

her faith. She knew that obeying the commandments is the best preparation to serve. President Monson advised us in the last April general conference to "obey the commandments" and "serve with love" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 63; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 47). Sister Ana Rita did so throughout her life.

### Desire to obey and serve God

When I was called to serve as a General Authority, I had an interview with President Faust. He noticed that I was concerned because I felt inadequate for such a call. In his tender way, President Faust told me, "Athos, be yourself. Be yourself." That night I lay awake in bed, thinking of my new responsibilities and

of President Faust's words. And I prayed. I asked myself, *Who am I?* And the answer came as clear and bright as the dawn of that brand-new day. I am, like each one of you, a child of God who wants to obey the Lord and serve wherever He sends me and thus be a better child of our Heavenly Father and a faithful member of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I know that Jesus Christ lives and that He is the head of this Church. I know He is our Savior and Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration and that President Gordon B. Hinkley is the prophet called by the Lord to preside over the Church today. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Val R. Christensen

When a member of the Church is called to challenging responsibilities, it is only natural to reflect upon the events and people who brought him to this point in his life. The call to serve in the Seventy offers a chance to express appreciation to friends, family—especially my wife, Ruth Ann—and to the missionaries in the Arizona Phoenix Mission. I love all of you. I look forward also to serving the wonderful people of the Philippines.

### Overcoming discouragement

Some years ago I was invited to participate in a fireside in which I outlined ways for people to overcome discouragement. At the beginning of the presentation, I invited those who were in attendance to write on a card a major challenge they were facing, one they would feel comfortable in having me share anonymously with other members of the group. When the problems came

forward, I was overcome by the significant issues faced by members who looked in control of their lives. Here are some they listed:

1. My farm is not making any money.
2. My son has a terminal illness.
3. Friction with a teenage child.
4. My oldest son is nearly blind.
5. Learning to accept the death of my son.
6. My husband sees the flaws but doesn't see the lovely things as much.

Many of us face significant challenges. Even the great prophet Enoch expressed sadness when he viewed the wickedness of the world: "And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look" (Moses 7:44).

There are at least three steps to take when striving to overcome discouragement:

1. You can work on changing your attitude toward the problem. Even though you can't change the circumstances in which you work or live, you can always change your attitude.

2. You can receive help from those who are close to you—your family, friends, and ward members, those who love you the most.

3. You can develop a more powerful and complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Change your attitude

By looking at a problem in a different way, it may be possible to reduce discouragement. I have been impressed with the pioneer story told about Zina Young. After experiencing the death of parents, crop failure, and sickness, she was encouraged with a spiritual experience that changed her attitude. While attempting to seek divine help, she heard her mother's voice: "Zina, any sailor can steer on a smooth sea, when rocks appear, sail around them." A prayer came quickly: "O Father in heaven, help me to be a good sailor, that my heart shall not break on the rocks of grief" ("Mother," *Young Woman's Journal*, Jan. 1911, 45). It is often difficult to change circumstances, but a positive attitude can help lift discouragement.

### Accept help from others

The next important point is to be willing to ask for help from those around you. Sometimes help comes from unexpected sources. A few years ago I stood in line in Chicago waiting to put my baggage on a plane. Behind me was an older man. After a few minutes he said to me, "Where are you going?" I said that I was heading for Salt Lake City. He said, "I'm going there too. Are you a Mormon?" I responded by saying I was. He said that he had been a Latter-day Saint all his life and had prepared himself finally to

go to the temple. While waiting for the plane, he opened his suitcase to show me all the missionary pictures that he had collected through the years. After some minutes, we were on our way and had a wonderful talk as we flew toward Utah. Upon arrival, we left the plane quickly. I made sure he knew where he was going and said good-bye.

Some weeks later I received this card in the mail: "Dear Brother Christensen, I lost your address and then found it. So I'm writing you a card. When I met you in Chicago, it was a prayer answered. I never travel anywhere. I wanted to be with someone. I have thought of you many times. I really enjoyed myself in Salt Lake City at the temple. Hope to see you someday. Thanks many times for the help you were to me." I wasn't planning to be useful that day, but I'm grateful for this brother who sought for extra help and I was nearby to assist.

### Develop trust in the Lord

I've talked about changing attitudes and receiving help from others. Now, let me mention the need to put more trust and faith in the Lord. I once talked to a woman who received help with her discouragement. While waiting for a temple session to begin, she picked up a Book of Mormon to read a verse. Her eyes fixed upon Alma 34:3:

"And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he hath spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your minds; yea, and he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience."

The scripture in Alma was an answer to her prayer. The message was simple: the problem she faced was going to take a long time to solve. If we place a little more patience in the process and a greater amount of faith in the Lord, our challenges will find their way toward successful conclusions.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read this: "If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful" (D&C 136:29).

I pray all of us may appreciate the challenges we have and try to improve our attitudes, even though our problems remain the same. Ask help from friends and family. I also testify that Jesus Christ lives and that He will help us through our discouragements if we will humbly

ask for His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Work," following which Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

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The choir sang "Sweet Is the Work."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A voice of warning

Because the Lord is kind, He calls servants to warn people of danger. That call to warn is made harder and more important by the fact that the warnings of most worth are about dangers that people don't yet think are real. Think of Jonah. He fled at first from the call from the Lord to warn the people of Nineveh who were blinded to the danger by sin. He knew that wicked people through the ages have rejected prophets and sometimes killed them. Yet when Jonah went forward with faith, the Lord blessed him with safety and success. (See Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10.)

We can also learn from our experiences as parents and as children. Those of us who have been parents have felt the anxiety of sensing danger our children cannot yet see. Few prayers are so fervent as those of a parent asking to know how to touch a child to move away from danger. Most of us have felt the blessing of hearing and heeding the warning voice of a parent.

### Mother's warning

I can still remember my mother speaking softly to me one Saturday after-

noon when, as a little boy, I asked her for permission to do something I thought was perfectly reasonable and which she knew was dangerous. I still am amazed at the power she was granted—I believe from the Lord—to turn me around with so few words. As I remember them, they were, "Oh, I suppose you *could* do that. But the *choice* is yours." The only warning was in the emphasis she put on the words *could* and *choice*. Yet that was enough for me.

Her power to warn with so few words sprang from three things I knew about her. First, I knew she loved me. Second, I knew she had already done what she wanted me to do and been blessed by it. And third, she had conveyed to me her sure testimony that the choice I had to make was so important that the Lord would tell me what to do if I asked Him. Love, example, and testimony: those were keys that day, and they have been whenever I have been blessed to hear and then heed the warning of a servant of the Lord.

### Responsibility to warn our neighbors

Our ability to touch others with our warning voice matters to all who are covenant disciples of Jesus Christ. Here