

ple . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance."¹⁰

I pray that we may join together, brothers and sisters, to do our part to prepare every family, adult, youth, and child to ultimately be worthy to receive every temple blessing that the gospel provides. I bear my witness that the Lord Jesus Christ lives; it is through Him that the eternal ordinances of the temple come to the faithful members of the Church. May the Lord bless us with the desire, the wisdom, and the commitment to enthusiastically move this great work forward in our families and in the Church, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115–16; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (1946), 288–89.
4. See Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (1982), 174.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 88.
8. *Young Women Leadership Handbook* (1995), 4.
9. Malachi 4:5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22, 24.

The chorus sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Bishop H. David Burton

A season of opportunity

In a recent sacrament meeting, a lovely young lady suggested that a good talk should begin with a little tasteful humor or an outrageous falsehood. My ability to convey humor is virtually nonexistent, but I can say with deep sincerity that I feel perfectly comfortable and free of fear as I stand at this podium.

As our recent sesquicentennial celebration concluded, our beloved prophet refocused our attention when he said: "The time has now come to turn about and face the future. This is a season of a thousand opportunities. It is ours to grasp and move forward. What a wonderful time it is for each of us to do his or her small part in moving the work of

the Lord on to its magnificent destiny" (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 67).

All of us face challenges in our daily lives. Yet in challenges lie some of our greatest opportunities. As we recognize and act on our opportunities, progress, happiness, and spiritual growth follow. We need to be involved in moving the Lord's work forward. Though the opportunities available to us are endless, may I suggest just a few.

A season to reverence the Sabbath day

Over and over again we have been reminded from this pulpit to fully observe the Sabbath day. If we are not

keeping the Sabbath day holy, today is a wonderful time to commit to seize that opportunity, to receive the promised blessings that come from Sabbath day observance.

Many have come to feel that the terms "Sabbath day" and "play day" are synonymous. A friend who manages several small retail outlets in predominantly LDS communities tells me he can precisely tell when Sunday worship services conclude because customer counts increase dramatically. Recreation in its various forms has become "king of the Sabbath day."

When Sister Burton and I were first married, we lived in the southeast part of the Salt Lake Valley. On occasion, as we purchased groceries from a small neighborhood store, we observed President and Sister Joseph Fielding Smith in the same store making their purchases. After several such observations, I finally mustered the courage to inquire of President Smith why it was he traveled all the way from downtown, past a dozen grocery stores, to shop at this particular store. Looking over the tops of his glasses he emphatically said, "Son! [He had my immediate attention.] Sister Smith and I patronize establishments that keep the Sabbath day holy."

The need to reverence the Sabbath day is not new counsel. We are only being told today what prior generations have been told by the prophets of their day and reconfirmed countless times by the prophets of our day. Latter-day scripture contains the following admonition:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High" (D&C 59:9-10).

Now, I know it's hard, particularly for our young people, to choose to observe the Sabbath day when athletic teams on which they so much want to participate regularly schedule games on Sunday. I too know it seems trivial to many who are in need of just a few items on the Sabbath to quickly stop at a convenience store to make a Sunday purchase. But I also know that remembering to keep the Sabbath day holy is one of the most important commandments we can observe in preparing us to be the recipients of the whisperings of the Spirit.

This is the season of opportunity for families to stand tall and be counted among the faithful who obey the fourth great commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8-10).

A season of temple service

A few years ago, President Hinckley responded to an observation concerning the number of temple dedications or rededications in which he had participated during his tenure as a General Authority. He indicated that it was his desire to continue to be involved in dedicating temples at least until we have 100 operating temples. As I heard this statement, I couldn't help doing a little simple math and realized that the sum of the number representing current operating temples and the number representing the temple projects then in design or construction was far less than 100. Because the Presiding Bishopric has the responsibility to oversee the construction of temples as they are announced, I remember very vividly saying to the prophet, "President, I pray the Lord will bless you with great longevity."

Little did I know that perhaps even at that time our prophet was being

prompted from the heavens to consider ways to provide more opportunities for worthy Latter-day Saint families to participate in the blessings associated with temple worship. I wept and rejoiced as you did last April in general conference when we heard President Hinckley say:

"In recent months we have traveled far out among the membership of the Church. I have been with many who have very little of this world's goods. But they have in their hearts a great burning faith concerning this latter-day work. They love the Church. . . . They love the Lord and want to do His will. They are paying their tithing, modest as it is. They make tremendous sacrifices to visit the temples. They travel for days at a time in cheap buses and on old boats. They save their money and do without to make it all possible.

"They need nearby temples. . . .

"Accordingly, I take this opportunity to announce to the entire Church a program to construct some 30 smaller temples immediately. . . .

"These will be in addition to the 17 buildings now going forward. . . . This will make a total of 47 new temples in addition to the 51 now in operation. I think we had better add 2 more to make it an even 100 by the end of this century" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 87-88).

Early in this dispensation our forefathers were blessed with the opportunity of sacrificing mightily to build temples. They offered generously of their meager financial means as well as the fruits of their physical labor. As temples were completed in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo, the sacrifice of the Saints was great. They were blessed as they responded. After the migration of the Saints to the tops of the mountains, temples began to appear in a number of locations in the West. Each temple project represented great sacrifice. Divinely promised blessings awaited those who availed them-

selves of the opportunity to participate in building temples.

The season of opportunity that awaits us today in temple service is different from that of the past. We are not expected to pound nails, carve stone, mill lumber, pour concrete, or physically participate in the construction of temples. We are, however, extended a marvelous opportunity to faithfully pay our tithes so temple construction and the work of the Lord may go forward. We are also challenged to be worthy to offer ourselves in the service of providing sacred saving ordinances for those who have preceded us. Very simply stated, the great opportunity of Latter-day Saint families is to see that the lights of our temples burn early and late in the day. Perhaps we could create the need for them to burn all night as they do presently on weekends in several temples.

A season to reach out

A few years ago a major communications company used in its advertising the phrase "Reach out and touch someone." President Hinckley has reminded us repeatedly of the many opportunities to reach out and touch someone. In speaking of those who have recently joined with us, he described a need to reach out and touch them with love and fellowship; to those who are estranged, a touch of encouragement, unconditional love, and a full measure of forgiveness if required; to our neighbors, associates, and friends who are not of our faith, the blessing of being touched by the Holy Spirit because of our words and deeds.

In a recent training meeting for stake and ward councils held as a part of a stake conference I attended, well-prepared presentations centered on the opportunities to be "inclusive" rather than "exclusive" in reaching out and touching new and less-active individuals, as well as those not members of our Church.

Sister Laura Chipman, a stake Young Women president, suggested five *I*'s to help us to be inclusive in our outreach. They are: (1) *Introspection*—Are we inadvertently communicating an exclusionary attitude? (2) *Identify*—Do we know the recently baptized, the less active, or nonmembers who reside in our neighborhoods and communities? (3) *Individualize*—Do we seek to know the interests, talents, and skills of those we wish to fellowship? (4) *Invite*—Do we include neighbors and friends in appropriate activities? (5) *Involve*—Are there ways we can utilize the skills, talents, and abilities of those we wish to include?

Blessings of reaching out

I recently attended the funeral for one of my boyhood friends. This brother was genetically challenged from birth. He could understand concepts quite well but could not read or write. His speech was limited to a very few identifiable words, along with a jargon all of his own. Some in our group could recognize a few words he spoke. However, we could usually tell from the tone of his words whether he was expressing his concerns or his great capacity to love. Much of Lynn's early life was spent in a special school away from home. He spent his summers and many holidays at home with his family. For the past 17 years, Lynn, who outlived all of his family, lived in a care center where his many needs could best be met.

Upon Lynn's death, one of his special friends arranged a funeral to be held in the meetinghouse we attended as boys. Present at the funeral were his dear friends, the staff from the care center, a few ward members who remembered him from many years ago, and about a dozen boyhood friends and their families. Several brethren who had stayed close to Lynn during his long, often lonesome stay at the care center offered tender remarks.

All of our memories were refreshed during the course of the service. One friend recalled that on one occasion our Sunday School teacher invited us to bear our testimonies in class. As he sequentially called upon us, he passed over Lynn, perhaps feeling he could not respond with understanding. With all the righteous indignation Lynn could muster, he let the teacher know he expected his opportunity to express himself. Though we didn't understand much of what he said, we felt his love and the depth of a great spirit tragically locked in a body that could not fully function. The spirit in that class was very strong!

As the staff and the special friends from the care center expressed their unconditional love, it was very evident that Lynn, in his humble way, had reached out and touched their lives. During the course of the funeral, it was apparent that at least three of our boyhood friends and their families had reached out to minister to Lynn in ways that included regular visits, long automobile rides, invitations to dinners on special occasions, and birthday parties.

When the stories and recollections were complete, we all realized that our physically challenged, loving angel of a friend had given us and the wonderful compassionate families who reached out so often in love, far more of real value than he had ever received.

Yes, today is indeed a season of many opportunities. It is a season to reach out to touch the life of someone, a season to commit to keeping the Sabbath day holy, and a season to help keep the lights of our temples burning brightly, to name just a very few. I testify of a living Father in Heaven and of His Son, our Savior and our Redeemer, both who love us unconditionally and are anxious for us to seize the many opportunities They have provided. I acknowledge and express my love to our dear prophet, who, with great devotion, carries our banner with cour-

age and majesty. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. She will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Sister Virginia U. Jensen

Love and reverence for prophets

One evening when I was 11 years old, I heard a commotion outside my window. I looked out the window, and in the street were newsboys carrying stacks of newspapers in their arms announcing the news that President George Albert Smith, the eighth President of the Church, had died. President Smith had been the only prophet I had known in my short time on earth. It was during his administration that I first felt the stirrings of a testimony, and even then I knew how important God's prophets are. I had been taught in Primary and in my home by loving parents that President Smith was our earthly link to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, that They could talk to me through him. What an empowering concept for a young girl! The Spirit had confirmed in my 11-year-old mind that this was true. When I learned of his death, I felt a tremendous loss.

However, just five days after President Smith's death, President David O. McKay stood in this tabernacle and spoke to those assembled. He had just been unanimously sustained as the prophet, seer, and revelator by the Saints. As he brushed back the tears, he said: "No one can preside over this Church without first being in tune with the head of the Church, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our head. This is his Church. . . . With his guidance, with his inspiration, we cannot fail."¹

I quickly came to love and revere President McKay just as I had loved and revered President Smith. In fact, I remember seeing him stand at this pulpit, with his white hair gleaming, and thinking he looked just like an angel.

"Come, listen to a prophet's voice"

Prophets ancient and modern were and are giants of the Lord, chosen and ordained before they came to this earth. Our prophets are men whom the Lord has raised up specifically to preside over the Church for the particular time in which they have served. The Lord is working through the leaders of His Church today, just as He has always done in the past.

President Wilford Woodruff said, "If we had before us every revelation which God ever gave to man . . . and they were piled up here a hundred feet high, the Church and kingdom of God could not grow, in this or any other age of the world, without the living oracles of God."²

Brothers and sisters, listen to the instructions and promise found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, . . . thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."³