

Promises for keeping the Sabbath holy

The Lord's promises to those who keep the Sabbath day holy are so wonderfully clear in the scriptures that they leave one asking, "Why would anyone throw away such blessings for the tawdry, temporary pleasures of the world?" Hear again the words of Jehovah as they roll down from Mount Sinai:

"Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase....

"... And ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give peace in the land, . . . neither shall the sword go through your land. . . .

"For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, . . . and establish my covenant with you. . . .

"And I will set my tabernacle [that is, my temple] among you. . . .

"And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."²²

I love the Sabbath day! It has blessed my family in countless ways. I bear a testimony born of personal experience that the commandments of the Lord are "true and faithful."²³

I know that you will be happier, enjoy greater peace, and find your lives made glad as you witness the miracles that come to each person and family who make the sacrifice of keeping this eternal covenant.

I love our Lord and Savior. I know He lives and that this is His Church and kingdom on earth. I know He is at once a just and merciful God, who loves His children with all the tenderness of a kind and loving Father. May we, in turn, "offer a sacrifice unto the Lord [our] God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit,"²⁴ I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42.
5. Exodus 20:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59 section heading.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 59:10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12 reads, "Thou shalt offer thine oblations," meaning to offer one's time, talents, or means (see footnote b).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:15.
15. Isaiah 58:13–14.
16. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 96–97.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 559.
18. Mark 2:27.
19. Exodus 31:16–17.
20. Matthew 5:20.
21. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658.
22. Leviticus 26:2–12.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 71:11.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 59:8.

Elder Robert C. Oaks

Importance of missionary work

I thrill to hear the prophet stand at this pulpit and declare how he sees the

work of the Lord rolling forth to fill the earth like that stone, cut without hands, that Daniel saw in his vision (see Daniel 2:34–35).

This work is driven by the Spirit of the Lord and through the operation of priesthood authority given to man. But it moves forward on the wheels of missionary work by those who have responded to the Lord's call to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Increase the number of converts

The gospel of Jesus Christ with all of its purity, beauty, and simplicity has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith.

We who have tasted the sweet fruits of the gospel know it as a fountain of faith, hope, and peace—a constant source of joy. Indeed, it is a rare jewel to be treasured and a rare jewel to be shared. There are 60,000 full-time missionaries engaged in the sharing process. Their efforts, coupled with those of stake missionaries and members, yielded some 300,000 new converts last year.

But this is not enough. Given the importance of the message, the help offered by the Spirit, the number of missionaries, and the size of the field that is ready to harvest, 300,000 new converts per year are not nearly enough. In fact, last year President Hinckley challenged Church members to significantly increase the number of converts. We are not yet on that prophetically prompted track.

This is what prophets do; they help us reach up to new heights.

President David O. McKay advised, "Every member a missionary";¹

President Kimball: "Lengthen your stride";² and "Do it now";³

President Benson: "Flood the earth with the Book of Mormon";⁴

And now President Hinckley: Increase the number of converts and retain them.

Do we need more specific instructions?

Guidelines for member-missionary work

Let me review the four-step instructions we have received regarding member-missionary work:

1. Identify prayerfully your friends and neighbors who would be the most receptive to the gospel message.
2. Introduce the identified individuals to the missionaries.
3. Involve yourself in the teaching of the gospel, preferably in your home.
4. Integrate your friends and any other new members into the Church by being attentive and helpful.

Through this simple, compact process we *can* increase the number of converts, and, more importantly, we can help the new converts achieve full fellowship. Increased member involvement is the only way to increase our current conversion rate.

Do not fear rejection

We have heard all of this many times. Why don't we do better in providing referrals? It is not laziness, because Latter-day Saints are not lazy people. I believe that the fear of rejection or the fear of hurting a friendship are the more common restraints to sharing the gospel.

But are these fears valid? When you extend to a friend an invitation to meet with the missionaries, you are offering to share something that is most valuable and cherished. Is that offensive? Sister Oaks and I have not found this to be the case. In fact, we have found that when we offer to share the gospel, friendships are strengthened, even though the friends may not embrace the gospel message.

Consider that you are invited to a friend's house for breakfast. On the table you see a large pitcher of freshly squeezed orange juice from which your host fills his glass. But he offers you none. Finally you ask, "Could I have a glass of orange juice?"

He replies, "Oh, I am sorry. I was afraid you might not like orange juice, and I didn't want to offend you by offering you something you didn't desire."

Now, that sounds absurd, but it is not too different from the way we hesitate to offer up something far sweeter than orange juice. I have often worried how I would answer some friend about my hesitancy when I meet him beyond the veil.

"Why have you kept it a secret?"

A story related by Elder Christoffel Golden of South Africa refreshed my concerns. He was recently in Lusaka, Zambia, attending a meeting of new converts. A well-spoken, well-dressed stranger with a Book of Mormon in hand walked in. He stated he had driven past the chapel many times and had wondered what church met there and what they taught for doctrine.

At the conclusion of the meeting, this gentleman stood up, raised his copy of the Book of Mormon high in the air, and asked, "Why have you kept this book hidden from the people of Lusaka? Why have you kept it a secret?"

As I heard this story, I flinched that one day some friend might ask me, "Why have you kept this Book of Mormon, with its message of truth and salvation, a secret?"

My reply, "I was afraid I would damage our friendship," will not be very satisfying to either me or my friend.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that we may put our fears and our hesitancy behind us and no more keep secret the great treasure that is ours.

Senior couple missionaries

One last thought regarding missionary work: During my short time in southeast Africa, I have been overwhelmed by the remarkable service rendered by se-

nior couple missionaries. Daily they make significant contributions to the strengthening of the members and to rolling that stone, cut without hands, forward on its eternal course. What a mighty team for righteousness they make when joined with the younger missionaries and the local members.

Whether in leadership, proselyting, temple, humanitarian, welfare, or Church education service, the contribution of these experienced, testimony-bearing souls is beyond measure. And without exception I see them deriving great personal satisfaction from their service.

If you are retired, or retirement eligible, and wondering what useful things you might do with the rest of your life, contact your bishop. Let him share with you his exciting list of missionary opportunities.

Today, take your spouse by the hand and see if you don't agree that the best thing for all concerned, including your grandchildren, would be for you to accept an assignment to serve the Lord as missionaries. This is His work, and He beckons us to join Him in it.

I testify that God, our Eternal Father, and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, live. Christ came to earth and fulfilled His calling as the Redeemer of all mankind. I testify that His gospel has been restored in its fulness and that there is a living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, guiding this work under the direction of the Father and of the Son. And I so do in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 4; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 4.
3. "Always a Convert Church," *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 3.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 5.

President Faust

Elders H. Aldridge Gillespie and Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder F. Enzio Busche of the Seventy, who yesterday received emeritus status. He will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder F. Enzio Busche

Feelings of awe for the Restoration

If I would be asked what, in my understanding, is the most important event to have happened on earth in the last 200 years, I would answer without any hesitation: it is the consequence of the prayer of a young boy who, in the early years of the 19th century, in upstate New York, knelt before God and asked questions of eternal truth.

This young man with the name Joseph Smith became, in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the instrument to restore to mankind the knowledge of the long-lost and nearly forgotten truth: the knowledge about us human beings—who we are, where we came from, what the meaning and purpose of our earthly existence is, and why mankind has experienced so much misery and injustice. Eventually answers were also given to mankind's questions of life after death and our final destiny.

Even to this day, more than 42 years after I accepted, by my own choice, the Lord's sacred covenant of baptism, I am still in a state of awe at all of the marvelous and miraculous happenings of the Restoration. Not only were we permitted to learn all about the essential meaning of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the important meaning of the priesthood of God was revealed, and it was restored for us to act in caring love and patience to bring about the choice of salvation to all.

A friend refuses alcoholic drinks

Time will not allow me to talk more about the details of this marvelous work in our time, but I feel to talk about one key aspect in the Lord's kingdom that, if not understood, may result in the fact that the whole picture may never be quite in focus.

In order to come to the point, I want to tell you of a faithful brother who was a member of the same branch in my home country of Germany in the early years of my membership.

He was living in humble circumstances and felt very blessed to have recently begun a job in a small, privately owned company. He told me about an upcoming event where all of the employed people were invited to participate in a traditional company dinner party. He was concerned because he knew that there would be a big beer party at the end of this meeting, with the boss being probably the heaviest beer drinker of them all. But he also knew that it would be considered very impolite if he did not attend the dinner at all.

When I saw him again after that dinner event occurred, I saw him with a most happy, deep inner glow, and he could not wait to tell me what had happened. Because he was new in the company, the boss had sat right next to him, wanting to get to know him better. As the evening progressed, the brother saw his wildest fears confirmed because the boss would