

Opening Remarks

October 2018 General Conference

By President Russell M. Nelson

It is time for a home-centered Church, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.

My dear brothers and sisters, we have looked forward to gathering with you again in this October general conference of the Church. We extend our heartfelt welcome to each of you. We are deeply grateful for your sustaining prayers. We can feel their effect. Thank you!

We are grateful for your tremendous efforts to follow through with counsel given at general conference six months ago. Stake presidencies throughout the world have sought revelation necessary to reorganize elders quorums. Men of those quorums along with our dedicated Relief Society sisters are working diligently to minister to our brothers and sisters in a higher, holier way. We are inspired by your goodness and extraordinary efforts to bring the Savior's love to your families, neighbors, and friends and to minister to them as He would.

Since April conference, Sister Nelson and I have met with members on four continents and on islands of the sea. From Jerusalem to Harare, from Winnipeg to Bangkok, we have experienced your great faith and the strength of your testimonies.

We are overjoyed with the number of our youth who have joined the Lord's youth battalion to help gather scattered Israel.¹ We thank you! And as you continue to follow my invitations offered at our worldwide youth devotional, you are setting a standard for the rest of us to follow. And what a difference you youth are making!

In recent years, we in the presiding councils of the Church have wrestled with a fundamental question: how can we take the gospel in its simple purity and the ordinances with their eternal efficacy to *all* of God's children?

As Latter-day Saints, we have become accustomed to thinking of "church" as something that happens in our meetinghouses, supported by what happens at home. We need an adjustment to this pattern. It is time for a *home-centered Church*, supported by what takes place inside our branch, ward, and stake buildings.

As the Church continues to expand throughout the world, many members live where we have no chapels—and may not for the foreseeable future. I remember a family who, because of such circumstances, was required to meet in their home. I asked the mother how she liked going to church in her own home. She replied, "I like it! My husband uses better language at home now, knowing that he will bless the sacrament here each Sunday."

The long-standing objective of the Church is to assist all members to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to assist them in making and keeping their covenants with God, and to strengthen and seal their families. In this complex world today, this is not easy.

The adversary is increasing his attacks on faith and upon us and our families at an exponential rate. To survive spiritually, we need counterstrategies and proactive plans. Accordingly, we now want to put in place organizational adjustments that will further fortify our members and their families.

For many years, Church leaders have been working on an integrated curriculum to strengthen families and individuals through a *home-centered* and *Church-supported* plan to learn doctrine, strengthen faith, and foster greater personal worship. Our efforts over these recent years to hallow the Sabbath—to make it a delight and a personal sign to God of our love for Him—will be augmented by the adjustments we will now introduce.

This morning we will announce a new balance and connection between gospel instruction in the home and in the Church. We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth. And scriptures make it clear that parents have the primary responsibility to teach the doctrine to their children.² It is the responsibility of the Church to assist each member in the divinely defined goal of increasing his or her gospel knowledge.

Elder Quentin L. Cook will now explain these important adjustments. All members of the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are united in endorsing this message. We gratefully acknowledge the inspiration from the Lord that has influenced the development of the plans and procedures that Elder Cook will present.

My dear brothers and sisters, I know that God lives! Jesus is the Christ! This is His Church that He directs by prophecy and revelation to His humble servants. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.