

President Hunter also reminded us, "A man who holds the priesthood leads his family in Church participation so they will know the gospel and be under the protection of the covenants and ordinances" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 69; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51).

For us to accomplish this we must make certain our personal lives are in order. Hypocrisy has never worked, and it will not work today. We are required to lead out in righteousness and encourage our families to follow our examples. Lead out in family home evening. Lead out in scripture study. Provide priesthood blessings. Lead out in personal and family prayer. President Monson said, "Remember that a man never stands taller than when he is upon his knees" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 509).

We are on the Lord's errand

A time-out usually concludes with a little pep talk. Brethren, we can prevail

and ultimately win the contest. We can honor and respect the priesthood on a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day basis. We can banish profanity, pornography, and drugs from our lives, as well as any other unwholesome or unclean activity. We can provide our families with the priesthood leadership and the spiritual direction they require. We can do all this and much more if we will draw near to the Savior, honor the sacred priesthood we hold, and be faithful to the covenants we have made.

I testify we are on the Lord's errand. He is our Savior. He is our Redeemer. He has atoned for our sins. He is our Advocate with the Father. He lives. He loves us unconditionally. We are bearers of His priesthood. I love President Hinckley, his counselors, the Twelve, and my fellow General Authorities, and I testify of their goodness, their greatness, and their authority. I love you, my fellow holders of the priesthood, and pray for our success. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Angel Abrea

Your personal testimony

I would like to have an imaginary conversation about personal testimony with the priesthood holders. I believe that this colloquial way will help me to convey my message. For the purpose of our discussion, I will use the names of my grandsons; please imagine that these names are yours and that I am speaking directly to each one of you young men.

My dear James, when you were a young boy you bore your testimony and said, "I know the gospel is true. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet."

You knew those things because others told you. Because of your trust in

your parents, your bishop, and others, you never questioned that knowledge. But now, as you grow more independent in understanding, comprehension, and perception of all the different variables that this intense and beautiful life presents to you, frequently you realize that not all men have the same testimony or the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Maybe, Jonathan, you have already realized that some adults are cynical and will not talk to you about the beautiful concepts of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and eternal life. Instead, they will tell you to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). Others you will see groping and grasping, looking for answers which they do

not find. And yet they will still try to demonstrate to you a knowledge of that which they do not have. Even others will say, "Well, maybe these things are true, but maybe they aren't. The best thing we can do is live our own lives the way we see fit, and then if there is a life after this one, we will see what happens."

Now, Andrew, I can understand the thoughts and feelings you may have in your mind and heart. I can understand that when you listen to these different messages, you may ask yourself what is right and what is not.

I'm sure that many questions have come to your mind. The truth is that you will not be condemned for wondering or questioning if you make a sincere effort to find the answer. Our mental powers have been given to us to use. Faith based on personal prayer, study, and obedience is more lasting than blind faith; it is more rewarding, and for sure it is better grounded.

Be humble and continue learning

And you, Paul, do you remember when the Savior said:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4).

We are benefited by retaining the humility and teachableness of a child, but we must be sure to continue growing and not be content with the limited knowledge or comprehension of the gospel which a child has. Remember, Paul, what the Apostle of your same name said to the Corinthians: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Testimony is our greatest possession

Well now, my dear Russell, you will ask yourself, "In that case, do I have to go and look for the answer myself? Can anybody have this kind of testimony? Is it a gift only for a few? Do those who say they *know* really only *think* they know, or have they convinced themselves through a psychological trick?"

In answer to your questions, and to give more light to these things, let me tell you that Elder John A. Widtsoe said that those who truly have a testimony of the gospel have "the highest type of knowledge. It comes as a revelation when truth is known and obeyed. . . . It is really *man's chief possession*" ("What Does It Mean to Have a Testimony?" *Improvement Era*, May 1945, 273; italics added). Do you realize that a testimony is defined as "the highest type of knowledge" and "man's chief possession" and that in the Doctrine and Covenants the Savior mentions it as a knowledge "which shall dwell in your heart"? (D&C 8:2).

Maybe it will be difficult to understand this at your age, but our testimony is something that we will take with us to the next life. We will leave all our earthly possessions behind, but that knowledge, that inner conviction will remain with us. Think of Joseph Smith: those who took his life could not take his chief possession—his testimony. The Prophet Joseph took that priceless possession with him through death's veil into eternity, where the Lord had promised him "a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father" (D&C 132:49). But at the same time, that testimony, together with "a fame and name that cannot be slain" (D&C 135:3), remains here with us. We hear the resounding witness of God's prophet testifying "that [Christ] lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

How to obtain a testimony

My dear Matthew, now that you have been able to see the eternal dimension of a testimony, we can continue with our conversation, showing that you can have your own testimony if you do what is necessary to obtain one.

In one of those difficult times that the faithful and dedicated young Nephi had with his rebellious brothers, he reminded them of the following guide to obtaining a testimony. The Lord declared, "If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:11). Now we can review the steps Nephi described.

First, *don't harden your heart*. Seek to know. In other words, have an intense, consuming desire to know. Give place for a seed to be planted in your heart. And if you do this, do you know what the promise is? Alma tells us, "He that will not harden his heart, to him is given . . . to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 12:10).

Second, *ask in faith*. In your study of the scriptures, have you noted how many times the phrase "believing that ye shall receive" accompanies the commandment of praying and asking? In the process of asking for knowledge, we have to exercise faith—believing before receiving. To illustrate this part of our conversation, Alma gives us a good example when he explained how he obtained his testimony:

"Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me" (Alma 5:46).

Third, *keep the commandments*. I think that the words of the Book of Mormon point out the blessings that we can

obtain if we abound in good works. King Benjamin declared to his people, "If you believe all these things see that ye do them" (Mosiah 4:10). And the great missionary Ammon said, "Yea, he that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God" (Alma 26:22).

Seek companionship of the Holy Ghost

Now, Cole, we have analyzed the different steps we should follow in our search for a testimony. But there is yet the most important help available that can give us confirmation and absolute assurance, and it is your right when you live worthy to receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Remember the promise in Moroni: "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Pay attention that I said to *receive* the companionship of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost has the power to bring light and understanding to our lives, but we must pay the price to seek and win His companionship.

Elder Marion G. Romney wrote: "It is the mission of the Holy Ghost to reveal the truth of heaven to those who qualify to receive it. Every one of us, if we will, may so qualify. We must ever keep in mind, however, that he will not dwell in an unholy environment. He is used to the society of God, for he is an associate of the Father and the Son. When we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are commanded to receive him; he is not commanded to come to us. But if, with all our hearts, we truly seek him, he will come to us and guide us in the making of decisions at every crisis of our lives" ("Revelation in Our Personal Affairs," *Relief Society Magazine*, Oct. 1955, 647).

The Holy Ghost is given to us to witness of the Father and the Son; that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer; that there is

a prophet upon the earth who presides over the true Church that carries the Savior's name, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and that all the works and promises of God will be fulfilled in His time and in His own way.

What a testimony represents in our lives

And now, my youngest grandson, Tate, we can end this conversation, mentioning what a testimony is. Maybe the best way to define it would be by looking at what a testimony represents in our lives.

It is to say, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know" (1 Nephi 3:7), and then to act in consequence.

It is to have the peace that comes with knowing that all possible has been done, that all talents have been exercised to the maximum.

It is to follow the commandment of the Lord to Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

And it is to "be patient in afflictions" (D&C 31:9).

It is to never give up, but to stand up as an example to others.

It is to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

It is to declare His generation: "Jesus Christ [is] the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:8).

Yes, these and many other characteristics and actions model a testimony. And this is my testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Angel Abrea of the Seventy.

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. When he concludes, the choir and congregation will sing "Ye Elders of Israel."

President James E. Faust

Brethren, this evening we are part of history in the making. We are convened in the largest of all priesthood meetings ever held in any dispensation. We rejoice in the attendance of all of those beyond the great Conference Center, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Meeting for the first time in this new, grand edifice is a great moment in the history of humanity. We are indebted to the Lord, who inspired President Gordon B. Hinckley with the prophetic vision that brought about its construction and made it all possible. We thank Bishop H. David Burton, Bishop Richard C. Edgley, Bishop Keith B. McMull-

in, and all who have had anything to do with its construction. Now that we have it, we must use it to strengthen the faith of our people.

The power of self-mastery

Tonight, brethren, I should like to speak about the power of self-mastery in its larger sense. Self-mastery is essential to invoke the power of the priesthood of God. This is because this great, divine agency can be exercised only in righteousness. Self-mastery requires self-determination and strength of character. It enhances our own gifts and talents in