

ders L. Tom Perry and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder Robert F. Orton of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Elder L. Tom Perry

The returned missionary

This afternoon I want to address my remarks to a special group. During the last many years, hundreds of thousands of you have returned from serving full-time missions. Each of you heeded the same call the Savior gave to His disciples:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19–20).

It was your privilege to go to the many parts of the world to carry the Savior's message—an invitation to come unto Him and enjoy the fruits of His gospel. You were privileged to live in different cultures and learn different languages. It was also a time of building your own personal testimony of the mission of Jesus Christ.

I have always been honored to visit with you returned missionaries over the years. Many of you long to return and visit the people you had the privilege of serving. You are anxious to share moments of your experiences in the mission field. In your wedding announcements and your employment résumés, you insert a line that identifies you as a returned missionary. While you no longer wear a missionary's badge, you seem anxious to identify yourselves as one who has served the Lord as a missionary. Moreover, you have fond memories because you discovered the joy of gospel service.

I have also learned from many conversations with you that the adjustment associated with leaving the mission field and returning to the world you left behind is sometimes difficult. Perhaps it is hard to keep alive the spirit of missionary work when you are no longer serving as a full-time missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

May I offer just a few suggestions?

Stay close to the Lord through prayer

One of the strongest recollections I have of being a missionary is how close I drew to the Lord through the practice of regular prayer. In my day the Mission Home was located on State Street in Salt Lake City. It was a large house that had been converted to a mission training center. It had large dormitory rooms with perhaps as many as 10 beds in a room. We checked in on Sunday night.

The week before I entered the mission field was an exciting time. There were a lot of parties and farewells. I am afraid that I was not properly rested and prepared for the training I was to receive at the Mission Home. As the evening of our first day in the Mission Home came to a close, I was weary. While waiting for the other missionaries to prepare themselves for bed, I stretched out on my bed and promptly fell asleep. My sleep, however, was interrupted by a feeling that I was surrounded. As the fog of sleep lifted, I heard the words of a prayer being said. I opened my eyes, and much to my surprise I found all the elders in my dormitory room kneeling around my bed, conclud-

ing the day with a prayer. I quickly closed my eyes and acted as if I was asleep. I was too embarrassed to get out of bed and join them. Even though my first experience with prayer as a missionary was an embarrassing one, it was the beginning of two wonderful years of frequently calling upon the Lord for guidance.

Throughout my mission I prayed with my companion each morning as we began a new day. The process was repeated each night before we retired. We offered a prayer before we studied, a prayer as we left our apartment to go out tracting, and, of course, special prayers when special guidance was needed to direct our missionary work. The frequency of our appeals to our Father in Heaven gave us strength and courage to press forward in the work to which we had been called. Answers would come, sometimes in astonishingly direct and positive ways. The guidance of the Holy Spirit seemed to be magnified the more times we appealed to the Lord for direction on a given day.

As I look back on my life following my mission, I realize that there were periods when I was able to maintain the same closeness to the Lord that I experienced in the mission field. There were also periods when the world seemed to creep in and I was less consistent and faithful with my prayers.

Wouldn't this be a good time for a little self-evaluation to determine if we still have the same relationship with our Father in Heaven that we enjoyed in the mission field? If the world has diverted us from the practice of prayer, we then have lost a great spiritual power. Maybe it is time that we rekindle our missionary spirit through more frequent, consistent, and mighty prayer.

Maintain the habit of scripture study

The next fond memory I have as a missionary is that of daily engaging in

scripture study. The discipline of following a scripture-study plan of learning the gospel was a wonderful, rewarding experience. The knowledge of the teachings of the scriptures would unfold in a glorious way through individual study. As a missionary, I recall marveling at how completely the Lord had prepared a plan for His children here on earth, how in all dispensations of time He has inspired the minds of His prophets to record His dealings with them. His words are always positive and direct, revealing the blessings that come through following His law and His way.

We would also take an hour or more each day to study as companions together. Having two sets of eyes examine the doctrine of the kingdom seemed to multiply our understanding. We would read together, then share our insights.

Our minds were sharpened as we followed the daily practice of individual and companion study. The practice brought us closer together as companions and increased our understanding of the doctrines of the kingdom.

When we leave the mission field, we no longer have companions to help us discipline our study habits, but that does not mean that the practice should be discontinued. As we return home, how great it would be to hold daily family scripture study. If we leave home, couldn't we invite roommates and friends to study with us? The practice of holding regular study classes would help keep the doctrines of the kingdom clear in our minds and offset the persistent intrusion of worldly concerns. Of course, when we marry, we have eternal companions with whom we can study and share gospel teachings. The scriptures are always there to deepen our understanding of the purpose of life and what we need to do to make life more fulfilling and rewarding. Please keep alive the practice of regular individual and companion scripture study.

Rededicate yourselves to sharing the gospel

Do you remember the joy that comes from teaching the gospel to someone who has been deprived of these teachings throughout his or her life, the excitement that comes when you teach the law of the Lord, and the blessings that are received from following Him? Could you ever forget the joy of your first baptism in the mission field?

In my day the chapels were not equipped with baptismal fonts. My first baptism was in the Scioto River in the state of Ohio. It was on a cool fall day, and the water seemed even colder than the air. I remember the shock of wading into the cold river while encouraging my investigator to follow me. The coldness of the air and the water, however, soon vanished as I administered the ordinance of baptism. Seeing the radiant face of the individual who came up out of the waters of baptism is an image I will never forget.

Opportunities to teach the gospel and baptize are not exclusive to those who wear the badge of a full-time missionary. I wonder why we allow the fire of missionary service to diminish when we return to the activities of our life in the world.

There has never been a time in the history of mankind when we have been better equipped to teach the gospel to our Father in Heaven's children here on earth. And they seem to need it more today than they ever have. We see a deterioration of faith. We see an increased love for worldliness and a depletion of moral values, both of which will cause increased heartache and despair. What we need is a royal army of returned missionaries re-enlisted into service. While they would not wear the badge of a full-time missionary, they could possess the same resolve and determination to bring the light of the gospel to a world struggling to find its way.

I call on you returned missionaries to rededicate yourselves, to become re-

infused with the desire and spirit of missionary service. I call on you to look the part, to be the part, and to act the part of a servant of our Father in Heaven. I pray for your renewed determination to proclaim the gospel, that you may become more actively engaged in this great work the Lord has called all of us to do. I want to promise you there are great blessings in store for you if you continue to press forward with the zeal you once possessed as a full-time missionary.

Reunion with first companion

I had an experience a few years ago of receiving a call from my son, Lee. He told me that my first missionary companion was in his neighborhood, and he wanted to spend a few minutes with me. Lee and I went over to the home of my first companion's daughter, whom he was visiting. We had a special experience of being together after many years of not seeing one another.

As missionaries we were given the opportunity of opening up a new town in Ohio to missionary work. Because of this assignment, we were allowed to labor together for 10 months. He was my trainer, my first companion. He came from a family that had taught him the value of hard work. It was difficult for me to keep up with him, but as we served together we drew close together as companions.

Our companionship did not end with the 10-month assignment. World War II was raging, and when I returned home I had only a short time to adjust before I was drafted into military service. On my first Sunday in boot camp, I attended an LDS service. I saw the back of a head that was very familiar to me. It was my first missionary companion. We spent most of the next two and a half years together.

Although circumstances were very different for us in military service, we tried to continue the practices of missionary service. As often as we could, we prayed to-

gether. When circumstances allowed, we had scripture study together. I recall many companion study sessions under the light of a Coleman lantern in a shrapnel-scarred tent. Several times our reading of the scriptures was interrupted by the sound of an air raid siren. We would quickly turn off our lantern, then kneel together and close our study class with a prayer.

We were both set apart as group leaders, and we again had the opportunity to serve and teach together the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior. We were more successful in the military than we had been as full-time missionaries. Why? Because we were experienced returned missionaries.

My visit with my first missionary companion was the last opportunity I had to be with him. He was suffering from an incurable disease and died only a few months later. It was a wonderful experience to re-live our missions together and then tell about our lives following our missionary service. We recounted our service in bishoprics, high councils, and stake presidencies, and, of course, we bragged about our children and our grandchildren. As we sat and thrilled at the opportunity of being together again, I couldn't help but think of the account in the 17th chapter of the book of Alma:

"And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met with the sons of Mosiah journeying towards the land of Zarahemla.

"Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

"But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:1-3).

A great army of returned missionaries

I wish all of you could have an experience similar to the one I had with my first missionary companion, that you could pause and reflect on a time of service when you gave diligently of your time and your talents in building our Father in Heaven's kingdom. If you try to make it happen, I promise you that it will be one of the thrilling experiences of your life. You are a great army of returned missionaries. Go forward with new zeal and determination, and through your example shine the light of the gospel in this troubled world. This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. We belong to His Church. This is my witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Seventh commandment is a vital shield

With you, my brothers and sisters, I have appreciated afresh the prophetic ministry of President Hinckley. I testify that he was foreordained a long, long time ago, and we are glad.

I share the reluctance Jacob expressed when he wrote of the problems of unchastity and infidelity, the breaching of what some number as the seventh commandment. Anxious because his audience had feelings "exceedingly tender and