

roots of testimony, of faith, of love, of kindness and patience with every child? Their roots are not deep enough for them to stand alone in the storms of life. They need us—every one of us—parents, teachers, leaders, youth, brothers, sisters. They need you.

And now I look to the future. How grateful I am for the principle of presidency, and for Sister Anne Wirthlin and Sister Susan Warner. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We will stand together in unity as we support our priesthood leaders and help parents teach and strengthen children.

To the Primary children of the world, I want you to know that there are many people you don't even know who love you and care about you, who want you to be safe, be happy, and feel peace. I love you and would want you to feel "encircled about . . . in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1:15) and my love. Listen carefully to every good thing you hear about Heavenly Father and Jesus our Savior and then try your very best to follow him by doing what he wants you to do.

All of us can be like the giant redwood trees and support and strengthen each other, especially the children, that when storms arise we can actually hold each other up. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Patricia P. Pinegar, general Primary president. I might say, Sister Pinegar, that for many years President Howard W. Hunter was the member of the Twelve who was an adviser to the Primary. You have a friend in court, and as Elder LeGrand Richards often said, one friend in court is better than a hundred friends in the courtyard.

Yesterday we thanked Sister Grassli and her counselors as they were released, and we of course have sustained a new Primary presidency. We should really take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the husbands of the sisters who serve in the auxiliary organizations. Without your support, brethren, your dear wives could not do nearly the work that they do. You are as silent redwood trees, sustaining each one of your companions, and we're very grateful to you.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." And then Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

It's been a blessing to be here and listen to the instruction we've received. It's a special privilege to welcome these men and to bid farewell for a time to those who will be leaving us. We're grateful for the valiant service these men have rendered.

President Hunter, I love you and sustain you with all my heart and soul,

as do all the Seventy. We declare to all our testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ and of your calling as His prophet at this time.

"What we need is home teachers"

I first met President Howard W. Hunter in 1967 when I reported to his

office to be set apart for a new calling. We discussed my new assignment for a moment; then he surprised me by saying something like, "Brother Pinegar, we don't need anyone to serve in that calling. Do you know what we need?" I sat there not knowing how to respond. I was wondering if I was mistaken about my call. In his pleasant way, he said if we were to stop the next one hundred members of the Church who passed in front of the Church Administration Building, almost all of them would be able and willing to serve in that same calling. "What we need," he said, "is home teachers. That is the great need in the Church today."

Then with a smile he said, "All right, Brother Pinegar, I'll set you apart anyway." As he placed his hands on my head, I was uncertain what Elder Hunter would say. I thought he might set me apart as a home teacher. In a kind, reassuring manner he gave me a blessing that I would be able to fulfill my calling. I promised myself that I would be a better home teacher.

President Hunter's reference to home teachers that day is in harmony with his focus now on the simple messages of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The great work of the Lord is primarily accomplished through small, kind acts that exemplify the basic teachings of His gospel. Obedience in doing the simple things has always been the means of obtaining the blessings of the Lord.

Naaman—obedience in simple things

Remember the story of Naaman, a captain for the king of Syria—"a great man with his master . . . because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: . . . a mighty man in valour, but . . . a leper" (2 Kings 5:1).

At the direction of his king, Naaman went to Elisha the prophet to be healed of his dreaded affliction.

"So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

"But Naaman was wroth . . . and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. . . .

"And his servants came near . . . and said, . . . if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

"Then went [Naaman] down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (vv. 9-11, 13-14).

Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?

The power of small, simple acts

At a Brigham Young University fireside, President Hunter said, "If you feel that . . . what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren't very famous either" ("No Less Serviceable," in *Brigham Young University 1990-91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1991], p. 6).

On another occasion he said that "the achievement of true greatness is a long-term process. . . . It seems that it always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and

mundane steps over a long period of time" ("What Is True Greatness?" in *Brigham Young University 1986-87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1987], p. 115).

The Lord has said, "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

President David O. McKay also spoke of the power of small and simple acts:

"There is no one great thing that we can do to obtain eternal life, and it seems to me that the great lesson to be learned in the world today is to apply in the little acts and duties of life the glorious principles of the Gospel. Let us not think that because some of the things named this afternoon may seem small and trivial, that they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up here of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases.

"The great sun is a mighty force in the universe, but we receive the blessings of his rays because they come to us as little beams, which, taken in the aggregate, fill the whole world with sunlight. The dark night is made pleasant by the glimmer of what seem to be little stars; and so the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour, this minute, in the home, in the quorum, in the organization, in the town, wherever our life and acts may be cast" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1914, pp. 87-88).

Simple teachings make a strong foundation

Focusing our attention on teaching and living the simple messages of the Savior in our homes will strengthen our families, perfect the society in which we live, and improve ourselves. It will enable us to successfully combat the erosion of the family, which President

Hunter has said is the greatest challenge in the world today. *Our first line of defense in a world of spiritual and moral decay is and will continue to be the family.*

Christlike qualities instilled early in one's life establish values that lead us to make correct choices and actions. It has been said, "Children are like wet cement; whatever falls on them makes an impression" (Haim G. Ginott).

As a teenage boy I began working for a contractor pouring concrete foundations for homes. I learned that concrete was made of a mixture of very simple elements which of themselves were not stable enough for a foundation. But mixed together in proper sequence and proportions, tiny grains of sand, small pebbles, water, and cement powder form a unique substance of unusual strength and durability. For a few hours after the concrete is mixed, it can be poured into any desired form. At first, before it is completely hardened, even a tiny bird hopping across its soft surface will leave an imprint. Later, however, it becomes so firm an elephant could walk over it without leaving any tracks.

Just as a few simple elements combined in a proper way form a sturdy foundation for a house, so do the simple teachings of the gospel bond together to make a strong foundation for our lives.

In contrast, we must be aware that there are small things that can destroy rather than build or strengthen us. Tiny grains of salt sprinkled on concrete can actually cause it to break up and crumble if they are not removed. Similarly, small steps taken in the wrong direction, ignored or uncorrected, will weaken and destroy our lives. Big problems grow out of thinking that little things don't matter.

Family home evening—a simple thing

Like Naaman, we have been counseled by our prophets to do simple things that do matter. We have received simple

instructions which we can all follow to strengthen our families, to heal our spiritual afflictions, and to become followers of Jesus Christ in thought and action. Parents have been counseled to set aside one night each week to teach fundamental gospel principles to their children.

The First Presidency has stated:

"No Church organization can supplant the parents in discharging this obligation. The best the Church can do is to give every aid possible so that the parents will be left without excuse in discharging this most sacred and vital work of building a solid foundation in the home" (*Family Home Evening: Love Makes Our House a Home* [manual, 1974], p. 2).

As we faithfully hold quality family home evenings, we "will gain strength to withstand the temptations of the world and will receive many blessings which will help qualify [us] to enjoy [our] families through eternity in the Celestial Kingdom" (First Presidency, *Family Home Evening: Strengthening Families* [manual, 1978], p. 2).

If the prophet bid us do some great thing for so great a blessing, would we do it? Holding regular family home evening is such a small thing we can do to obtain these great blessings.

Daily family prayer—a simple thing

Another simple thing we all can do to draw us closer to the Savior and to bring us His guidance is to have daily family prayer. The Savior himself taught, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

Praying together, seeking to know the will of our Father in Heaven, and desiring strength to do His will draws Him near to us. This practice unifies family members in a common direction and purpose. How simple the Lord has

made it for us! All we have to do is sincerely ask in faith in his name, and He will hear and answer our prayers. Yet if the prophet bid us do some great thing for such blessings, would we do it? Holding regular family prayer is such a simple thing to do to receive these great blessings.

Book of Mormon study—a simple thing

President Ezra Taft Benson promised that we can keep our children close to us and to the Lord and that we will receive "blessing[s] hitherto unknown" if we will faithfully read the Book of Mormon together and "abide by its precepts" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 100; or *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 78). He said that in the Book of Mormon we will "find great power, great comfort, and great protection" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, p. 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 7).

As we read of the Lord, hear His words, and learn His teachings, we will receive the peaceful spirit of truth and faith in our homes and in our hearts. We will learn what Jesus would have us do, what he would have us say.

If the prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive these blessings, would we do it? Reading the Book of Mormon each day is a simple requirement for receiving such great blessings.

Do the simple things

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Nephi tells his people why many of the children of Israel perished in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. Because of their iniquity, the Lord "sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished" (1 Nephi 17:41).

Brothers and sisters, we must not fail to do the simple and easy things that the gospel requires and thereby deny ourselves and our families the great blessings that the Lord has promised.

In general conference just last April, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve asked: "Given the gravity of current conditions, would parents be willing to give up just one outside thing, giving that time and talent instead to the family?" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 121; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 90).

Charles Francis Adams, grandson of the second president of the United States, was a successful lawyer, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. ambassador to Britain. Amidst his responsibilities he had little time to spare. He did, however, keep a diary. One day he wrote, "Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted!"

On that same date, Charles's son, Brooks Adams, had printed in his own diary, "Went fishing with my father today—the most wonderful day of my life" (quoted in Scott Walker, *Daily Guide-*

posts: 1994 [Carmel, N.Y.: Guideposts, 1993], p. 67).

President Hunter has said, "Frequently it is the commonplace tasks that have the greatest positive effect on the lives of others" ("What Is True Greatness?" p. 115).

I pray that we will heed the counsel of our prophet and have the faith to follow the Savior by doing the simple things His gospel requires. For if the Lord's prophet had bid us do some great thing to receive the Lord's great blessings, who among us would not do it? In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Rex D. Pinegar, for that wonderful sermon. Elder Pinegar is a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Lance B. Wickman, who was sustained as a Seventy at April conference, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Lance B. Wickman

Leaving for Vietnam

I shall never forget one night almost three decades ago. My bride, Patricia, and I had been married for two years. We lived in a small duplex on Oahu's north shore. I was an army infantry officer, a platoon leader, assigned to a unit at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Our brigade had been ordered to war in Vietnam. My plane was scheduled for departure after midnight, and a good Latter-day Saint friend had agreed to take me to the airfield at 11:00 P.M.

All through that long evening, Pat and I sat on the sofa in our tiny living room with our fingers intertwined, watching the hands of the clock approach the fateful hour and listening to

the soft lapping of the surf against the shore. The ticking of the clock seemed a metronome of mortality in painful contrast to the muffled rushing of the eternal sea. At last the hour of parting arrived. Inside the doorway to our little home, I clutched my bride to my bosom and kissed her one last time, and then I was gone. As I closed the door, I wondered if I had seen my sweetheart for the last time in mortality. It was truly night.

My friend and I drove silently in the darkness through the sugarcane and pineapple fields of Oahu. My heart felt as though it would break. Then as we passed Schofield, an unseen infantry unit on night maneuvers fired a flare. Its brilliance momentarily lit the inky