

President James E. Faust

Humbled and grateful to serve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, in responding at this pulpit as the newest member of the First Presidency of this church, I recall the words of Solomon, who said, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."¹ Like Solomon, I pray that God will give me an understanding heart. We miss our beloved friend and associate, President Howard W. Hunter, beyond expression. We honor and praise his name. His memory will be blessed to us forever.

President Hinckley has honored me beyond my ability to express in asking me to serve as his second counselor. I don't think that even my mother ever dreamed that her son would sit in these chairs. As I explained last night in general priesthood meeting, my long association with President Gordon B. Hinckley has blessed me over most of my adult life. As you know, he is a man of remarkable gifts and talents. All these long years he has been teaching, guiding, and blessing all of us. Over the years we have seen him grow in strength as the Lord has time and time again called and magnified him. He has had increasingly burdensome responsibilities in many callings, including as a counselor to three Presidents of the Church. He has magnified each calling he has received with great inspiration, intelligence, and energy in a remarkable way. His ministry has blessed the work of God throughout the world.

I also feel privileged to have worked so closely with President Thomas S. Monson ever since he was the newest Apostle. President Monson has been blessed with a great mind and capacity. He has always been an outstanding leader as a boy and a man. Great responsibilities came upon him very early in life to school him. He is a man of great, simple faith. His outgoing and car-

ing heart has blessed the people of this church tremendously over the many years of his ministry.

The Church's rich cultural diversity

Today I would like to speak to the members of the Church worldwide. I hope we can all overcome any differences of culture, race, and language. Since the early days of the Church, the General Authorities and missionaries have traveled over much of the earth to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to establish the Church with keys and authority in many lands. An impressive and enjoyable part of our ministry has been to worship with the wonderful people of many cultures and ethnic groups. It has been soul satisfying to feel of their spiritual strength and their love and to love them in return.

Now the curtains are opening up to more and more of the nonindustrialized nations. In some of these countries a large percentage of the population is poor. Many of them have much less opportunity than others to acquire the comforts of life and even some of the necessities. We have seen men and women working to exhaustion from sunrise to sundown for a pittance. Yet their ready smiles and cheerful countenances indicated that they had found some happiness with their lot in life.

Some might say, "Where is the justice in the fact that some of God's children have so much of health and this world's goods and others so very little?" So many of those who have in abundance seem unappreciative of what they have. But we have also seen the generosity of members of this church who have great concern for those worldwide who lack the necessities of life. They generously contribute to help the poor in many countries, even though we have no mem-

bers there. Humanitarian help has been given in 114 countries since 1985.²

I have learned to admire, respect, and love the good people from every race, culture, and nation that I have been privileged to visit. In my experience, no race or class seems superior to any other in spirituality and faithfulness. Those who seem less caring spiritually are those individuals—regardless of race, culture, or nationality—spoken of by the Savior in the parable of the sower who are “choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”³

Look to the divinity within

One of this nation’s leading pollsters, Richard Wirthlin, has identified through polls an expression of the basic needs of people in the United States. These needs are self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment. I believe these are needs of God’s children everywhere. How can these needs be satisfied? I suggest that behind each of these is the requirement to establish one’s own personal identity as the offspring of God. All three needs, regardless of ethnic background, culture, or country, can be met if we look to the divinity that is within us. As the Savior himself has said, “And the Spirit giveth light to every man [and woman] that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man [and woman] through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.”⁴

President David O. McKay said:

“Generally there is in man a divinity which strives to push him onward and upward. We believe that this power within him is the spirit that comes from God. Man lived before he came to this earth, and he is here now to strive to perfect the spirit within. At sometime in his life, every man is conscious of a desire to come in touch with the Infinite. His spirit reaches out for God. This sense of

feeling is universal, and all men ought to be, in deepest truth, engaged in the same great work—the search for and the development of spiritual peace and freedom.”⁵

Satisfy basic needs through obedience

As the humble servants of God—the General Authorities, the missionaries, and others—travel throughout the world, we are compelled to ask: What can we do for the peoples of the earth? What can we give that no one else can? What can justify the great expenditure of effort, time, and means to “go . . . into all the world,”⁶ as the Savior commanded. We cannot change the economy of countries. We do not seek to change governments. The answer is simple. We can offer the hope promised by the Savior: “Peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”⁷

Lives are changed as the servants of God teach God’s children everywhere to accept and keep the commandments of God. Anyone, regardless of culture or economic circumstance, can go to the depths of his spiritual wells and drink of that water. He who partakes of this water, as the Savior said, “shall never thirst; but [it] shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”⁸ The basic needs of mankind identified by Dr. Wirthlin—self-esteem, peace of mind, and personal contentment—can be fully satisfied by faithful obedience to the commandments of God. This is true of any person in any country or culture.

Seek a unity of the faith

Though many lack the necessities of life, I take comfort in the words of Nephi: “But they were . . . one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.”⁹

As we move into more and more countries in the world, we find a rich cul-

tural diversity in the Church. Yet everywhere there can be a "unity of the faith."¹⁰ Each group brings special gifts and talents to the table of the Lord. We can all learn much of value from each other. But each of us should also voluntarily seek to enjoy all of the unifying and saving covenants, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the great diversity of peoples, cultures, and circumstances, we remember that all are equal before the Lord, for as Paul taught:

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."¹¹

Spiritual and doctrinal unity

We do not lose our identity in becoming members of this church. We become heirs to the kingdom of God, having joined the body of Christ and spiritually set aside some of our personal differences to unite in a greater spiritual cause. We say to all who have joined the Church, "Keep all that is noble, good, and uplifting in your culture and personal identity." However, under the authority and power of the keys of the priesthood, all differences yield as we seek to become heirs to the kingdom of God, unite in following those who have the keys of the priesthood, and seek the divinity within us. All are welcomed and appreciated. But there is only one celestial kingdom of God.

Our real strength is not so much in our diversity but in our spiritual and doctrinal unity. For instance, the baptismal prayer and baptism by immersion in water are the same all over the world.

The sacramental prayers are the same everywhere. We sing the same hymns in praise to God in every country.

The high moral standards of this church apply to all members in every country. Honesty and integrity are taught and expected everywhere. Chastity before marriage and absolute fidelity to wife or husband after marriage are required of members of the Church everywhere. Members who violate these high standards of moral conduct place their Church membership in question anywhere in the world.

The requirements for temple attendance do not change from place to place. Where a temple is available, priesthood authority gives no greater or lesser blessings in one place than another. Temple worship is a perfect example of our unity as Church members. All of us answer the same questions of worthiness to enter the temple. All the men dress alike. All the women dress alike. We leave the cares of the world behind us as we enter the temple. Everyone receives the same blessings. All make the same covenants. All are equal before the Lord. Yet within our spiritual unity there is wide room for everyone's individuality and expression. In that setting, all are heirs to the kingdom of God. President Hunter said it well: "The key to a unified church is a unified soul, one that is at peace with itself and not given to inner conflicts and tensions."¹²

Diverse people united by the Spirit

The spiritual richness of our meetings seems to have little to do with the buildings or country in which we meet. Many years ago we went to Manaus, Brazil, a city far upstream on the Amazon River, surrounded by jungle, to meet with the missionaries and the handful of Saints who were then in that area. We met in a very humble home with no glass panes in the windows. The weather was excessively hot. The children sat on the

floor. The mission president, President Helio da Rocha Camargo, conducted the meeting and called on a faithful brother to give the opening prayer. The humble man responded, "I will be happy to pray, but may I also bear my testimony?" A sister was asked to lead the singing. She responded, "I would love to lead the singing, but please let me also bear my testimony."

And so it was all through the meeting with those who participated in any way. All felt impelled to bear their profound witness of the Savior and his mission and of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All who were there reached deep down in their souls to their spiritual taproots, remembering the Savior's words that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."¹³ This they did more as heirs to the kingdom of God than as Brazilian members of the Church.

The multiplicity of languages and cultures is both an opportunity and a challenge for members of the Church. Having everyone hear the gospel in their own tongue requires great effort and resources. The Spirit, however, is a higher form of communication than language. We have been in many meetings where the words were completely unintelligible, but the Spirit bore powerful witness of Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Even with language differences, hopefully no minority group would ever feel so unwelcome in the "body of Christ"¹⁴ that they would wish to worship exclusively in their own ethnic culture. We hope that those in any dominant culture would reach out to them in the brotherhood and sisterhood of the gospel so that we can establish fully a community of Saints where everyone will feel needed and wanted.

Recovering the sacred within us

Spiritual peace is not to be found in race or culture or nationality but rather

through our commitment to God and to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. Each of us, regardless of our nationality, needs to reach down into the innermost recesses of our souls to find the divinity that is deep within us and to earnestly petition the Lord for an endowment of special wisdom and inspiration. Only when we so profoundly reach the depths of our beings can we discover our true identity, our self-worth, and our purpose in life. Only as we seek to be purged of selfishness and of concern for recognition and wealth can we find some sweet relief from the anxieties, hurts, pains, miseries, and concerns of this world. In this manner, as President J. Reuben Clark said, we can bring "to flower and fruitage the latent richness of the spirit."¹⁵ God can not only help us find a sublime and everlasting joy and contentment, but He will change us so that we can become heirs of the kingdom of God.

This is really the recovery of the sacred within us. We have the authority in our beings to respond to challenges of life any way we choose. Thus we gain mastery in any circumstance. As the Savior said to the diseased woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."¹⁶

Mine is the certain knowledge that Jesus is our divine Savior, Redeemer, and the Son of God the Father. I know of his reality by a sure perception so sacred I cannot give utterance to it. I know and testify with an absolute awareness that Joseph Smith restored the keys of the fulness of times and that every President of the Church has held these keys, as does President Gordon B. Hinckley today, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Kings 3:7.
2. "Helping Hearts and Hands Span the Globe," *Church News*, 11 Feb. 1995, pp. 8-10.
3. Luke 8:14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:46.

5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1963, p. 7; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1963, p. 1057.
6. Mark 16:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
8. John 4:14.
9. 4 Nephi 1:17.
10. Ephesians 4:13.
11. Galatians 3:26–29.
12. *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994), p. 50.
13. Matthew 18:20.
14. 1 Corinthians 10:16; see also v. 17.
15. As cited in *Providing in the Lord's Way: A Leader's Guide to Welfare* (welfare handbook, 1990), p. i.
16. Matthew 9:22.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." We shall then hear from Elder Joe J. Christensen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Joe J. Christensen

Barbara and I have been blessed with six children. Some years ago, when we had taken all of them to visit with their grandparents, my father said, "Joe, I think you and Barbara have started something you can't stop."

At this Easter season we declare to all the world that Jesus is the Christ and that through his holy priesthood and its sealing power, marriages and families need never stop—need never come to an end.

Today I would like to speak to all of you about our marriages. Here are eight practical suggestions that, hopefully, may be of value in strengthening our marriages, now and in the future.

Remember the importance of marriage

1. Remember the central importance of your marriage. Listen to these words from Elder Bruce R. McConkie on the importance of marriage in our Father in Heaven's "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8):

"From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come. . . .

"There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units" ("Salvation Is a Family Affair," *Improvement Era*, June 1970, pp. 43–44).

Pray for the success of your marriage

2. Pray for the success of your marriage. Years ago, when it was common for a General Authority to tour a mission and interview all the missionaries, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was visiting with an elder who was just about to finish his mission.

"When you get released, Elder, what are your plans?"