanded them to eat and drink in remembrance of His body and His blood, which was shed for them (see Matthew 26:26-28).

After Judas, the betrayer, had gone out into the night, the Savior instructed the remaining eleven with these familiar words, saying:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Christ's atonement and crucifixion

Then Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and the quiet, lovely Garden of

Gethsemane. There He knelt down and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The law demanded a perfect Lamb for the atoning sacrifice. He alone could qualify. His love for us was so great, so intense that voluntarily He suffered both body and spirit until blood came from every pore to pay the price of sin (see Mosiah 3:7). Somehow we must try to understand and internalize the ransom that He actually paid for each one of us.

Betrayed by a traitor's kiss, condemned to die at foreign hands for a crime He did not commit, He humbly submitted Himself to the ugly lash and was nailed by His hands and feet to a wooden cross. Yea, the greatest of all of God's children was left to die on a horrible cross. When finally all things were accomplished, He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus Christ was dead. The spirit had fled. The body was placed in a borrowed tomb.

Christ's resurrection

And then, on the third day, in mighty power He arose, the bonds of death to break. The spirit had returned to reclaim the flesh. His victory over death was complete!

For forty days He tarried on the earth, showing Himself to many and instructing them in "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Finally, from Bethany He rose from their midst and ascended into heaven (see Luke 24:50-51).

Apostasy and Restoration

The faithful Apostles continued vigorously with their ministry. But with their passing came a rapid decline of spirituality. The sacred ordinances were

changed, priesthood authority was lost, and spiritual darkness enveloped the earth. Mankind had ceased to know God.

Then in the spring of 1820, to a fourteen-year-old boy, Joseph Smith Jr., the voice of God the Father pierced through the blackness: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Pure light emerged, and darkness fled. God had spoken to man again.

Once again the fulness of the gospel, as found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other sacred scriptures, is flooding the earth. The holy priesthood has been restored to man. The sacred ordinances are being administered to every worthy soul who will receive them—all this to prepare the world for the glorious Second Coming proclaimed by the Savior Himself (see D&C 29:11).

Humbly I testify to you that He will come again in glory, and on that day He will manifest Himself to mankind, saying: "I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God" (D&C 45:52). Then He will reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Do we love Christ?

Now, during these last few minutes we have focused on Christ's love. Did we feel His Spirit burn within us? Have we felt a greater love for Him? Are we really trying to be like Jesus? If so, may I ask each one of us to think of the following questions as they relate to our love for Him.

First, do we love Jesus Christ enough to follow His chosen prophets and Apostles, giving heed to their counsel and guidance as if it came from His own mouth? (see D&C 1:38).

Second, do we love the Savior enough to forsake our lovely home, our precious family, and accept a call to proclaim His gospel in any part of the world?

Third, do we love Christ sufficiently that we will be true to our mates, casting out all our unclean thoughts and never betraying their sweet love for us?

Can we do too much for the Lord? Certainly we all love Him. Therefore, I implore us, keep His commandments and become more like Him. Come unto Christ, eat the bread of life, drink the living water, and feast on His limitless love. He is our Savior, our Master, of

whom I bear my humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder F. Melvin Hammond of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Sister Ruth B. Wright, second counselor in the general Primary presidency, and she will be followed by Elder Hans B. Ringger of the Seventy.

Sister Ruth B. Wright

Focus on children

Sister Wilson carefully studied each young child as she entered the Primary classroom. *How they have grown and developed since January*, she thought. She gathered them around her and began her lesson. "You are each very special! You have learned so many things. You have learned to sit reverently and listen to our lessons. Why, you can even say your own prayers!"

"Well, of course," responded Clayton, "I've already been on this earth five years!"

Clayton's lifetime seemed a very long time to him, and he saw no limits to what he could learn. Brothers and sisters, our children are eager to learn. They want to be taught. They need to be taught.

The First Presidency has admonished all adult members of the Church to focus on children in an ongoing effort to help them learn to follow the teachings of the Savior. The purpose of "Focus on Children" is to direct the attention and efforts of adult members to care for children in a way that will enable them to have a strong foundation of testimony and faithfully live the gospel of Jesus Christ (see "Focus on Children, Guidelines and Suggestions"). When we consider all the eager young Claytons, we

realize that this is an important and exciting responsibility.

The First Presidency has suggested four goals to help us focus on children. The goals are one, to recognize the worth of our children; two, to activate children who are not participating in the blessings of the gospel; three, to teach children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it; and four, to ensure that children are prepared for and given the opportunity for baptism and ordination. I would like to focus my remarks on the third goal, teaching children the gospel in such a way that they will understand and live it.

Teach children to walk uprightly

The Lord, through revelation, has taught us in section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants that parents have the responsibility to teach and train their children in righteousness. Parents have been instructed to "teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord" (v. 28).

What does it mean to walk uprightly before the Lord? The word *upright* is defined as honest, honorable, straightforward. Thus, to walk uprightly, our children need to choose to live in an honest, honorable, straightforward manner. Children who understand and live