

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome each of you to this, the fourth general session of the 170th annual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Let Earth's Inhabitants Rejoice" and will now favor us with "Press Forward, Saints." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Press Forward, Saints."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

One day during the personal ministry of our Savior, He took Peter, James, and John "up into a high mountain . . .

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here."¹

Today, on this historic occasion, we assemble in this magnificent Conference Center and in the overflow facilities on Temple Square and throughout the world.

Tears moisten our eyes and gratitude fills our hearts as we echo the title of a beautiful hymn, "Thanks Be to God!"²

The erection of this edifice has long been in the planning stage. We have needed a much larger building to accommodate those who attend conference and other activities throughout the year. Workmen with finely honed skills have labored with their hearts and hands to provide a structure worthy of His divine approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."³

The Savior's references to home building

When Jesus ministered among men at a time long ago and a place far away, He often spoke in parables, in language the people best understood. Oftentimes

He referred to home building in relationship to the lives of those who listened. Wasn't He frequently known as "the carpenter's son"? He declared, "Every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand."⁴ Later He cautioned, "Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion."⁵

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, on December 27, 1832, the Master counseled, "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God."⁶

Where could any of us locate a more suitable blueprint whereby he or she could wisely and properly build a house to personally occupy throughout eternity?

Building our eternal homes

In a very real sense, we are builders of eternal houses. We are apprentices to the trade, not skilled craftsmen. We need divine help if we are to build successfully. The words of instruction provided by the Apostle Paul give the assurance we need: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"⁷

When we remember that each of us is literally a spirit son or daughter of God, we will not find it difficult to approach our Heavenly Father in prayer. He appreciates the value of this raw material which we call life. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."⁸ His pronouncement finds lodgment in our souls and inspires purpose in our lives.

There is a Teacher who will guide our efforts if we will but place our faith in Him—even the Lord Jesus Christ. He invites us:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."⁹

It was said of Jesus that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹⁰ Do we have the determination to do likewise? One line of holy writ contains a tribute to our Lord and Savior, of whom it was said, "[He] went about doing good."¹¹

Paul, in his epistle to his beloved Timothy, outlined a way whereby we could become our better selves and, at the same time, provide assistance to others who silently ponder and then audibly ask the question, "How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?"¹²

The answer, given by Paul to Timothy, provides an inspired charge to each of us. Let us take heed of his wise counsel: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹³

Let us examine this solemn instruction which, in a very real sense, is given to us.

Be an example in word

First, be an example in *word*. "Let your words tend to edifying one another,"¹⁴ said the Lord.

Do we remember the counsel of a favorite Sunday School hymn?

Oh, the kind words we give shall in memory live
And sunshine forever impart.
Let us oft speak kind words to each other;
Kind words are sweet tones of the heart.¹⁵

Consider the observation of Mary Boyson Wall, who celebrated her 105th

birthday a few years ago. She married Don Harvey Wall in the Salt Lake Temple in 1913. They celebrated their 81st wedding anniversary shortly before Don died at age 103. In a *Church News* article "she attributed longevity in life and in their marriage to speaking kind words. She said, 'I think that helped us through because we tried to help each other and not say unkind words to each other.'"16

Be an example in conversation

Second, be an example in *conversation*. In a general conference in October 1987, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared: "Foul talk defiles the man who speaks it. If you have the habit, how do you break it? You begin by making a decision to change. The next time you are prone to use words you know to be wrong, simply stop. Keep quiet or say what you have to say in a different way."<17

François de la Rochefoucauld observed, "One of the reasons why so few people are to be found who seem sensible and pleasant in conversation is that almost everybody is thinking about what he wants to say himself, rather than about answering clearly what is said to him."

Be an example in charity

Third, be an example in *charity*.

From Corinthians comes the beautiful truth "Charity never faileth."<18

Satisfying to the soul is the ready response the Church has made to disasters of nature, such as in Mozambique, Madagascar, Venezuela, and many other locations. Frequently we have arrived first on the scene following such disasters, and with the most help. There are other organizations which likewise respond in a generous fashion.

What is charity? Moroni, in writing a few of the words of his father, Mormon, recorded, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever."<19

One who exemplified charity in his life was President George Albert Smith. Immediately following World War II, the Church had a drive to amass warm clothing to ship to suffering Saints in Europe. Elder Harold B. Lee and Elder Marion G. Romney took President George Albert Smith to Welfare Square in Salt Lake City to view the results. They were impressed by the generous response of the membership of the Church. They watched President Smith observing the workers as they packaged this great volume of donated clothing and shoes. They saw tears running down his face. After a few moments, President George Albert Smith removed his own new overcoat and said, "Please ship this also."

The Brethren said to him, "No, President, no; don't send that; it's cold and you need your coat."

But President Smith would not take it back; and so his coat, with all the others, was sent to Europe, where the nights were long and dark and food and clothing were scarce. Then the shipments arrived. Joy and thanksgiving were expressed aloud, as well as in secret prayer.

Be an example in spirit

Fourth, be an example in *spirit*. The Psalmist wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."<20

As a 17-year-old I enlisted in the United States Navy and attended boot camp in San Diego, California. For the first three weeks, one felt as though the navy were trying to kill rather than train him on how to stay alive.

I shall ever remember the first Sunday at San Diego. The chief petty officer said to us, "Today everybody goes to church." We then lined up in formation on the drill ground. The petty officer shouted, "All of you who are Catholics—you meet in Camp Decatur. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!"

A large number marched out. He then said, "All of you who are of the Jewish faith—you meet in Camp Henry. Forward, march! And don't come back until three!" A smaller contingent moved out. Then he said, "The rest of you Protestants meet in the theaters in Camp Faragut. Forward, march! And don't come back until three o'clock!"

There flashed through my mind the thought, "Monson, you're not Catholic. You're not Jewish. You're not a Protestant." I elected to stand fast. It seemed as though hundreds of men marched by me. Then I heard the sweetest words which the petty officer ever uttered in my presence. He said, "And what do you men call yourselves?" He used the plural—*men*. This was the first time I knew that anyone else was standing behind me on that drill ground. In unison we said, "We're Mormons." He scratched his head, an expression of puzzlement on his face, and said, "Well, go and find somewhere to meet—and don't come back until three o'clock." We marched away. One could almost count cadence to the rhyme learned in Primary:

Dare to be a Mormon;
Dare to stand alone.
Dare to have a purpose firm,
And dare to make it known.

Be an example in faith

Fifth, be an example in *faith*.

President Stephen L. Richards, speaking of faith, declared: "The recognition of power higher than man himself does not in any sense debase him. If in his faith he ascribes beneficence and high purpose to the power which is superior to himself, he envisions a higher destiny and nobler attributes for his kind and is stimulated and encouraged in the struggle of existence. . . . He must seek believing, praying, and hoping that he will find. No such sincere, prayerful effort will go un-

required—that is the very constitution of the philosophy of faith."²¹ Divine favor will attend those who humbly seek it.

Minnie Louise Haskins set forth this principle in a lovely poem: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied: 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'"²²

Be an example in purity

Finally, be an example in *purity*.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."²³

As President David O. McKay observed: "The safety of our nation depends upon the purity and strength of the home; and I thank God for the teachings of the . . . Church in relation to home building, and the impression that kind parents have made, that the home must be the most sacred place in the world. Our people are home-builders, and they are taught everywhere, from childhood to old age, that the home should be kept pure and safe from the evils of the world."²⁴

Example of President Francis Winters

Many years ago I attended a stake conference in Star Valley, Wyoming, where the stake presidency was reorganized. The stake president who was being released, E. Francis Winters, had served faithfully for the lengthy term of 23 years. Though modest by nature and circumstance, he had been a perpetual pillar of strength to everyone in the val-

ley. On the day of the stake conference, the building was filled to overflowing. Each heart seemed to be saying a silent *thank-you* to this noble leader who had given so unselfishly of his life for the benefit of others.

As I stood to speak, I was prompted to do something I had not done before, nor have I done so since. I stated how long Francis Winters had presided in the stake; then I asked all whom he had blessed or confirmed as children to stand and remain standing. Then I asked all those persons whom President Winters had ordained, set apart, personally counseled, or blessed to please stand. The outcome was electrifying. Every person in the audience rose to his or her feet. Tears flowed freely—tears which communicated better than could words the gratitude of tender hearts. I turned to President and Sister Winters and said, “We are witnesses today of the prompting of the Spirit. This vast throng reflects not only individual feelings but also the gratitude of God for a life well lived.” No person who was in the congregation that day will forget how he or she felt when we witnessed the language of the Spirit of the Lord.

Here, in Francis Winters, was “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”²⁵

True to the faith that our parents have
cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs
have perished,
To God’s command,
Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.²⁶

That each of us may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 17:1–4.

2. Felix Mendelssohn, “Thanks Be to God!” *Elijah*.
3. Matthew 25:21.
4. Matthew 12:25.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 132:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119.
7. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
9. Matthew 11:28–30.
10. Luke 2:52.
11. Acts 10:38.
12. Acts 8:31.
13. 1 Timothy 4:12.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 136:24.
15. “Let Us Oft Speak Kind Words,” *Hymns*, no. 232.
16. Quoted in “Lives of Service,” *Church News*, 21 Sept. 1996, 10.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 57–58; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 47.
18. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
19. Moroni 7:47.
20. Psalm 51:10.
21. In Conference Report, Oct. 1937, 35, 38.
22. “God Knows,” in Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 328.
23. Psalm 24:3–5.
24. In Conference Report, Apr. 1909, 66.
25. 1 Timothy 4:12.
26. “True to the Faith,” *Hymns*, no. 254.

The choir sang “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing “How Great the Wisdom and the Love.”

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.