

Elder Harold G. Hillam

Lessons for future leaders

During the last general conference, a relatively insignificant thing caught my attention. It was a necktie! As a choir of young boys and girls was singing, one of the TV cameras happened upon a young boy in the choir. He thought he saw himself on the television monitor but perhaps wasn't completely sure. So this is what he did: by wiggling his tie almost unnoticeably, he knew—yes—it was really him!

This modest act triggered a flood of thoughts in my mind. Turning to look at those young boys and girls, I thought, "These children represent millions of similar other boys and girls throughout the world. What will this great Church be like when they reach the ages of the leaders here, and what part will they play in its remarkable future? Which children will hold ward or stake positions? Might a future member of the Twelve be listening to the conference or even be seated here today? Which young boy will someday preside as President of the Church when it has many more millions of members?"

As these thoughts continued in my mind, I realized that you young people will need to learn so many lessons. You will have to prepare for your awesome responsibilities in a time when the adversary seems to go unchecked by the world in his opposition to all that is good and decent. You will need to learn many lessons, but let me share three lessons that I believe are essential.

Develop a sense of respect

The first essential lesson is to develop a sense of respect for things that are sacred and a respect for other people, especially your elders.

The Lord taught Moses about sacred things and places. When Moses approached the burning bush that was not

consumed by fire, the Lord commanded, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). We too have the opportunity to stand in holy places. Temples, Church buildings, and your home should command your respect because they are sacred.

You will need to recognize and value all that the Lord has revealed as being sacred. One of the most significant is the sacred nature of your own body. The Apostle Paul spoke of our bodies as temples given to us by God (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). What a tragedy if you deprived yourself of life's opportunities by willfully disfiguring your body or numbing your mind with drugs. Don't use your body for immoral acts. Clothe it modestly, and leave the sloppy dress craze behind. When you have the courage to dress modestly and avoid fads in clothing, you will find that self-respect is a companion of obedience and that the Lord will help you.

How we act and dress reflects how we regard where we are and who we are. Let me demonstrate. One of the natural occurrences in missionary work is the change in new converts, especially little boys, young men, and fathers. When they go to Church meetings, they want to look like the missionaries. Now, that tells us a lot about the importance of looking like a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The words of the prophets as found in ancient scripture and in modern-day revelation are sacred also. They are the words of the Lord to us. Treat them with respect by listening carefully and then conforming your lives to them.

I urge you young people to develop the habit of always showing respect, courtesy, and deference to your parents and others, especially those who are

older than you. My father taught me that every person in and out of the Church has a title, such as *Mr., Mrs., Brother, Sister, Bishop, Elder, or President*, and that they should be addressed with respect. When I was six years old, my father reinforced this principle when I made the horrid mistake of calling our local grocer by his first name. Upon leaving the grocery store, my father taught me with firmness that I had shown a lack of respect by being so casual to an older person. I have never forgotten that experience, nor have I after 60 years forgotten the name of the grocer. I even remember his first name.

Learn and obey the commandments

The second essential lesson is to learn the commandments and obey them because you choose to. Before you can obey the commandments, you must know what they are. You *learn* the commandments by being instructed. That is why family home evening, Sunday classes, and seminary are so important. You *know* the commandments by the Spirit through prayer, your own personal study, and your own personal revelation.

You need to keep your minds clean so you can recognize and respond to the quiet whisperings of the Spirit. Select with care the information you allow to enter your mind. Avoid the cluttered clamor of the world. Television, movies, and especially the Internet can provide an open window through which you can peer into the far reaches of the world. They can bring to you information that is uplifting, good, and inspiring. But if used improperly, these media technologies can fill your mind with such unwholesome thoughts that you will be unable to hear the gentle prompting of the Spirit. Live each day so that you are able to be in tune with the Spirit like the boy prophet Samuel and you are able to respond to the Lord and say, "Speak [Lord]; for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Come to know and love the Savior

A third essential lesson is to develop a love for the Savior. *Knowing about* the Savior is a natural part of our religious education. *Knowing* the Savior requires personal obedience, prayer, a closeness to the Spirit, and revelation.

I want to speak to you teachers for a moment—you parents, priesthood leaders, bishops, stake presidents, and teachers in Primary, Young Women, Young Men, and Sunday School. The Lord has reminded everyone that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). We are all responsible to teach and lead these wonderful young men and young women and touch their lives by our example. As the song says, "How will they know unless we teach them?" And maybe we could add, "How will they know unless we show them?" ("How Will They Know?" *Children's Songbook*, 182–85).

Every leader and every teacher in every part of the world has a responsibility to teach the gospel by the Spirit. The boys and girls you teach have the potential to become outstanding fathers and mothers as well as revered Church leaders of the future. May you visualize each one of them in their important future callings. Some teacher somewhere is indeed teaching a young boy who will someday sit in these seats as he serves as the Lord's prophet. What a marvelous opportunity is yours.

Prepare to be faithful leaders

And now to you, my young friend with the tie—yes, it *is* you. You and the millions like you, if you prepare well, will be the faithful mothers and fathers in the Church and the Lord's future leaders. You will be the teachers and leaders who will continue to establish the Church throughout the world. You will probably want to look in the mirror periodically and remind yourselves of the great mission that lies before you, and perhaps

you might even want to wiggle your tie just to remind yourself of your important mission ahead. May you stand straight and noble in your callings.

I pray that you young people will develop a reverence for sacred things, a respect for your elders, and a willingness to keep the commandments. I pray that you will learn to know of the Savior and have an ever-growing understanding of His Atonement. I ask the Lord to help you throughout your life to join your testimony with those of today's living prophets and apostles, who have declared:

"We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for

the matchless gift of His divine Son" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3).

To this I also testify and witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Sister Coleen K. Menlove, Primary general president, will then speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Sister Coleen K. Menlove

Obtaining happiness

Children love stories. As a child I was immediately drawn into stories that started with the words "Once upon a time." These stories often ended with "They lived happily ever after." I have a feeling that children are not the only ones who are intrigued by those phrases. We each long to have the "once upon a time" of our lives filled with so much happiness that it becomes the "happily ever after" of our hopes and dreams.

We are living in our "once upon a time." We are experiencing a mortal probation now during our turn on earth. In our premortal existence, "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) as we accepted the great eternal plan of happiness. We happily anticipated coming to earth to have opportunities to grow spiritually. "Men are, that they might have

joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). The opportunity is here and now to obtain happiness that extends beyond our earth life; however, we need to know what it is and where to find it.

Happiness results from obedience

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi explained to his son Jacob that happiness is a result of obedience. He told Jacob that eternal laws have both punishments and opportunities for happiness attached to them. When we disobey God's laws, we suffer the punishments, but when we obey, we reap the happiness (see 2 Nephi 2:10). Part of what creates happiness is the absence of regret, guilt, and sin.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it;