

rewarding times of our lives are those “extra mile” hours given in service when the body says it wants to relax, but our better self emerges and says, “Here am I; send me.”¹⁹

Or, like the old engine, do we say we are too tired—or too old? I remind you that President Hinckley is 92 and still going strong!

I hope we can all be like the “little engine that could.” It wasn’t very big, had been used only for switching cars, and had never been over a mountain, but it was willing. That little engine hooked on to the stranded train, chugged up to the top of the mountain, and puffed down the mountain, saying, “I thought I could.” Each of us must climb mountains that we have never climbed before.

Brethren, great is our work, and heavy are our priesthood responsibilities. I hope and pray that we can go forward with this holy work humbly, prayerfully, and unitedly under the guiding Spirit of the Lord and the direction of President Gordon B. Hinckley, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
2. *The Little Engine That Could*, retold by Watty Piper, from Mabel C. Bragg, *The Pony Engine* (1930).

3. In Evan Esar, ed., *Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* (1964), 151.
4. Matthew 25:15–25.
5. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 582.
6. Matthew 25:29.
7. See Matthew 25:15.
8. 2 Nephi 28:30.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 475.
10. See John K. Carmack, “California: What Went Right and What Went Wrong,” *Nauvoo Journal*, spring 1998, 5–6, 8–9; Paul Bailey, “Sam Brannan and the Sad Years,” *Improvement Era*, Apr. 1951, 232–34, 282–87.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:34.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.
14. *Pathways to Happiness* (1957), 230.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 132:47.
16. 2 Nephi 9:41.
17. Meade McGuire, quoted in Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 39.
18. 3 Nephi 12:41.
19. 2 Nephi 16:8.

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

President Thomas S. Monson

Master, the tempest is raging

The singing of the men’s choir this evening has lighted memory’s fire and brought to my mind the songs I sang when I was a boy. With fervor we would render:

Put your shoulder to the wheel;
push along.
Do your duty with a heart full of song.
We all have work; let no one shirk.
Put your shoulder to the wheel.¹

We had a chorister who taught us boys how to sing. We had to sing. Sister Stella Waters would wave the baton within inches of our noses and beat time with a heavy foot that made the floor creak.

If we responded properly, Sister Waters let us choose a favorite hymn to sing. Inevitably the selection was:

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!

The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness.

No shelter or help is nigh.

Carest thou not that we perish?

How canst thou lie asleep

When each moment so madly is
threat'ning

A grave in the angry deep?

And then the assuring chorus:

The winds and the waves shall obey
thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed
sea

Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where
lies

The Master of ocean and earth and
skies.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, be still; peace, be still.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will:

Peace, peace, be still.²

Demons that stalk our lives

As a boy, I could fathom somewhat the danger of a storm-tossed sea. However, I had but little understanding of other demons that can stalk our lives, destroy our dreams, smother our joys, and detour our journey toward the celestial kingdom of God.

A list of destructive demons is lengthy; and each man, young or old, knows the ones with which he must contend. I'll name but a few: the Demon of *Greed*, the Demon of *Dishonesty*, the Demon of *Debt*, the Demon of *Doubt*, the Demon of *Drugs*, and those twin Demons of *Immodesty* and *Immorality*. Each of these demons can wreak havoc with our lives. A combination of them can spell utter destruction.

Greed

Concerning *greed*, the counsel from Ecclesiastes speaks caution: "He that loveth

silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."³

Jesus counseled, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."⁴

We must learn to separate need from greed.

Dishonesty

When we speak of the demon of *dishonesty*, we can find it in a variety of locations. One such place is in school. Let us avoid cheating, falsifying, taking advantage of others, or anything like unto it. Let integrity be our standard.

In decision making, ask not, "What will others think?" but rather, "What will I think of myself?"

Debt

Enticements to embrace the demon of *debt* are thrust upon us many times each day. I quote the counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

"I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. . . .

"We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing invitation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest. . . .

"I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years."⁵

I would add: We must not allow our yearnings to exceed our earnings.

Drugs

In discussing the demon of *drugs*, I include, of course, alcohol. Drugs impair our ability to think, to reason, and to make

prudent and wise choices. Often they result in violence and in child and wife abuse, and they can provoke conduct that brings pain and suffering to those who are innocent. “Just say no to drugs” is an effective statement of one’s determination. And this can be buttressed by the scripture:

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”⁶

Immodesty, immorality, and pornography

When I consider the demons who are twins—even *immodesty* and *immorality*—I should make them triplets and include *pornography*. They all three go together.

In the interpretation of Lehi’s dream, we find a rather apt description of the destructiveness of pornography:

“And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.”⁷

A modern-day Apostle, Elder Hugh B. Brown, has declared, “Any immodesty inducing impure thoughts is a desecration of the body—that temple in which the Holy Spirit may dwell.”⁸

I commend to you tonight a jewel from the *Improvement Era*. It was published in 1917 but is equally applicable here and now:

“The current and common custom of indecency in dress, the flood of immoral fiction in printed literature, in the drama, and notably in [motion] picture[s] . . . , the toleration of immodesty in every-day conversation and demeanor, are doing deadly work in the fostering of soul-destroying vice.”⁹

Alexander Pope, in his inspired *Essay on Man*, declared:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.¹⁰

Perhaps a fitting summation pertaining to this demon can be found in the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”¹¹

For each of us it is infinitely better to hear and heed the call of conscience, for conscience always warns us as a friend before punishing us as a judge.

The Lord Himself gives us the final word: “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”¹²

A lesson in patience and calmness

Brethren, there is one responsibility that no man can evade. That is the effect of personal influence.

Our influence is surely felt in our respective families. Sometimes we fathers forget that once we too were boys, and boys at times can be vexing to parents.

I recall how much, as a youngster, I liked dogs. One day I took my wagon and placed a wooden orange crate in it and went looking for dogs. At that time, dogs were everywhere to be found: at school, walking along the sidewalks, or exploring vacant lots, of which there were many. As I would find a dog and capture it, I placed it in the crate, took it home, locked it in the coal shed, and turned the latch on the door. That day I think I brought home six dogs of varying sizes and made them my prisoners after this fashion. I had no idea what I would do with all those dogs, so I didn’t reveal my deed to anyone.

Dad came home from work and, as was his custom, took the coal bucket and

went to the coal shed to fill it. Can you imagine his shock and utter consternation as he opened the door and immediately faced six dogs, all attempting to escape at once? As I recall, Dad flushed a little bit, and then he calmed down and quietly told me, "Tommy, coal sheds are for coal. Other people's dogs rightfully belong to them." By observing him, I learned a lesson in patience and calmness.

Patience with a son and his water snake

It is a good thing I did, for a similar event occurred in my life with our youngest son, Clark.

Clark has always liked animals, birds, reptiles—anything that is alive. Sometimes that resulted in a little chaos in our home. One day in his boyhood he came home from Provo Canyon with a water snake, which he named Herman.

Right off the bat Herman got lost. Sister Monson found him in the silverware drawer. Water snakes have a way of being where you least expect them. Well, Clark moved Herman to the bathtub, put a plug in the drain, put a little water in, and had a sign taped to the back of the tub which read, "Don't use this tub. It belongs to Herman." So we had to use the other bathroom while Herman occupied that sequestered place.

But then one day, to our amazement, Herman disappeared. His name should have been *Houdini*. He was gone! So the next day Sister Monson cleaned up the tub and prepared it for normal use. Several days went by.

One evening I decided it was time to take a leisurely bath, so I filled the tub with a lot of warm water, and then I peacefully lay down in the tub for a few moments of relaxation. I was lying there just pondering, when the soapy water reached the level of the overflow drain and began to flow through it. Can you imagine my surprise when, with my eyes focused on that drain, Herman came swimming out,

right for my face? I yelled out to my wife, "Frances! Here comes Herman!"

Well, Herman was captured again, put in a foolproof box, and we made a little excursion to Vivian Park in Provo Canyon and there released Herman into the beautiful waters of the South Fork Creek. Herman was never again to be seen by us.

Let every man learn his duty

There appears in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 99, a brief but direct admonition to each priesthood bearer: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence." I have always taken this charge seriously and have attempted to live up to its direction.

In the recesses of my mind, I hear over and over again the guiding direction which President John Taylor gave to the brethren of the priesthood: "If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty."¹³

Heed promptings in doing your duty

In the performance of our responsibilities, I have learned that when we heed a silent prompting and act upon it without delay, our Heavenly Father will guide our footsteps and bless our lives and the lives of others. I know of no experience more sweet or feeling more precious than to heed a prompting only to discover that the Lord has answered another person's prayer through you.

Perhaps just one example will suffice. One day just over a year ago, after taking care of matters at the office, I felt a strong impression to visit an aged widow who was a patient at St. Joseph Villa here in Salt Lake City. I drove there directly.

When I went to her room, I found it empty. I asked an attendant concerning

her whereabouts and was directed to a lounge area. There I found this sweet widow visiting with her sister and another friend. We had a pleasant conversation together.

As we were talking, a man came to the door of the room to obtain a can of soda water from the vending machine. He glanced at me and said, "Why, you are Tom Monson."

"Yes," I replied. "And you look like a Hemingway." He acknowledged that he was Stephen Hemingway, the son of Alfred Eugene Hemingway, who had served as my counselor when I was a bishop many years ago and whom I called Gene. Stephen told me that his father was there in the same facility and was near death. He had been calling my name, and the family had wanted to contact me but had been unable to find a telephone number for me.

I excused myself immediately and went with Stephen up to the room of my former counselor, where others of his children were gathered, his wife having passed away some years previous. The family members regarded my meeting Stephen in the lounge area as a response by our Heavenly Father to their great desire that I would see their father before he died and answer his call. I too felt that this was the case, for if Stephen had not entered the room in which I was visiting at precisely the time he did, I would not have known that Gene was even in that facility.

We gave a blessing to him. A spirit of peace prevailed. We had a lovely visit, after which I left.

The following morning a phone call revealed that Gene Hemingway had passed away—just 20 minutes after he had received the blessing from his son and me.

I expressed a silent prayer of thanks to Heavenly Father for His guiding influence which prompted my visit to St. Joseph Villa and led me to my dear friend Alfred Eugene Hemingway.

Peace, be still

I like to think that Gene Hemingway's thoughts that evening, as we basked in the Spirit's glow, participated in humble prayer, and pronounced a priesthood blessing, echoed the words mentioned in the hymn "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," which I cited at the beginning of my message:

Linger, O blessed Redeemer!
Leave me alone no more,
And with joy I shall make the blest
harbor
And rest on the blissful shore.

I still love that hymn and testify to you tonight as to the comfort it offers:

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed
sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where
lies
The Master of ocean and earth and
skies.
They all shall sweetly obey thy will:
Peace, be still.¹⁴

His words in holy writ are sufficient: "Be still, and know that I am God."¹⁵ I testify to this truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Hymns*, no. 252.
2. "Master, the Tempest Is Raging," *Hymns*, no. 105.
3. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
4. Luke 12:15.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 70–71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53.
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.
7. 1 Nephi 12:17.
8. *The Abundant Life* (1965), 65.
9. Joseph F. Smith, "Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age," *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 742.
10. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 409.

11. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
13. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 6 Aug. 1878, 1.
14. *Hymns*, no. 105.
15. Psalm 46:10.

President Hinckley

Thank you, brethren. We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Heavy load on local leaders

Now, my beloved brethren, I speak with a desire to be helpful. I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide me.

I need not tell you that we have become a very large and complex Church. Our program is so vast and our reach is so extensive that it is difficult to comprehend. We are a Church of lay leadership. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that is. It must ever remain so. It must never move in the direction of an extensive paid ministry. But we know that the administrative load is very heavy on our bishops and stake presidents, as well as some others. An awareness of that fact has led the Presidency and the Twelve to hold a number of meetings, some of them long and interesting, in which, in effect, we have taken the Church apart and then put it together again. Our objective has been to see whether there might be some programs we could do away with. But as we have analyzed these, we have not seen much that could be dropped. To drop one is like giving away one of your children. You haven't the heart to do it. But I wish to assure you that we are aware of the burdens you carry and the time you spend. In this priesthood meeting I wish to men-

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to this Aaronic Priesthood choir for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing "We'll Bring the World His Truth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

tion a few of the items we have discussed. I think you will note that we have made some progress, although it may be small.

I shall speak to you about a number of miscellaneous items.

Temple recommends valid for two years

We have determined, first, that effective November 1, temple recommends will remain valid for two years instead of one. This should cut the time that bishops and stake presidents and their counselors have to spend in interviews for temple recommends. Of course, if at any time the recommend holder becomes unworthy of going to the temple, then it will become the responsibility of the bishop or stake president to pick up the individual's recommend.

But experience has shown that there are very few such incidents. And so this will become the program, brethren. Beginning the first of November, regardless of the date written on the recommend, the term will be extended for one year. Recommends will then be renewed every two years rather than the present one year. We hope this will be beneficial. We are confident that it will.