

# Standing with the Leaders of the Church

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Are you standing with the leaders of the Church in a darkening world so that you might spread the Light of Christ?

We extend a warm welcome to the newly called General Authorities, Area Seventies, and the wonderful new Primary general presidency. And with deepest appreciation, we thank those who have been released. We love you, each one.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have just participated in a most blessed experience as we have raised our hands to sustain prophets, seers, and revelators and other leaders and general officers called of God in these very days. I have never taken lightly or casually the opportunity of sustaining and being guided by the Lord's servants. And being just months into my own new calling as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I am humbled by your sustaining vote and confidence. I treasure your willingness to stand with me and with all of these great leaders.

Soon after I was sustained last October, I traveled to Pakistan on an assignment and, while there, met the magnificent and dedicated Saints in that country. They are few in number but large in spirit. Shortly after returning home, I received the following note from Brother Shakeel Arshad, a dear member I had met on my visit: "Thank you, Elder Rasband, for coming to Pakistan. I want to tell you that we ... Church members ... sustain you and love you. [We are] so lucky that you were here and we heard from you. It was just a golden day in my family's life that we met an Apostle."<sup>1</sup>

Meeting Saints like Brother Arshad was an overwhelming and humbling experience and, using his words, "a golden day" for me as well.

In January, Church leaders participated in a Face to Face broadcast with youth and their leaders and parents from around the world. The broadcast was streamed live over the Internet to many locations in 146 countries; some

locations had large audiences in chapels, and others were a single home with one youth tuning in. In total, many hundreds of thousands joined in.

In connecting with our vast audience, Sister Bonnie Oscarson, Young Women general president; Brother Stephen W. Owen, Young Men general president; and I—supported by our youth hosts, musicians, and others—answered questions from our youth.

Our purpose was to introduce the Mutual theme for 2016, “Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ,” from 2 Nephi, which reads: “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.”<sup>2</sup>

By reading many hundreds of our youth’s questions, what did we learn? We learned that our youth love the Lord, sustain their leaders, and desire to have their questions answered! Questions are an indication of a further desire to learn, to add to those truths already in place in our testimonies, and to be better prepared to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ.”

The Restoration of the gospel began with a youth, Joseph Smith, asking a question. Many of the Savior’s teachings in His ministry began with a question. Remember His question to Peter: “Whom say ye that I am?”<sup>3</sup> And Peter’s response: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>4</sup> We need to help each other find Heavenly Father’s answers through the guidance of the Spirit.

At that broadcast, I said to the youth:

“The leaders of this Church are no strangers to your issues, to your concerns, and to your challenges.

“We have children. We have grandchildren. We are often meeting with youth all over the world. And we’re praying for you, we’re talking about you in the most sacred places, and we love you.”<sup>5</sup>

I would like to share one of the many, many responses we received from that event.

Lisa, from Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, wrote: “This Face to Face event was wonderful. What a strength to my testimony and convictions of the gospel. We are so blessed to have inspired leaders who have been called to serve in so many different capacities.”<sup>6</sup>

Liz, from Pleasant Grove, Utah, wrote on an earlier post: “I am grateful for my

LIZ, FROM PLEASANT GROVE, UTAH, WROTE ON AN EARLIER POST. I AM GRATEFUL FOR MY personal faith and the opportunity to sustain a prophet of God and the men and women who serve with him.”<sup>7</sup>

We have sustained leaders today who, by divine inspiration, have been called to teach and guide us and who are calling out to us to beware of the dangers we face each day—from casual Sabbath-day observance, to threats to the family, to assaults on religious freedom, and even to disputing latter-day revelation. Brothers and sisters, are we listening to their counsel?

Many times in conferences, sacrament meetings, and Primary we have sung the tender words, “Lead me, guide me, walk beside me.”<sup>8</sup> What do those words mean to you? Who comes to mind when you think of them? Have you felt the influence of righteous leaders, those disciples of Jesus Christ who have in the past and continue today to touch your life, who walk the Lord’s path with you? They may be close at home. They may be in your local congregations or speaking from the pulpit at general conference. These disciples share with us the blessing of having a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, the leader of this Church, the leader of our very souls, who has promised, “Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”<sup>9</sup>

I remember President Thomas S. Monson sharing the story of being invited to his stake president Paul C. Child’s home to prepare for advancement to the Melchizedek Priesthood. What a special blessing for President Child, who did not know at the time that he was teaching a young Aaronic Priesthood boy who would one day become the prophet of God.<sup>10</sup>

I have had my own learning moments from our dear prophet, President Monson. There is no question in my mind or in my heart that he is the Lord’s prophet on the earth; I have been a humbled recipient as he has received revelation and acted upon it. He has been teaching us to reach out, to protect each other, to rescue one another. So it was taught at the Waters of Mormon. Those “desirous ... to be called his people” were willing “to bear one another’s burdens,” “to mourn with those that mourn,” and “to stand as witnesses of God.”<sup>11</sup>

I stand today as a witness of God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I know our Savior lives and loves us and directs His servants, you and me, to fulfill His mighty purposes on this earth.<sup>12</sup>

As we press forward, choosing to follow the counsel and the warnings of our leaders, we choose to follow the Lord while the world is going in another direction. We choose to hold fast to the iron rod, to be Latter-day Saints, to be on the Lord’s errand, and to be filled “with exceedingly great joy.”<sup>13</sup>

The growing question of today is clear: are you standing with the leaders of the Church in a darkening world so that you might spread the Light of Christ?

Relationships with leaders are so important and significant. No matter what age leaders may be, how close or far away, or when they may have touched our lives, their influence reflects the words of the American poet Edwin Markham, who said this:

*There is a destiny that makes us brothers:  
[No one] goes his way alone:  
All that we send into the lives of others  
Comes back into our own.*<sup>14</sup>

Shakeel Arshad, my friend in Pakistan, sent his support to me, his brother and friend. So have many of you. When we reach out to lift one another, we prove those powerful words: “[No one] goes his way alone.”

Most of all, we need our Savior, our Lord, Jesus Christ. One of the accounts from scripture that has always spiritually moved me is when Jesus Christ walked out on the water to meet His disciples who were traveling in a ship on the Sea of Galilee. These were leaders newly called, like many of us on the stand today. The account is recorded in Matthew:

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with [the] waves: for the wind was contrary.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, ... and they cried out for fear.

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”<sup>15</sup>

Peter heard that wonderful call of encouragement from the Lord.

“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

“And [Jesus] said, Come.”<sup>16</sup>

Pretty bold. Peter was a fisherman, and he knew about the hazards of the sea. However, he was committed to following Jesus—night or day, on a ship or on dry land.

I can imagine that Peter leaped over the side of the boat, not waiting for a

second invitation, and began to walk on the water. Indeed, the scripture says, “He walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> As the wind increased in strength and force and as the waves swirled about his feet, Peter became “afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried [out], saying, Lord, save me.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him.”<sup>18</sup>

Such a powerful lesson. The Lord was there for him, just as He is there for you and for me. He reached out His hand and drew Peter to Him and to safety.

I have needed the Savior and the rescue of His hand so many times. I need Him now as never before, as does each of you. I have felt confident at times leaping over the side of the boat, figuratively speaking, into unfamiliar places, only to realize that I could not do it alone.

As we discussed during Face to Face, the Lord often reaches out to us through our families and leaders, inviting us to come unto Him—just like He reached out to save Peter.

You too will have your many moments to respond to frequent invitations to “come unto Christ.”<sup>19</sup> Isn’t that what this mortal life is all about? The call may be to come rescue a family member; come serve a mission; come back to church; come to the holy temple; and, as we have recently heard from our wonderful youth in the Face to Face event, come, please help me answer my question. In due time, each one of us will hear the call “Come home.”

I pray that we will reach out—reach out and take the Savior’s hand that He is extending to us, often through His divinely called leaders and our family members—and listen for His call to come.

I know that Jesus Christ lives; I love Him, and I know with all my heart that He loves each of us. He is our great Exemplar and the divine leader of all of our Father’s children. Of this I bear my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.