

and your love. I extend my love to each of you. May the heavens open, and may blessings come down upon you in abundance as you walk in faithfulness before the Lord.

We shall now be pleased to go forward with the proceedings of this great gathering.

God bless you, my beloved associates, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "We Are Sowing."

President Faust

The choir has just sung "We Are Sowing." We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy will speak to us.

Following Elder Jensen's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will then address us, followed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Fulfilling the purposes of mortality

One of the most exhilarating moments of your life—when you were filled with anticipation, excitement, and gratitude—you are not able to remember. That experience occurred in the premortal life when you were informed that finally your time had come to leave the spirit world to dwell on earth with a mortal body.

You knew you could learn through personal experience the lessons that would bring happiness on earth—lessons that would eventually lead you to exaltation and eternal life as a glorified, celestial being in the presence of your Holy Father and His Beloved Son.

You understood that there would be challenges, for you would live in an environment of both righteous and evil influences. Yet surely you resolved that no matter what the cost, no matter what the effort, suffering, and testing, you would return victorious.

You were reserved to come when the fulness of the gospel is on earth. You arrived when His Church and the priest-

hood authority to perform the sacred temple ordinances are in place. You anticipated being born into a home where parents would be expected to love, nurture, strengthen, and teach you truths. You knew that in time you would have the opportunity to form your own eternal family as husband or wife, father or mother. Oh, how you must have rejoiced at that prospect.

These words express the most fundamental purpose of your being on earth:

"We will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:24–26).

After Adam was placed on earth, God said, "Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man

should be alone" (Abraham 5:14). Eve and Adam formed the first family. God declared, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Moses 3:24). They had children who also formed families. "And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God" (Moses 5:16). The pattern of families essential to Father's plan of happiness was established, and our need to continually "call upon God" emphasized. You are in the midst of living that plan.

Strive for the ideal family

Through the restored gospel we learn there is an *ideal family*. It is a family composed of a righteous Melchizedek Priesthood bearer with a righteous wife sealed to him and children born in the covenant or sealed to them. With a mother in the home in an environment of love and service, the parents teach their children, through example and precept, the ways of the Lord and His truths. They fulfill their divinely appointed roles mentioned in the family proclamation (see *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102). Their children mature by living teachings instilled from birth. They develop characteristics of obedience, integrity, love of God, and faith in His holy plan. In due course, each of those children seeks a companion with similar ideals and aspirations. They are sealed in the temple and bear children, and the eternal plan continues, with generation strengthening generation.

Throughout your life on earth, seek diligently to fulfill the fundamental purposes of this life *through the ideal family*. While you may not have yet reached that ideal, do all you can through obedience and faith in the Lord to consistently draw as close to it as you are able. Let nothing dissuade you from that objective. If it requires fundamental changes in your personal life, make them.

When you have the required age and maturity, obtain all of the ordinances of the temple you can receive. If for the pres-

ent that does not include sealing in the temple to a righteous companion, live for it. Pray for it. Exercise faith that you will obtain it. Never do anything that would make you unworthy of it. If you have lost the vision of eternal marriage, rekindle it.

If your dream requires patience, give it. As brothers, we prayed and worked for 30 years before our mother and our nonmember father were sealed in the temple. Don't become overanxious. Do the best you can. We cannot say whether that blessing will be obtained on this side of the veil or beyond it, but the Lord will keep His promises. In His infinite wisdom, He will make possible all you qualify in worthiness to receive. Do not be discouraged. Living a pattern of life as close as possible to the ideal will provide much happiness, great satisfaction, and impressive growth while here on earth, regardless of your current life circumstances.

"Good things" can become distractions

Satan and his hosts will do all in their power to keep you from obtaining the ordinances required for the ideal family. He will attempt to distract you from centering your mind and heart on raising a strong family by nurturing your children as the Lord requires.

Are there so many fascinating, exciting things to do or so many challenges pressing down upon you that it is hard to keep focused on that which is essential? When things of the world crowd in, all too often the wrong things take highest priority. Then it is easy to forget the fundamental purpose of life. Satan has a powerful tool to use against good people. It is distraction. He would have good people fill life with "good things" so there is no room for the essential ones. Have you unconsciously been caught in that trap?

"Men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the

great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, . . . for [the devil] seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Why has your moral agency been given to you? Only to live a pleasurable life and to make choices to do the things you want to do? Or is there a more fundamental reason—to be able to make the choices that will lead you to fully implement your purpose for being here on earth and to establish priorities in your life that will ensure the development and happiness the Lord wants you to receive.

Danger of focusing only on pleasure

Recently I met an intelligent young man with great potential. He was undecided about a mission. He has decided not to attend a university now. In his free time he does only what he likes to do. He doesn't work because he doesn't have to, and it would take time from pleasure. He passed seminary classes without much thought of personally applying the knowledge gained. I noted:

"You are making choices today that appear to give you what you want: an easy life, abundant enjoyment, and not much sacrifice. You can do that for a while, yet every decision you make narrows your future. You are eliminating possibilities and options. There will come a time, and it won't be too distant, when you are going to spend the rest of your life doing things you don't want to do, in places you don't want to be, because you have not prepared yourself. You are not taking advantage of your opportunities."

I mentioned how everything I treasure today began to mature in the mission field. Missionary service is not something we do for ourselves, yet great growth and preparation for the future are gained from a mission. Missionaries focus outside of themselves on other people. They draw close to the Lord and really learn His teachings. They find individuals who are interested in the message but not sure of

its worth. Missionaries try with every capacity—prayer, fasting, and testifying—to help individuals embrace the truth. A mission teaches one to be led by the Spirit, to understand our purpose for being on earth and how to accomplish it. I gave him a blessing. As he left, I prayed earnestly that the Lord would help him choose the right priorities. Otherwise, he will fail in life's purpose.

Discipline and sacrifice develop character

In stark contrast, consider the example of another young man. Through the years I have watched how his parents have taught him from infancy to unwaveringly live the commandments of God. By example and precept, they nurtured him, together with their other children, in truth. They encouraged him to develop discipline and sacrifice to obtain worthy goals. This young man chose swimming to instill in his character those qualities. Early-morning practice sessions required discipline and sacrifice. Over time he excelled in that sport.

Then came the challenges—for example, a championship swim meet on Sunday. Would he participate? Would he rationalize an exception to his rule of not swimming on Sunday to help his team win the championship? No, he would not yield, even under intense peer pressure. He was called names, even physically abused. But he would not yield. The rejection of friends, the loneliness, and the pressure brought times of sadness and tears. But he would not yield. He was learning firsthand what each of us must come to know—the reality of Paul's counsel to Timothy: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Over the years this consistent pattern of righteous living—woven from hundreds of correct decisions, some in the face of great challenge—has developed a character of strength and capacity. Now, as a missionary, he is appreciated by his peers

for his ability to work, his knowledge of truth, his unwavering devotion, and his determination to share the gospel. One who earlier was rejected by his peers now has become a respected leader of his peers. Is there a message for you in these examples?

Seek the Lord's will, not convenience

While wholesome pleasure results from much we do that is good, it is not our prime purpose for being on earth. Seek to know and do the will of the Lord, not just what is convenient or what makes life easy. You have His plan of happiness. You know what to do, or can find out through study and prayer. Do it willingly. The Lord declared:

"It is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"... Men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in no wise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned" (D&C 58:26–29)—meaning stopped in progress and development.

Get what you pay for in spiritual matters

An axiom we all understand is that you get what you pay for. That is true for spiritual matters as well. You get what you pay for in obedience, in faith in Jesus Christ, in diligent application of the truths that are learned in your own life. What you get is the molding of character, the growth in capacity, the success-

ful completion of your purpose here on earth—to be proven.

Time and time again at funerals, statements are made that the deceased will inherit all blessings of celestial glory when that individual has in no way qualified by obtaining the necessary ordinances and by keeping the required covenants. That won't happen. Such blessings can be earned only by meeting the Lord's requirements. His mercy does not overcome the requirements of His law. They must be met.

Put first things first

Some places are sacred and holy, where it seems easier to discern the direction of the Holy Spirit. The temple is such a place. Find a retreat of peace and quiet where periodically you can ponder and let the Lord establish the direction of your life. Each of us needs to periodically check our bearings and confirm that we are on course. Sometime soon you may benefit from taking this personal inventory:

- What are my highest priorities to be accomplished while on earth?
- How do I use my discretionary time? Is some of it consistently applied to my highest priorities?
- Is there anything I know I should not be doing? If so, I will repent and stop it now.

In a quiet moment write down your responses. Analyze them. Make any necessary adjustments.

Put first things first. Do the best you can while on earth to have an *ideal family*. To help you do that, ponder and apply the principles in the proclamation on the family. I testify that the Lord lives. He loves you. As you live worthily and honestly seek His help, He will guide and strengthen you to know His will and to be able to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.