

the world to speak the glad tidings of the gospel” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 17). We now understand from the First Presidency’s statement on missionary work that there are transgressions that will disqualify young men and women from missionary service (see “Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002).

President James E. Faust said: “There need to be some absolutes in life. There are some things that should not ever be done, some lines that should never be crossed, vows that should never be broken, words that should never be spoken, and thoughts that should never be entertained” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 74; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 48).

The bar for missionary service has been raised. “Those individuals not able to meet the physical, mental, and emotional demands of full-time missionary work are honorably excused. . . . They may be called to serve in other rewarding capacities” (“Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, 11 Dec. 2002). We believe that by following the guidelines outlined by the First Presidency, there will be an increase in the number of full-time missionaries who are worthy and prepared to serve.

### Examples to follow

In sports we often have great athletes whom we admire, and we strive to develop skills to become like them. In our

spiritual lives we also have great examples to follow, the greatest being our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who responded to Thomas’s question, “How can we know the way?” (John 14:5).

The scriptures record Jesus saying, “I am the way” (John 14:6). In 2 Nephi we read: “Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?” (2 Nephi 31:10).

My young friends, there are many who are following “the way” of the Savior whom you can follow as your example as you prepare for missionary service. You will find them among your family, your friends, and your Church leaders. Even today I count as one of my greatest blessings those dear friends who set the proper example by following the Savior.

### Be the greatest generation of missionaries

It is my prayer that you young men will be diligent in your righteous desires, that you will be successful in all that you do, and that you will be, as Elder M. Russell Ballard has said, “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47).

I testify, as President Hinckley recently said of missionary service, that “there is no greater work. There is no more important work” (*First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 2003, 21). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop H. David Burton

### And that’s the way it is

Good evening. I love to gather with bearers of the priesthood of God and enjoy the worldwide brotherhood we share and cherish. A special spirit arises from the expectation we will be instructed in

the plain and precious parts of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This evening my remarks will be directed to the young men of the Church. You who find yourselves in a different age category are welcome to listen.

During this past Christmas season, news correspondent Walter Cronkite participated with the Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square in their Christmas concert. “He . . . spent 19 years as the anchorman for the ‘CBS Evening News.’ . . . [Mr. Cronkite] earned the reputation as ‘the most trusted man in America.’”<sup>1</sup> When asked how he would want to be remembered, his response was, “Oh, as a fellow who did his best.”<sup>2</sup> Over his distinguished career, Mr. Cronkite concluded each news report with the phrase, “And that’s the way it is.” Tonight let’s talk about the way it is.

### Repetitive reminders

At a recent stake conference, the stake president shared a story with me. He asked his son what was discussed at a recent Sunday evening fireside. The young man replied, “Raising the bar.” He then informed his father that he was weary of the theme because it was the subject of every recent class and meeting. My first thought was, “That’s great; the prophet’s message is being discussed, heard, and acted upon.” My second thought related to the young man’s feelings concerning repetitive reminders. Repetitive reminders can be an irritant when we are trying hard to do our best.

As a youth I would tune out my mother’s repetitive reminder: “David, remember who you are.” The reminder always brought some interesting comments from my friends. Irritation set in when my father repeatedly pointed out President George Albert Smith’s home as we traveled along 13th East in Salt Lake City and reminded me that a living prophet of God who loved me lived there. Today I am most grateful for those repetitive reminders.

### Qualifying for spiritual events in our lives

The term “raising the bar” is often used in the world of sports to describe achieving higher levels of performance.

The use of a sports metaphor may help describe why it is critical to respond to what President Hinckley asked us to do last conference when he said: “I hope that our young men, and our young women, will rise to the challenge [Elder Ballard] has set forth. We must raise the bar on the worthiness and qualifications of those who go into the world as ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

A year ago we experienced a wonderful Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. For most Olympic events, athletes must attain minimum levels of achievement in order to qualify to compete. Our lives are similar to the Olympic qualification process in that we need to achieve and maintain standards in order to participate in the important *spiritual* events of life. World-class athletes have a disciplined daily routine. They master the skills demanded by their sport. Only then can they qualify to participate in the contest. And that’s the way it is.

Young men, if you want to be world class and qualified to be participants in the really important events of life like priesthood ordinations, blessings of the temple, and missionary service, you too must develop a disciplined daily routine of honesty, virtue, study, and prayer. And that’s the way it is.

### The importance of obeying the rules

Olympians know and understand the *rules* that govern their sport. Broken rules can bring severe penalties and even disqualification. At the last Olympics, failure to observe rules associated with performance-enhancing drugs brought medal forfeiture. One of the harshest penalties levied on an athlete occurs in the game of golf. Just signing a scorecard with an incorrect score entered for any one of the 18 holes brings *disqualification*. There is zero tolerance. It doesn’t matter if the error benefits or hurts the individual; the penalty is the same—*disqualification*.

After more than 50 years, I can still hear the words of a tournament official: “Sorry, son, we must disqualify you for signing an incorrect scorecard.” My disqualification came as a result of my mentioning to the official that I needed to correct my score. For weeks I said to myself, “Why didn’t I remain silent? Besides, the error was an innocent mistake. The total score was correct.” Though my performance was good enough to find me in the winner’s circle, I left the awards presentation empty-handed. And that’s the way it is.

My young friends, rules are important, even critical. In life there are also penalties, perhaps even disqualification, if rules are broken. Our participation in life’s important events may be jeopardized if we fail to follow the rules contained in our Father in Heaven’s commands. Involvement in sexual sin, illegal drugs, civil disobedience, or abuse could keep us on the sidelines at key times. You would do well to view rules as *safety restraints*, not as *chains that bind*. Obedience builds strength. And that’s the way it is.

In 1834 the Prophet Joseph Smith recorded, “No month ever found me more busily engaged than November; but as my life consisted of activity and unyielding exertions, I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*”<sup>4</sup>

### **A superb support team for youth**

For some, sports are a business. The difference between winning and losing can be a substantial amount of money. Athletes hire agents to handle their business affairs. Agents, personal trainers, coaches, and managers assist the athlete to enhance performance.

Our Father in Heaven has provided His precious young sons with a superb support team more than equal to the one used by the athlete. Our parents make *superb agents*. They look after our interests. They are not only interested in us, but be-

cause they love us, they are terrific consultants as well.

The Apostle Paul in teaching the Colossians said, “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). In addition to our parents, think about the vast support network that has been provided to enhance our *spiritual* performance. Our bishops serve as *personal trainers* and use their sacred priesthood keys to bless our lives. Seminary teachers, quorum advisers, and home teachers round out the support team which has been assembled by the Lord to help us prepare for the big games of life. As you follow and obey, your performance will steadily improve. When the Lord commands, do it. And that’s the way it is.

### **Focusing on what is truly important**

One of the defining differences between the good and the great is what sports psychologists call *focus*. Competitors who have the ability to set aside the unimportant and be completely attentive to that which is critical are able to improve their performance. Focus is a critical success factor.

I overheard a conversation between golfing great Arnold Palmer and a young caddie he was using for the first time. The young caddie, while handing Mr. Palmer his club, told him the distance to the flag was 165 yards, there was an unseen stream on the left, and a long and treacherous rough on the right. In a very kind but firm way, Mr. Palmer reminded the young man that the only information he required was the distance to the hole. He further suggested he didn’t want to lose focus by worrying about what was on the right or left.

It is easy to lose sight of the really important objectives of life. There is much to distract us. Some are floundering in the water hazards on the left, and others are finding the long, treacherous rough on the right insurmountable. Safety and success

come when focus is maintained on the important opportunities found by driving the ball straight down the middle—priesthood advancement, temple worthiness, and missionary service. And that’s the way it is.

May our Father in Heaven bless each one of you. I testify to one and all that Jesus is the Christ. He lives, and His love for us is perfect. I’m grateful for a great prophet who helps us understand that when the Lord commands, do it, because that’s the way it is. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Walter Cronkite: A Lifetime Reporting the News,” *Voices from The Smithsonian*

*Associates*, Internet, [www.smithsonianassociates.org/programs/cronkite/cronkite.htm](http://www.smithsonianassociates.org/programs/cronkite/cronkite.htm).

2. Kira Albin, “That’s the Way It Is . . . with Walter Cronkite,” *Grand Times*, Internet, [www.grandtimes.com/cronkite.html](http://www.grandtimes.com/cronkite.html).
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 63; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 57.
4. *History of the Church*, 2:170.

#### President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Faust’s remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “Sweet is the Work.” It will then be my opportunity to speak to you.

## President James E. Faust

### The Devil’s Throat

My dear brethren of the priesthood, tonight I address my remarks to all of you, but in particular to the young men. My purpose is to instruct and warn you of dangers that lie ahead, but I also want to express my love for you and the great confidence I have in you as the rising generation.

As a young man I served a mission to Brazil. It was a marvelous experience. One of the wonders of the world in that great country is Iguaçu Falls. In the flood season, the volume of water spilling over the brink is the largest in the world. Every few minutes, millions of gallons of water cascade into the chasm below. One part of the falls, where the deluge is the heaviest, is called the Devil’s Throat.

There are some large rocks standing just above, before the water rushes down into the Devil’s Throat. Years ago, reckless boatmen would take passengers in canoes to stand on those rocks and look down into the Devil’s Throat. The water above the falls is usually calm and slow moving,

and the atmosphere tranquil. Only the roar of the water below forewarns of the danger lurking just a few feet away. A sudden, unexpected current could take a canoe into the rushing waters, over the cliff, and down into the Devil’s Throat. Those foolish enough to leave the canoes to stand on these treacherous wet rocks could so easily lose their footing and be swept away into the swirling currents below.

### The only safe course

I recognize that some of you think of yourselves as daredevils, ready to take on almost any challenge. But some of these excursions for excitement will inevitably take you down into the Devil’s Throat. The only safe course is to stay well away from the dangers of the Devil’s Throat. President George Albert Smith strongly cautioned, “If you cross to the devil’s side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter’s power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>