

Elder Bruce D. Porter

The most important class in Cambridge

Nearly 25 years ago our family lived in Massachusetts, where I was enrolled in graduate school. My program of study was very demanding, leaving me little free time. One Sunday in church the ward Primary president approached me and asked if I might substitute as a Primary teacher for two weeks. Primary was then held on a weekday afternoon, and I knew it would be difficult to find room in my schedule to teach the class. But after some hesitation, I agreed.

The appointed day came to teach Primary. That afternoon I was in the university library, absorbed in a book on international politics. The subject I was studying seemed somehow more important than the upcoming Primary class. Consequently, I procrastinated until just 30 minutes before the class was to begin to review the lesson I was to teach. Then I walked from the library down to our ward chapel on the edge of campus. My reluctant attitude must have slowed my steps, for I arrived a few minutes late. As I stepped to the door of the Primary room, the children were just beginning to sing the opening hymn. It was a song I had never heard before, a song whose melody and message touched me deeply:

As I have loved you,
Love one another.
This new commandment:
Love one another.
By this shall men know
Ye are my disciples,
If ye have love
One to another.
["Love One Another," *Hymns*,
no. 308]

As I stood there, transfixed in the doorway, the Spirit bore witness that I was looking at the most important class taking place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that day.

Back at the university in dozens of classrooms and laboratories, dedicated scholars were pursuing answers to the world's problems. Yet valuable though such efforts may have been, the university did not and could not hold the ultimate answers to the problems of a troubled world. Here before me was the Lord's answer: the quiet building up of His kingdom on earth by the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was taking place in Primary that day was a small part of a divinely revealed plan for the salvation of a fallen world.

God's kingdom is built by simple means

In October 1831, the Lord, in reference to the Restoration, declared, "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that kingdom whose destiny it is to fill the whole earth. In the miraculous wisdom of the Almighty, the building up of God's kingdom in the latter days will take place by means as plain and simple as what I witnessed in Primary that day.

We rejoice to hear of temples being reared in every quarter of the earth and of far-flung nations opening their doors to the gospel. Built upon a foundation of apostles and prophets, the Lord's Church is being taken to the whole world by missionaries called to proclaim His word. Sometimes, perhaps, we may be inclined to see the building of the kingdom as something that takes place beyond the horizon, far away from our own branch or ward. In truth, the Church advances both by outward expansion and by inward refinement. "For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must

be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened" (D&C 82:14).

We do not have to be called to serve far from home, nor do we have to hold a prominent place in the Church or in the world to build up the Lord's kingdom. We build it in our own hearts as we cultivate the Spirit of God in our lives. We build it within our families by instilling faith in our children. And we build it through the organization of the Church as we magnify our callings and share the gospel with neighbors and friends.

As our missionaries labor in fields ready for harvest, others labor in fields at home to strengthen the kingdom in the ward and community where they reside. From its earliest days, the Lord's Church has been built up by ordinary people who magnified their callings in humility and devotion. It does not matter to what office we are called to serve, only that we act "in all diligence" (D&C 107:99). In the words of modern revelation:

"Be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33).

The kingdom of God is built in the home

President Joseph F. Smith observed once that "great causes are not won in a single generation" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 119). More than anywhere else, it is within the family, in the quiet sanctuary of the home that generations unite in building the kingdom of God. The rearing of children is a divine work. The First Presidency has called on the parents of the Church to hold family home evening and family prayer, to study the gospel in the home, and to spend time with children in wholesome activities. As fathers and mothers teach their children the eternal truths once taught to them, they pass on the torch of truth to yet another generation, and the kingdom waxes stronger. "We are watchers of a beacon whose light

must never die" ("For the Strength of the Hills," *Hymns*, no. 35).

When I was growing up, my father often led our family in gospel discussions around the dinner table. Only with the perspective of years do I understand today the contribution those family hours made to my own testimony. I rejoice in the prophecy of Isaiah that the time will come when "upon every dwelling place of mount Zion" there shall be "a cloud . . . by day, and . . . a flaming fire by night" (Isaiah 4:5), when the Spirit of God will abide in the homes of His people continually.

"The kingdom of God is within you"

The Lord's kingdom encompasses not only Church and family, but also the hearts and minds of His people. As the Savior taught during His mortal ministry, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). If we truly desire to contribute to this great latter-day work, our eyes will be single to the glory of God, our minds enlightened by "the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 19:10), our hearts pure and consecrated. Personal prayer, study, and pondering are vital to building the kingdom within our own souls. It is in quiet moments of contemplation and communion with the Almighty that we come to know and love Him as our Father.

I bear witness that the kingdom of God has been restored to the earth, never to be taken away again. Under the direction of our Eternal Father, Jesus Christ is the Author and Finisher of this work, the cornerstone of the Church, and the Holy One of Israel. In the strength and power of the Lord, may we build up the kingdom of God on earth that it may be prepared to meet the kingdom of heaven at His coming. In the words of a battlefield anthem that might also stand as an anthem of the Restoration:

Sunday, April 1, 2001

He has sounded forth the trumpet
that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men
before his judgment seat.
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer him;
be jubilant my feet!
Our God is marching on.
["Battle Hymn of the Republic,"
Hymns, no. 60]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders L. Lionel Kendrick and Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We shall now have the pleasure to hear from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Accountability for our use of resources

As we approach the conclusion of this wonderful conference, it is timely to ask ourselves what we are going to strive to *become* because of what we have heard from the Lord's servants.

We are accountable and will be judged for how we use what we have received. This eternal principle applies to all we have been given. In the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14–30), the Savior taught this principle with reference to the use of property. The principle of accountability also applies to the spiritual resources conferred in the teachings we have been given and to the precious hours and days allotted to each of us during our time in mortality.

I wish to examine how this principle of accountability applies to our use of the enlarged time and information we have been given in our day.

Because of increased life expectancies and modern timesaving devices, most of us have far more discretionary time than our predecessors. We are accountable for how we use that time. "Thou shalt not idle away thy time," and "Cease to be idle" (D&C 60:13; 88:124), the Lord commanded the early missionaries and members. "Time flies on wings of lightning," we sing in a popular hymn; "we cannot call it back. It comes, then passes forward along its onward track. And if we are not

mindful, the chance will fade away, for life is quick in passing. 'Tis as a single day" ("Improve the Shining Moments," *Hymns*, no. 226).

The significance of our increased discretionary time has been magnified many times by modern data-retrieval technology. For good or for evil, devices like the Internet and the compact disc have put at our fingertips an incredible inventory of information, insights, and images. Along with fast food, we have fast communications and fast facts. The effect of these resources on some of us seems to fulfill the prophet Daniel's prophecy that in the last days "knowledge shall be increased" and "many shall run to and fro" (Daniel 12:4).

Principles for using time and information

With greatly increased free time and vastly more alternatives for its use, it is prudent to review the fundamental principles that should guide us. Temporal circumstances change, but the eternal laws and principles that should guide our choices never change.

Value what we have, not a bigger truckload

A homely story contains a warning. I like this story because it translates easily into different languages and cultures.

Two men formed a partnership. They built a small shed beside a busy road.