

joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven.

Listen to the rich blessings prophesied for those who live the law of the fast:

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . .

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."<sup>15</sup>

As we live the law of the fast, we not only draw nearer to God through prayer, but we feed the hungry and care for the poor. Each time we do so, we fulfill both of the great commandments upon which "hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>16</sup>

I know that Jesus the Christ lives. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is our prophet, seer, and revelator. And I bear solemn witness of this reality. I also bear witness that He who had compassion for the "least of these"<sup>17</sup> looks with love and compassion upon those today who "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>18</sup>

I raise my voice in testimony and promise, along with the great Apostles who have preceded us, that those who live the law of the fast will surely discover the rich blessings that attend this holy principle. Of this I bear solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Matthew 22:36-40.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29.
3. "Will a Man Rob God?" (1952), 207-8.
4. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 331-32.
5. *History of the Church*, 7:413.
6. Alma 45:1.
7. Alma 17:2-3.
8. Mosiah 4:26.
9. See Alma 34:28.
10. Ephesians 2:19.
11. Mormon 8:37.
12. "The Blessings of the Fast," *Ensign*, July 1982, 4.
13. See Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 10; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 8.
14. In Conference Report, Apr. 1991, 73; or *Ensign*, May 1991, 52-53.
15. Isaiah 58: 9, 11.
16. Matthew 22:40.
17. Matthew 25:40.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.

## Elder John K. Carmack

### Love and testimony unify the Church

Seventeen years ago today, during the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, I responded to President Hinckley's assignment that I represent the six newly called Seventy in accepting our calls. As I awaited my turn at the midpoint of the session, I stood between two great Apostles: Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Bruce R. McConkie. I felt their love and support as I gazed with no little trepidation at the congregation of Saints gathered in the Tabernacle. Incidentally, we're four times greater today.

Elder Ashton, sensing my feelings, whispered, "I know it's an awesome sight, but they're all your friends." As I stood that first time to speak, I felt the love of the Saints washing over me. Since then, in all the places to which worldwide assignments have taken us, Shirley and I have felt that same love and tried to return it.

The unity of the Saints is unique and powerful. I have seen and felt it on virtually every continent and in the islands of the sea. That unity is a major reason the Church is progressing. Without it we would falter. As Jesus explained, "Every

city or house divided against itself shall not stand."<sup>1</sup>

Division and fault lines abound in the world, but "we are not divided; all one body we."<sup>2</sup> We have that unity under the spiritual direction of our prophet. Our wealth, social status, or skin color doesn't matter. The feast of the gospel is freely available to all who desire to partake of its delicacies. Jesus told His disciples, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>3</sup> The Church is quietly moving forward in crescendo, as a great symphony orchestra moving toward a climax, strengthening communities as it grows.

We enjoy that unity through love. We can neither purchase nor force it. Our method is to "persuade, . . . and bless with wisdom, love, and light, . . . but never force the human mind."<sup>4</sup> To the extent we operate in other ways, we diminish our right to be recognized as disciples of Christ. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>5</sup>

That unifying love is coupled with our individual testimonies. Almost all members could and would respond if called upon to bear their own testimonies in this conference. Yes, we are united in love and testimony.

### Testimony of the Book of Mormon

My testimony is built on the firm convictions that the Book of Mormon is true and that Jesus is our Savior. This spiritual foundation has helped me weather the storms of challenge and doubt. I started reading the Book of Mormon in my youth and have continued, learning and drinking its spirit with every study.

As one in the last large group of missionaries called before demands of the Korean War diverted our young men into military service, I participated in about five days of training in the Salt Lake Mission Home on State Street. One of our trainers was Bryant S. Hinckley, a leader

of stature and a stimulating teacher. He invited those missionaries assembled to share reasons they believed the Book of Mormon to be true. I was impressed with the variety of reasons shared by the missionaries. On that occasion I suggested that in addition to the witness of the Holy Ghost, the number of new names identifying people, places, animals, and things in the Book of Mormon had impressed me.

Now, 50 years later, I am still impressed by these new names. When researchers reported the discovery of stones in the southern Arabian Desert with the name *Nahom* inscribed on them, I paid attention. These inscriptions appear to be dated about 700 B.C. Ishmael, we read, was buried in a place called Nahom. Nahom is one of those names that impressed me.

Evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon continues to mount. During his mission in Germany, Jack Welch found verses in the Book of Mosiah that clearly form a chiasmus, or an X-shaped configuration. That finding evidenced ancient rather than modern authorship.

Scholars continue to find and publish new insights into what the book says and how it says it. A distinguished literature professor has published a recent book containing his lifetime study of the Book of Mormon, detailing its astonishing variety of literary forms.<sup>6</sup> Statisticians have found evidence of multiple authors within the covers of the book. Although these evidences have added to my testimony, the original powerful witness of the Holy Ghost has remained unshaken and unaltered. It has also recurred many times.

### Value of Book of Mormon witnesses

I also wonder if we fully appreciate the value and strength of the witnesses' testimonies published in each copy of the Book of Mormon. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris saw

the plates and the angel. And Joseph also showed the gold plates to eight other men who saw and, using their words, “hefted” them.<sup>7</sup> These witnesses did not recant their testimonies, nor have their published testimonies ever been otherwise impeached. Those eight additional witnesses, in effect, testified, “Yes, we saw and lifted those plates. Joseph had them.”

The witnesses have been important to me. The Lord told Joseph that the declarations of these witnesses prove “to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old.”<sup>8</sup>

### Testimony of Christ is the main message

Having discovered that the book is true, we must ask, “What is its message?” Alma (and incidentally, Professor Welch says that they’ve discovered recently ancient usage of the word *Alma*), in speaking to the people of Gideon, put his finger on the central message of the book. He said, “There be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.”<sup>9</sup> Yes, Jesus’ coming and His Atonement, worked out in Gethsemane and on the cross, are surely more important than all other knowledge a person can gain. And the Book of Mormon is “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” as its subtitle proclaims.

Before reading the Book of Mormon, I had a child’s testimony of Jesus. My first awareness of Jesus was when my Grandmother Carmack, an artist of some minor acclaim, pointed out to me the beauty of the Arizona sunset and then asked, “John Kay, who made this beautiful world?” Answering her own question, she explained, “Jesus made this world. Yes, He did.” Grandmother was right, of course. Jesus, the Son of God, did create the worlds under the Father’s direction.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally,

grandparents should not underestimate their influence in the lives of their grandchildren.

### Jesus helps us personally in times of need

Christ’s Atonement is the central doctrine, but of even more comfort and benefit has been how wonderfully accessible and individual His mercy and help have been to me personally. These familiar words capture my feelings about that important aspect of Jesus’ influence and ministry:

In ev’ry condition—in sickness, in health,

In poverty’s vale or abounding in wealth,

At home or abroad, on the land or the sea—

As thy days may demand, . . . so thy succor shall be.<sup>11</sup>

During those chaotic moments we all seem to experience—when suffering anxiety or despair, when misunderstood and depreciated—as our days demand, our Savior can and will provide that succor or help in time of need. His succor brings us peace. Did He not say, “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” but “in me ye might have peace”?<sup>12</sup> Oh, how I have needed that peace! And it has been available in every condition, as my days and circumstances may have demanded.

To conclude, Church members are unified in Christ through love and testimony. This dispensation’s pathway to our Savior is through Joseph and the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup> Thus we can be certain that the New Testament account of Jesus is true. Jesus is our Lord and Redeemer. At every opportunity we ought to proclaim, “Hallelujah! How great Thou art!”

President Hinckley is His prophet on the earth. This is His Church. May our unity constitute evidence to the world that we are His disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. Matthew 12:25.
2. "Onward, Christian Soldiers," *Hymns*, no. 246.
3. Matthew 8:11.
4. "Know This, That Every Soul Is Free," *Hymns*, no. 240.
5. John 13:35.
6. See Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (1997).
7. "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 20:11.
9. Alma 7:7.
10. See Hebrews 1:1-2.
11. "How Firm a Foundation," *Hymns*, no. 85.

12. John 16:33.

13. Doctrine and Covenants 5:10.

**President Monson**

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." Following the singing, Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and then Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah."

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## Elder L. Lionel Kendrick

**Enhancing our temple experience**

One of the great blessings that we enjoy today is the opportunity to attend the temple. With an ever increasing number of temples, the blessings of the temple are available to a growing number of Church members.

These blessings should not be taken lightly. The Savior has commanded that we should "trifle not with sacred things" (D&C 6:12). The temple and the holy ordinances are indeed sacred, and we should be spiritually sensitive to them. It is a sacred blessing to attend the temple to worship the Lord.

There is a difference in just attending the temple and having a rich spiritual experience. The real blessings of the temple come as we enhance our temple experience. To do so, we must feel a spirit of reverence for the temple and a spirit of worship.

**The spirit of reverence in the temple**

All who attend the temple should remember the counsel of the Lord when

He said, "Reverence my sanctuary" (Leviticus 19:30). Reverence is an expression of deep respect, honor, and adoration for the Lord. It is having reverence for His name, for His words, for His ordinances and covenants, for His servants, for His chapels, and for His temples.

It is an outward indication of an inner feeling that we have for Him. We should always remember that it is by His invitation that we come to His holy house, the temple of the Lord. We should respond to His invitation by being worthy, by being prepared, and by having the temple as a priority in our lives. While in the temple, we should act as if we are in His holy presence.

To be reverent is not just to be quiet. It involves an awareness of what is taking place. It involves a divine desire to learn and to be receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. It involves a striving to seek added light and knowledge. Irreverence is not only an act of disrespect for Deity, but it makes it impossible for the Spirit to teach us the things that we need to know.