

President Hinckley

We have just heard from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

We remind you brethren that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic

rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the men of the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus for the music given us this evening.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "I Need Thee Every Hour."

The benediction will be offered by Elder Donald L. Staheli of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now brethren, it becomes my privilege to speak to you, and I will repeat some things that have been said during this conference with the hope of giving emphasis to them. This has been a wonderful meeting, and if the counsel we have received is heeded, we shall all be the better for it.

Temples planned or under construction

I believe that no member of the Church has received the ultimate which this Church has to give until he or she has received his or her temple blessings in the house of the Lord. Accordingly, we are doing all that we know how to do to expedite the construction of these sacred buildings and make the blessings received therein more generally available.

With the dedication of the St. Louis Temple last June, we have 50 working temples. We will soon dedicate the Vernal Utah Temple. The next dedication is scheduled for June of 1998 in Preston, England.

I am pleased to report that the temples in Colombia; Ecuador; the Dominican Republic; Bolivia; Spain; Recife and Campinas, Brazil; Mexico; Boston; New York; and Albuquerque are all moving forward either in planning or in various stages of construction. Our previously

announced plan to construct a temple in Venezuela is also going forward, and we are hopeful of acquiring a site in the very near future. We continue to work on permits of various kinds, against some opposition, for temples in Billings, Montana; and Nashville, Tennessee.

I am now pleased to announce our intent to build temples in Houston, Texas; and in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil. All of this speaks of our great interest in vigorously moving forward this important work. Altogether I think we have about 17 temples in some course of construction, and that is a prodigious undertaking.

Small temples will be built

But there are many areas of the Church that are remote, where the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances? While visiting such an area a few months ago, we prayerfully pondered this question. The answer, we believe, came bright and clear.

We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances. They would be built to temple

standards, which are much higher than meetinghouse standards. They would accommodate baptisms for the dead, the endowment service, sealings, and all other ordinances to be had in the Lord's house for both the living and the dead.

They would be presided over, wherever possible, by local men called as temple presidents, just as stake presidents are called. They would have an indefinite period of appointment. They would live in the area, in their own homes. One counselor would serve as temple recorder, the other as temple engineer. All ordinance workers would be local people who would serve in other capacities in their wards and stakes.

Patrons would be expected to have their own temple clothing, thereby making unnecessary the construction of very costly laundries. A simple laundry would take care of baptismal clothing. There would be no eating facilities.

These structures would be open according to need, maybe only one or two days a week—that would be left to the judgment of the temple president. Where possible, we would place such a building on the same grounds as the stake center, using the same parking lot for both facilities, thereby effecting a great savings.

One of these small temples can be constructed for about the same cost it takes just to maintain a large temple for a single year. It can be constructed in a relatively short time, several months. I repeat that none of the essentials would be missing. Every ordinance performed in the house of the Lord would be available. These small buildings would have at least half the capacity of some of our much larger temples. They could be expanded when needed.

Now as you hear me say these things, I think stake presidents in many areas will say this is exactly what we need. Well, let us know of your needs, and we will give them prayerful and careful con-

sideration, but please don't expect things to happen all at once. We need a little experience for this undertaking.

The operation of such temples will require some measure of sacrifice on the part of our faithful local Saints. They not only will serve as ordinance workers; it will be expected that they will clean the buildings and take care of them. But the burden will not be heavy; in view of the blessings, it will be light indeed. There will be no paid employees; all of the work of operation will represent faith and devotion and dedication.

We are planning such structures immediately in Anchorage, Alaska; in the LDS colonies in northern Mexico; and in Monticello, Utah. In areas of greater Church membership we will build more of the traditional temples, but we are developing plans that will reduce the costs without any reduction in terms of the work to be performed therein. We are determined, brethren, to take the temples to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship.

Retain every convert

Now, so much for that matter. What I say next you have heard me say before, and you have heard others speak of it. I hope we keep talking about it and then doing something about it. I do so because I am so concerned with it.

With the increase of missionary work throughout the world, there must be a comparable increase in the effort to make every convert feel at home in his or her ward or branch. Enough people will come into the Church this year to constitute more than 100 new average-size stakes. Unfortunately, with this acceleration in conversions, we are neglecting some of these new members. I am hopeful that a great effort will go forward throughout the Church, throughout the world, to retain every convert who comes into the Church.

This is serious business. There is no point in doing missionary work unless we hold on to the fruits of that effort. The two must be inseparable.

A letter from a former convert

I should like to read you a letter. It is of a kind that we occasionally receive. A man writes:

"I feel compelled to write to you after reading your comments from the April general conference. I was especially moved by your comments on 'Converts and Young Men.' I was reading the article on the Internet and was touched by your words. Your perception of converts and their special needs was especially moving to me since I was a convert to the Church. I wanted to write to you and tell you that I agree with all of your statements, and that had more members been aware of the needs of a convert I would probably have stayed in the Church.

"I was converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1994. This was after a long period of time in which I was searching for the true church. I had explored just about every denomination and church but never found what I was looking for. From my first contact with the missionaries, I knew that they were presenting something to me that would change my life. I listened to what they had to say, and I heard what I was looking for all those years. I don't know if there are words to describe how I felt after hearing their message. I was finally at peace. It all made sense. I earnestly studied the Church and felt as if I had found a 'home.' I decided to be baptized on October 8, 1994. It was one of the greatest days of my life.

"However, after my baptism, things with the Church changed. I suddenly was thrown into an environment where I was supposed to know what was going on. I now was not the focus of attention but

just another member. I was treated as if I was in the Church for years.

"I had been told that there would be six discussions following my joining the Church. They never took place. At this same time, I was feeling intense pressure from my fiancée to not be in the Church. She was extremely anti-Mormon [in her] beliefs and didn't want me to be a part of it. We fought often about the Church. I thought that I could make her see my side of the story. I thought that if I just had more time to participate in the Church, she wouldn't think of it as a bad thing or as a cult. I thought that she would see from my example that this was the true Church and she would come to accept it.

"I used the missionaries for a lot of support. They helped . . . to think of ways to convince my fiancée that I had made the right decision. That worked until the missionaries were transferred. They moved away, and I was basically left alone. At least, that is how I thought. I looked to the members for support, but there was none. The bishop helped, but he could only do so much. I gradually lost my 'warm, fuzzy feeling' about the Church. I felt like a stranger. I began to doubt the Church and its message. Eventually, I started to listen more to my fiancée. Then I made a decision that maybe I had rushed into the Church too quickly. I wrote my bishop and asked that my name be removed from the Church records. I allowed this to be done. That was a low point in my life.

"Now, it's two years since I left the Church. I have gone back to [my old church] and haven't been involved with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since then. I am constantly praying and asking God to guide me. I know in my heart that He will guide me to His true Church. However, I don't know if that is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or if it even exists at all. I regret that I left the Church and had my

name removed from the records, but at the time I felt that there was no other option. The experience left a bad impression with me, and it would be difficult to overcome.

"As the Church prepares to implement a program for the retention of new converts, I wanted you to know . . . that I think a lot of new converts may have similar experiences to mine. I know that there are people who are joining the Church against the advice of friends and family. This is a big step for them, and they should be supported at this critical time. I know from my past that had the support been there, I would not be writing this letter to you.

"Thank you for your time," and he signs the letter.

What a tragedy. What a terrible tragedy. I believe the writer still has a testimony of this work. That testimony has been with him since the time he was baptized, but he has felt neglected and of no consequence to anyone.

Someone has failed, failed miserably. I say to bishops throughout the world that with all you have to do—and we recognize that it is much—you cannot disregard the converts. Most of them do not need very much. As I have said before, they need a friend. They need something to do, a responsibility. They need nurturing with the good word of God. They come into the Church with enthusiasm for what they have found. We must immediately build on that enthusiasm. You have people in your wards who can be friends to every convert. They can listen to them, guide them, answer their questions, and be there to help in all circumstances and in all conditions. Brethren, this loss must stop. It is unnecessary. I am satisfied the Lord is not pleased with us. I invite you, every one of you, to make this a matter of priority in your administrative work. I invite every member to reach out in friendship and love for those who come into the Church as converts.

You will hear much about this in the months to come. I mention it now only to give my wholehearted endorsement.

Young men are a marvelous generation

Permit me now to speak of another matter. I wish to speak to every boy who is listening tonight. And I express appreciation for what the other Brethren have said to them.

First, let me say that we honor and respect you young men. You represent a marvelous generation in this Church. I have said again and again that I believe this is the best generation we have ever had. You and the young women are tremendous. You study the scriptures. You pray. You attend seminary at sacrifice to yourselves. You try to do the right thing. You have testimonies of this work, and most of you live accordingly. I compliment you most generously! I express to you our great love for you. I wish only to say one or two things, adding to the things I have previously said, which I hope will be encouraging as you go forward with your lives.

I could wish for you nothing better than to see in your lives total loyalty to the Church, total faith in its divine mission, total love for the work of the Lord with a desire to move it forward, and total dedication in performing your duties as members of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Be virtuous in thought and deed

You live in a world of terrible temptations. Pornography, with its sleazy filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slough of evil thoughts and possibly of evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly. Be virtuous

in thought and in deed. God has planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls.

We receive letters, we constantly deal with people who, under the pressures of life, marry while very young. There is an old saying, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." How true that is.

Have a wonderful time with the young women. Do things together, but do not get too serious too soon. You have missions ahead of you, and you cannot afford to compromise this great opportunity and responsibility.

The Lord has said, "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (D&C 121:45).

Stay away from alcohol and drugs

Stay away from alcohol. Graduation from high school is no reason for a beer bust. Better stay away and be thought a prude than go through life regretting it ever afterwards. Stay away from drugs. You cannot afford to touch them. They will utterly destroy you. The euphoria will quickly pass, and the deadly, strangling clutches of this evil thing will embrace you in their power. You will become a slave, a debauched slave. You will lose control of your life and your actions. Do not experiment with them. Stay free of them!

Walk in the sunlight, strength, and virtue of self-control and of absolute integrity.

Become educated and serve missions

Get all the schooling you can. Education is the key that unlocks the door of opportunity. God has placed upon this

people a mandate to acquire knowledge "even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118; see also D&C 109:7, 14).

You are a peculiar people. Of course you are. You have bypassed the things of the world. You are on your way to something higher and better. You have education to be obtained. You have marriage before you as a great and sacred opportunity in the house of the Lord.

You have missions to perform. Each of you should plan for missionary service. You may have some doubts. You may have some fears. Face your doubts and your fears with faith. Prepare yourselves to go. You have not only the opportunity; you have the responsibility. The Lord has blessed and favored you in a remarkable and wonderful way. Is it too much to ask that you give two years totally immersed in His service?

Stand up and walk as sons of God

My young brethren, you are something special. You must rise above the ordinary. You must put on the whole armor of God and walk with virtue. You know what is right. You know what is wrong. You know when and how to make the choice. You know that there is a power in heaven on which you can call in your time of extremity and need. Pray with fervency and with faith. Pray to the God of heaven, whom you love and who loves you. Pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His very life for you. Stand up and walk as becomes the sons of God.

We love you. We pray for you. We count on you so very, very much. May you be watched over and safeguarded and blessed of the Lord.

Sisters are not obligated to go on missions

Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter.

There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned in their papers. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation.

We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life's program. Over a period of many years, we have held the age level higher for them in an effort to keep the number going relatively small. Again to the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission.

We constantly receive letters from young women asking why the age for sister missionaries is not the same as it is for elders. We simply give them the rea-

sons. We know that they are disappointed. We know that many have set their hearts on missions. We know that many of them wish this experience before they marry and go forward with their adult lives. I certainly do not wish to say or imply that their services are not wanted. I simply say that a mission is not necessary as a part of their lives.

Now, that may appear to be something of a strange thing to say in priesthood meeting. I say it here because I do not know where else to say it. The bishops and stake presidents of the Church have now heard it. And they must be the ones who make the judgment in this matter.

That is enough on that subject.

Expression of love and blessing

Now in closing, I simply want to express my love for each of you. You men and boys provide the leadership for this great organization, which is moving across the world in a marvelous and miraculous manner. I have not the slightest concern about the future. This Church has become a great builder of leaders. One sees them everywhere. Converts of only a few years are serving as bishops and stake presidents and in other capacities. What a wonderful thing you are doing, my brethren.

Husbands, live the gospel. Be kind to your wives. You cannot serve acceptably in the Church if there is conflict at home. Fathers, be kind to your children. Be companionable with them. As hard as you may labor in gathering the necessities of the world, no asset you will ever have will compare with the love and loyalty of the woman with whom you joined hands over the altar in the temple, and the affection and respect of your children.

May each of you be blessed in your vocational pursuits whatever they may be, so long as they are honorable. May you look upon the Church as your great

and good friend, your refuge when the world appears to be closing around you, your hope when things are dark, your pillar of fire by night and your cloud by day as you thread the pathways of your lives. May the Lord be mindful of you and merciful and kind to you. May you find great joy in that which you do in His service is my humble prayer, with an ex-

pression of love and affection for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Elder Donald L. Staheli offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 167th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 5, 1997. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Lead Me into Life Eternal." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 167th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference. We acknowledge the

presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

We have with us the great Tabernacle Choir. Under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley with Brother John Longhurst at the organ, they opened these services by singing "Lead Me into Life Eternal."

The choir will now sing "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee," following which Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee."

Elder John B. Dickson offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

President James E. Faust

The "weightier matters of the law"

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I have prayed earnestly that you might understand my words this morn-

ing in the spirit which is intended. I therefore seek your faith and prayers in my behalf.

Jesus of Nazareth described His ultimate work: "This is my work and my