

6. See Luke 17:33.
7. Articles of Faith 1:13.
8. See 3 Nephi 20:41; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38.
9. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 709.
10. Amos 5:14.
11. Matthew 6:33.
12. John 17:3.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
14. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 194.
15. Ephesians 1:10.
16. Ephesians 2:20.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
18. Mosiah 16:9.

Elder James M. Dunn

Words to live by

The world is full of words. Many are shrill and accusatory, and many are sarcastic. Together they are a noise, a blur, and we do not listen to or seriously consider them. Then, once in a while, through the din as it were, we hear precious words, such as in this conference, words to live by.

President Thomas S. Monson, in the April 1988 general conference, stated:

“We treasure the inspired thought:

“God is a Father.

Man is a brother.

Life is a mission

And not a career.”

(Quoting Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 62; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 54.)

These are words to live by.

We are all children of God

God is our Heavenly Father. We are His spiritually begotten children. Knowing our relationship to God helps us better understand where we came from and what our eternal possibilities are. Knowing Him, we learn better how to approach Him and how we ought to live in order to please Him. Our earthly sojourn is part of a divine plan of happiness designed by Him, which beckons us to live by faith, to gain mortal experiences, and to become qualified through obedience and the power of the Atonement to return to His presence forever.

We live in a world marked by great diversity: different lands, cultures, races, and languages. To some degree, at least, one must believe that this is the way God intended it to be. The gospel teaches us that, notwithstanding these differences, we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. The human race is one family, and we are all, therefore, brothers and sisters.

As siblings we must see that Heavenly Father loves His children equally, as any good earthly father would. Courtesy, kindness, generosity, and forgiveness are all elements of proper conduct among family members. Imagine the disappointment of a perfect, loving Father who sees His children treating each other badly.

Keep focused on life's true purposes

Life is short. “It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). In the precious time that we have in mortality, there are many things to be done. Some of these things are more important than others, and we must make wise decisions. Some things are obviously wrong. Some are good. But some are vital if we are to meet the expectations of our Father and succeed in our mortal probation.

The expectations of the Father exceed merely devising a way to make a living or indulging ourselves in the beauties and pleasures of this earth, even though the Lord has assured us, “It pleaseth God that

he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess” (D&C 59:20).

Successfully working our way through life, while keeping our eye on life’s true purposes, blesses us both here and hereafter. Obeying the commandments, keeping sacred covenants, and being “anxiously engaged in a good cause” (D&C 58:27) enable us to partake of the joy that is the purpose of our earthly existence (see 2 Nephi 2:25).

The Lord has given us this additional assurance: “But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23).

So our earthly mission hasn’t much to do at all with our mortal careers. It has, however, everything to do with preparing for our immortal destiny.

I testify that the godly life will lead us back to the Father, who gave us life here and who will receive us back into eternal life.

Distractions of the world

Many of God’s children live life as though there were no tomorrow, no day of reckoning. They fill their lives with the pursuit of comfort, gain, and pleasure. Of such, Nephi said, “Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us” (2 Nephi 28:7). Many compound this miscalculation by concluding:

“Nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28:8).

As the result of such erroneous thinking, the world is filled with lurid and lascivious attractions. We see young men who refuse to marry; young women who foolishly surrender their virtue in pursuit of lustful relationships; couples who purposefully refuse to have children or who opt for a “trophy child” because a family would interfere with plans for adventure, leisure, or maximum financial gain.

Living by God’s words keeps us on track

Nevertheless, there are millions of faithful brothers and sisters throughout the world who strive daily to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44). They plan and live their lives in compliance with the revealed word of Heavenly Father. They work hard, study hard, and pray hard. They know how to be serious, and they know how to have fun. They listen to the word, and they obey the word. They know the meaning of and the blessings that come from living the law of sacrifice. These faithful people help and defer to others. They love and care for little children and the elderly. Good manners and high morals are their hallmarks, and they lead by example in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities. God loves and blesses them. His words are the words they live by, words that “are sure and shall not fail” (D&C 64:31).

Words to live by. They are usually simple and to the point. They help us remember. They keep us on track. They will lead us back to our Heavenly Father and His rest.

May we remember:

“God is a Father.
Man is a brother.
Life is a mission
And not a career.”

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.