

have received and heard, what we know and feel:

I belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I know who I am. I know God's plan.

I'll follow him in faith.

I believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

I'll honor his name.

I'll do what is right; I'll follow his light.

His truth I will proclaim.

["The Church of Jesus Christ," *Children's Songbook*, 77]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, has just spoken to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Visiting starving people in Africa

Brothers and sisters, this has been another glorious conference. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me as I now have the privilege to speak to you.

In February Sister Ballard and I attended a multistake conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. We were impressed with the faith and the special spirit of the members.

Visiting the African continent brought back memories of my earlier assignments to East and West Africa. I thought once again of the special fast by Church members worldwide in 1985. It provided approximately six million dollars to relieve suffering and hunger primarily in drought-stricken Ethiopia. Brother Glenn L. Pace and I witnessed firsthand the fruits of generous contributions by Church members when the First Presidency assigned us to go to Africa, assess the needs of the people, and recommend how to make the best use of these special funds.

We visited refugee camps in that arid country. The land was as barren as any I had ever seen. We visited Red Cross centers and field hospitals where the desperately ill were being cared for. Such dreadful, pitiful suffering broke

our hearts. We saw sick mothers lying on cots trying to feed and comfort their children, many of whom had the sunken eyes and pencil-thin arms and legs of those in the advanced stages of starvation. This was one of the most heart-wrenching experiences of my life. I had never seen anything that touched my heart so deeply as the anxious yearning for food and nourishment that I saw there.

Many people are starving spiritually

Brothers and sisters, even as people in Ethiopia were starving physically because of the lack of food, far too many people in the world are starving spiritually. Sadly, most of them have no idea where to find real spiritual nourishment. They wander to and fro—another form of pathetic refugees. Those who yearn for true spiritual light and knowledge can find it only through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit enlightens and gives understanding of the eternal purpose of life. By the Spirit, Church members know the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is true. We should, therefore, feel compelled to share our spiritual knowledge with all of our Father's children by inviting them to pull a chair up to the

Lord's table and feast on the words of Christ.

"Come unto the Holy One of Israel," wrote the great Book of Mormon prophet Jacob, "and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness."¹ Later Nephi urged his followers to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do."²

Cultivate spiritual strength in ourselves

God's chosen prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, recently said:

"Every member of this church is an individual man or woman, boy or girl. Our great responsibility is to see that each is 'remembered and nourished by the good word of God' (Moroni 6:4), that each has opportunity for growth and expression and training in the work and ways of the Lord. . . .

"This work is concerned with people, each a son or daughter of God. In describing its achievements we speak in terms of numbers, but all of our efforts must be dedicated to the development of the individual."³

For The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to fulfill its divine mission to assist in bringing "to pass the immortality and eternal life of man,"⁴ all members need to generate an appetite for gospel sustenance. We must "hunger and thirst after righteousness"⁵ before we can be filled. We need to cultivate spiritual strength within ourselves before we can ever hope to engender it in others.

Individual, personal testimony of gospel truth, particularly of the divine life and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, is essential to our eternal life. "And this is life eternal," said the Savior, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."⁶ In other words, life eternal is predicated upon our own individual, personal knowl-

edge of our Father in Heaven and His Holy Son. Simply knowing about them is not enough. We must have personal, spiritual experiences to anchor us. These come through seeking them in the same intense, single-minded way that a hungry person seeks food.

Once again quoting President Hinckley:

"The gaining of a strong and secure testimony is the privilege and opportunity of every individual member of the Church. The Master said, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17).

"Service in behalf of others, study, and prayer lead to faith in this work and then to knowledge of its truth. This has always been a personal pursuit, as it must always be in the future."⁷

Invite others to the spiritual feast

We must fortify ourselves before we can ever hope to offer spiritual nourishment to others. Once we have nourished ourselves with the good word of Christ and feasted personally at His table so that our testimony is strong and vibrant, we are obligated to join with the missionaries in a balanced effort to invite others—beginning with our families—to the spiritual banquet. As the Lord said to His beloved Apostle Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."⁸ And again speaking to Peter, the Savior asked: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."⁹

If we are obedient to the Savior's command given to Peter, we will focus our attention on the spiritual growth and development of those for whom we are responsible. Feeding the Lord's sheep requires each of us to awaken our inter-

est in others. The duty to invite others to partake of the gospel feast does not rest only on the shoulders of the missionaries. That sober and significant duty belongs to each member of the Church, for "it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor."¹⁰

Today our prophet is calling for enthusiastic and dynamic love for our Heavenly Father's children. He asks us to see the spiritual hunger around us and to respond by willingly sharing our abundance. No power on earth can accomplish as much as one righteous man or woman or boy or girl.

Build faith at home

The home and family have vital roles in cultivating and developing personal faith and testimony. The family is the basic unit of society; the best place for individuals to build faith and strong testimonies is in righteous homes filled with love. Love for our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ is greatly enhanced when the gospel is taught and lived in the home. True principles of eternal life are embedded in the hearts and souls of young and old alike when scriptures are read and discussed, when prayers are offered morning and night, and when reverence for God and obedience to Him are modeled in everyday conduct. Just as the best meals are home cooked, the most nourishing gospel instruction takes place at home. Strong, faithful families have the best opportunity to produce strong, faithful members of the Church.

The recent proclamation to the world on the family, issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, makes very clear that the family is ordained of God. The proclamation warns that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

The Church's supporting role

The family is where the foundation of personal spiritual growth is built and nurtured; the Church, then, is the scaffolding that helps support and strengthen the family. While the Church is secondary to the family in teaching gospel principles, much spiritual learning and growth come through the Church. For example, carefully planned sacrament meetings should be a spiritual feast in which we worship and learn of our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bishops, if your sacrament meetings are less than a banquet of spiritual nourishment, I urge you to invite suggestions from your ward council, especially the sisters, on ways to make every sacrament meeting a more reverent, spiritual experience. Let the council also help teach our members that the chapel is a special place in our buildings where we come in a spirit of respect for God and reverence for His holy Son. Let the quiet, peaceful promptings of the Holy Spirit abide in our worship services, causing spiritual enlightenment and nourishment to flow into our lives.

Teaching at home and at church

Whether we are teaching in the home or in the Church, we must keep a clear vision of the gospel's eternal purpose. Not long ago I experienced the kind of faith and spiritual strength the gospel provides when an 18-year-old sister, who was fighting for her life in a battle with cancer, asked me for a blessing. She said: "Brother Ballard, I am not afraid to die. I would like to live. There are things I would still like to accomplish in this life, but I know that Jesus is my Savior and my Redeemer. During these past few years He has become my best friend. I trust Him, and I trust you as His representative. Whatever He wants for me, I am prepared."

We pled for a miracle but at her request left the matter with Heavenly Father. She died shortly thereafter with the peace of the Lord attending her and her faithful family.

Brothers and sisters, we should teach revealed principles and inspired doctrine in our homes and in our Church meetings. Every parent and class instructor should be well prepared to teach the gospel by the power of the Spirit to ensure that testimonies are renewed and understanding of life and life eternal is fortified.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles ask leaders to emphasize constantly, in priesthood quorums, auxiliaries, and stake and ward councils, the preeminence of the home and family. That is where scriptures are studied and prayers are offered regularly so all family members will strive to follow the Savior in all things.

The temple is the ultimate feast

Leaders also need to emphasize that all adult members of the Church should strive to become worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple. Members should identify their ancestors and perform the sacred temple ordinances for them.

Parents and leaders need to do everything possible to prepare each young man to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and the ordinances of the temple and to serve a full-time mission. Likewise, young women need to prepare to make and keep sacred covenants and receive temple ordinances. Making and keeping sacred covenants in the house of the Lord is the most delicious course at the Lord's table. It is the ultimate, satisfying spiritual feast of the gospel of Jesus Christ in mortality; it has eternal consequences. Our living prophet has expressed his great vision of those who qualify for temple ordinances, keep temple covenants, and serve regularly in the house of the Lord:

"We would be a better people," President Hinckley said. "There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us."¹¹

The Savior offers untold bounty

Through His prophet, God has promised to replace the spiritual hunger that plagues mankind with untold bounty from His own table. All He asks is that we come unto Christ and then do all we can, through our families and with the support of the Church, to help all of our Father's children succeed spiritually in this critical journey of mortality.

"Behold," said the Lord, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹²

I testify to you that Jesus is the Christ. He lives and invites everyone to partake of the joyful feast of the gospel. Joseph Smith is the prophet of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. May we all be blessed, my beloved brothers and sisters, with an increased desire to seek after and feast on the things of the Spirit, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 9:51.
2. 2 Nephi 32:3.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 72-73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 52-53.
4. Moses 1:39.
5. Matthew 5:6.
6. John 17:3.

7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 53.
8. Luke 22:32.
9. John 21:17.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:81.
11. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
12. Revelation 3:20.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Ricks College combined choirs, the BYU combined men's choir, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music during the conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given during this conference; the doctors, the Church Health

Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to the local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

We shall now be pleased to hear from our beloved President of the Church, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Go Forth in Faith." The benediction will be offered by Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

This has been a wonderful conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us. We have heard much of wisdom and inspiration. Our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. Many of us, I hope, have resolved within our hearts to live more fully the principles of the gospel.

Surely we have been blessed in the talks that have been given. The prayers have been inspiring, and the music has been wonderful. We are so greatly blessed with dedicated musicians in the Church. They add so substantially to the spirit of the conference. Every choir and chorus has performed exceptionally well.

Praise for the Tabernacle Choir

I wish to say a particular word about this Tabernacle Choir, which has sung

to us today. I came across a letter written by Wilford Woodruff and his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, under date of February 11, 1895, 101 years ago. It was addressed to the choir at that time. It reads:

"We desire to see this choir not only maintain the high reputation it has earned at home and abroad, but become the highest exponent of the 'Divine Art' in all the land; and the worthy head, example and leader of all other choirs and musical bodies in the Church, inspiring musicians and poets with purest sentiment and song and harmony, until its light shall shine forth to the world undimmed, and nations shall be charmed [by] its music."

The letter goes on: "This choir is and should be a great auxiliary to the