

tions in many countries throughout the world.

There are approximately 2,360 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

Elders L. Tom Perry, James M. Parimore, and Gary J. Coleman are on the stand in the Assembly Hall; D. Todd Christofferson and Han In Sang in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Stephen Nadauld and Max Caldwell in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce that at this afternoon's session, Elders Ted E. Brewerton and Hans B. Ringger were given emeritus status. Elders Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey were released from their service as Seventies. Elders Jack H Goaslind and Harold G. Hillam were sustained as Presidents of the Seventy, succeeding Rex D. Pinegar and Charles Didier. Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, and Glenn L. Pace were sustained to succeed Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the general Sunday School presidency. I suppose I should also announce that Brigham Young University won its football game today.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We will begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Awake, My Sons, Awake." I think we should have delayed that until the middle of my talk! After the singing, Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Thy Servants Are Prepared," and then we shall hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir sang "Thy Servants Are Prepared."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Called to touch lives

I am grateful that we are assembled as the priesthood of God tonight, presided over by the prophet who holds and exercises the keys of the holy priesthood in all the world. President Hinckley spoke in the Sunday morning session of conference last April. Near the end of that talk, he said this: "Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion I wish to leave with you one thought which I hope you will never forget."

With that introduction, which surely caught our attention, he then said:

"This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said:

“Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees’ (D&C 81:5)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 71).

You must have wondered about that idea that your calling carries for you as serious a responsibility as his does for him. But you can see why that must be so. You and he are called by the same Savior, whose church this is. You are involved in the same work, which is to help the Lord bring to pass the eternal life of man. In your calling you touch lives. The life you touch in your service will be as valuable to God as any other life. And so how you touch a life is as serious a matter for you as it would be for any other servant of God.

That seriousness comes from your assigned purpose. Your responsibility is to touch people so that they will make the choices that will take them toward eternal life. And eternal life is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

### **A deacon touches a life**

Some of you young men may feel uncomfortable with the thought that what may seem to you simple assignments or everyday acts could have eternal consequences. But you may have done more than you know. Your deacons quorum president next week may ask you to invite to come with you to a Sunday meeting a boy who has never attended, nor has anyone in his family. You may trudge up to his house, get him to come with you a few times, and then see him move away. You may think you haven’t done much that mattered. But the grandfather of such a boy came up to me during a stake conference, described in detail how a deacon had done just that for his grandson—more than ten years before and almost a continent away—and with tears in his eyes asked me if

I could thank that deacon for him, now grown older, unaware that the Savior had reached out through a twelve-year-old servant assigned by a thirteen-year-old quorum president.

Some of you brethren know the feelings of that grandfather. The mother of his grandson was raising him alone with no contact with the Church. The grandfather had tried every way he knew to reach out to touch their lives. He loved them. He felt responsible for her and for his grandson. And he knew what you know: He knew that someday, when they saw things as they really are, they would wish with all their hearts that they had made the choices that would qualify them for eternal life, choices which won’t and can’t be made without faith in Jesus Christ sufficient to salvation.

His heartache was one most of us have felt over someone we cared about and could not seem to reach. And that heartache will lead you to ponder and pray for the answer to this question: How can I touch a life with faith?

### **Help others increase their faith**

A place to begin your pondering is with the Savior and His disciples. Early in His mortal ministry, they wanted Him to touch their lives with faith.

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Luke 17:5–6).

You will not be surprised that the Lord responded by speaking of a seed. The first thing to know about how faith in Him increases is to think of its growth like that of a tree. You remember how Alma used that illustration. The seed is the word of God. It must be planted in the heart of the person you serve and

whose faith you want to see increase. He described what must happen this way:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

“Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea” (Alma 32:28–29).

Just as soil needs preparation for a seed, so does a human heart for the word of God to take root. Before he told the people to plant the seed, Alma told them that their hearts were prepared. They had been persecuted and cast out of their churches.

Alma, with his love, and the circumstances of their lives, which led them to be humble, had prepared them. They were then ready to hear the word of God. If they chose to plant it in their hearts, the growth in their souls would surely follow, and that would increase their faith.

### **Help others want to obey**

It's not hard to see from these examples what you can do to touch someone's life with faith. To begin with, you recognize that what people choose to do, and what the Savior has done, will matter more than what you do. But there are things you can do to make it more likely that they will make the choices that will move them toward eternal life.

You know first of all that to plant the seed, they must do more than hear the word of God. They have to try it by

keeping commandments. The Lord said it this way:

“Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17).

It won't be enough for them simply to listen to the word of God. They must choose to keep commandments because they feel at least a beginning desire to know the will of our Heavenly Father and submit to it. That feeling of surrender is not likely to come unless they experience some feeling of being loved and some value in their being meek and lowly of heart.

You can help with your example. If you love them because you feel God's love for them, they will feel that. If you are meek and humble because you feel your dependence on God, they will sense that too.

### **Teach with love, as Aaron did**

In addition to your example, you can teach the word of God to them in a way that is more likely to give them a desire to repent and to try to live it. They may think they have heard preaching enough. But they must do more than hear the word of God; they must plant it in their hearts by trying it.

You can make that more likely if you talk with them about it in a way that helps them feel how much God loves them and how much they need God.

Aaron, one of the great missionaries in the Book of Mormon, knew how to teach that way. You remember how he taught King Lamoni's father, the old king.

The king's heart had already been prepared by seeing love and humility in the way Aaron's brother had treated Lamoni, the king's son. But even with that preparation of the old king's heart,

Aaron taught the word of God in a way that emphasizes God's love and our need for Him. Listen to this description of how he did it:

"And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

"And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name" (Alma 22:12-13).

You won't very often have the remarkable result that Aaron had. After hearing the word of God taught that way, in what the scriptures sometimes call the plan of happiness, the old king said that he would give whatever he had to root the wickedness out of him and have eternal life. When Aaron told him to cry to God in prayer for forgiveness, the king bowed down on the spot. The seed was planted. He was doing the will of God (see vv. 15-18).

### **Help others plant the seed**

When you touch the hearts of people you serve, you won't do everything exactly the way Aaron did. But you will do some of the same things. You will try to help them feel that God loves them by the way you treat them. You will be humble so that they are more likely to choose to be meek and lowly of heart. You will teach the word of God, when the Spirit prompts you, in a way that testifies of God's love for them and their need for the atonement of Jesus Christ. And you will teach them commandments they can keep. That is why, when you go into the mission field, you learn to com-

mit those you teach to pray or to read the Book of Mormon or to come with you to a sacrament meeting or to be baptized. You know that when they keep commandments, they plant the seed. And you know that it will grow, their souls will be expanded, and that when that happens their faith will increase.

### **Teach when hearts are prepared**

You not only know what to do but you know when the Spirit is apt to prompt you to do it. The times people will be most likely to choose to try the word of God, to repent, will be when they feel at least the beginnings of His love for them and their dependence on Him.

For instance, wise bishops have learned that funerals can be such times. When death occurs in a family, the bishop, quorum members, and the home and visiting teachers reach out to the family because they love them. The family generally feels humbled, longing for comfort and peace. For many, their hearts will be prepared to hear the word of God.

The bishop will know that as he plans the funeral service. He will be sure that testimony is given of the plan of salvation, of the atonement of Jesus Christ, of the Resurrection, and of glorious reunions, because that will bring comfort and hope. But such teaching will do more than that. The word of God will be heard by people with hearts softened by love and by grief and so more likely to choose living it more fully. And from doing that, faith will increase and the changes will come in people which move them toward eternal life.

### **Prove love by service**

Your opportunities won't come only at times of great tragedy or overwhelming need. Life has in it moments of challenge that will bring even the people most hardened to spiritual things to say

to themselves, "Isn't there more than this?" If you have been a constant friend, if you have proved your love by service and so become trusted, they may turn to you with that question. When they do, you can say, knowing that their hearts are prepared, "Yes, there is, and I can tell you where it is and what you can do to find it."

Your teaching will become easier as those you serve try the word of God. For instance, a deacon or an elder might choose to follow the command to search the scriptures and so read passages that tell him of the honor and glory bestowed through the holy priesthood (D&C 124:34). From such obedience in reading scriptures, he might be able to hear the Holy Ghost whisper that such an honor, such a holy calling deserves wearing better than everyday clothes when he performs priesthood ordinances or more considerate speech wherever he is. Because others may not honor the dignity of the priesthood in those ways, such obedience may take faith. But faith, when exercised, increases. And that increase in faith will give greater power to hear and to obey.

### **Refresh and nurture others' faith**

Now, you will have great moments in your service to others as they discover the source of faith or when that faith leads them to go through the pain of repentance to gain the peace of forgiveness.

But even people with faith developed by obedience and with sins washed away will need your help to refresh and strengthen their faith. There are reasons for that. Blessings when they are no longer seen as coming from our Heavenly Father can lead to pride. The peace of forgiveness can lead to overconfidence, forgetting to pray always lest we be overcome. Even some who have exercised faith enough to have great spiritual experiences have later been deceived

into apostasy or overcome with the trials of life. All of them need your help in nurturing faith, in learning to put all their trust in God.

For all those you serve, wherever they may be in the tests of life, the way you nurture will be much the same. You will love them. You will encourage them as they choose to be humble. You will present the word of God to them in the way most likely to lead to their choosing to exercise enough faith to repent and thus see that there is more that God would have them do. And that will help them endure in faith.

### **The Lord will make you fishers of men**

Now, your responsibility to touch lives might seem overwhelming. You can take heart that you were called by the Savior. You have the same promise He gave those He called at the beginning of His earthly ministry. He called first humble men, uneducated, with less schooling and less gospel knowledge than the most recently ordained of you may have. But listen to what He said, and know that it applies to you:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:18-20).

He will make you a fisher of men, however inadequate you may feel now. It won't be done by a mysterious process. It will be the natural result of your choosing to follow Him. Just think about what you must do to be a fisher of men, to touch lives with faith for Him. You will need to love the people you serve. You will need to be humble and full of hope. You will need to have the Holy Ghost as your companion to know when to speak and what to say and how to testify.

But all of that will come naturally, in time, from the covenants you make and keep as you follow Him. Here is the description of how that will happen, from the eighth chapter of Moroni, the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses:

“And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

“And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.”

You may not have seen that mighty change in yourself yet. But it will come as you continue to follow Him. You can trust that He will qualify you as His servant, to assist Him in touching lives with

faith to bring to pass the eternal life of man. And you will find satisfaction in that service beyond your fondest dreams.

I testify that God the Father lives and that He loves you. I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that He called you, and that He atoned for your sins and those of all you will ever serve. I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds the keys that allow us to offer to our Father's children the covenants and ordinances that can qualify them for eternal life. And I pray with all my heart that we may touch lives with faith enough to repent and to make and keep those sacred covenants. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

## **Elder Harold G. Hillam**

### **Sacrifice in missionary service**

As I look at you this evening, I can see many young men with their valiant fathers and loyal priesthood leaders seated side by side. These fathers and leaders are ready to pay the price, yes, even sacrifice, for the success of you young men.

In the spirit of sacrifice, I recall a conversation I had some years ago with my stake president in Idaho. We were discussing the forthcoming Aaronic Priesthood-Scout campout. I explained to him that it would be necessary for each person to bring his own sleeping bag, to which the president replied, “I have never slept in a sleeping bag.”

I quickly responded, “President, you can't be serious. You have lived in beautiful Idaho all these years and you have never slept in a sleeping bag?”

“Nope!” he said, “I never have. But I have sure lain in a lot of 'em.” And then he went on to say, “And I'll lie in a whole bunch more of them if it will help to save boys.”

The sacrifice I would like to speak to you about is the sacrifice that accompanies missionary service. Since the beginning of time our Heavenly Father has called worthy servants to go into the world to proclaim the gospel and to testify of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many of those who have fulfilled their callings have done so with considerable sacrifice.