

our daughter and son-in-law left, they saw four little children standing at the window with smiles on their faces and hands on their cheeks.

They trusted their parents. They knew they were loved.

Just as little children trust, each of us must have that same childlike, unreserved trust. We must all remember that we are sons and daughters of God and that He loves us very much. If we truly understand who we are, we will have an unfailing source of hope and comfort.

We can never complete “the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1) without placing our hand in the Lord’s.

### **Blind runner guided by a friend’s hand**

Several years ago our only daughter decided to compete in a marathon. She trained and worked very hard, along with some of her friends. The race was difficult, and there were times when she wanted to quit. But she kept going, just concentrating on one step at a time. As she was approaching the middle part of the course, she heard someone behind her shout out, “Blind man on your left.”

She turned her head only to see a blind man overtake her, holding the hand of another man. They were both running the race. As they passed, she could see how tightly the blind man held the hand of his friend.

Overcome with her own physical pain, she was lifted as she watched these two men run hand in hand. He who could see was motivated by his blind friend, and the blind man depended upon the connection he had to his friend’s hand. Our daughter

knew the blind man could never finish the race alone. She was inspired by the trust of the blind man and the devoted love of his friend.

### **The Savior extends His hand to us**

In like manner, the Savior stretches forth His hand to each of us so we don’t have to run alone. “To those [of us] who [occasionally] stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen” (*Trusting Jesus*, 43). As we advance toward the finish line, He will be there to save us; and for all this He gave His life.

Imagine the wounds in His hands. His weathered hands, yes, even His hands of torn flesh and physical sacrifice, give our own hands greater power and direction.

It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue.

If we will keep the commandments of God and walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone.

Trust in His promise of eternal life, and allow peace and hope to distill upon you.

When we connect with the Author of Peace and with His perfect and redeeming love, then we can come to know the reality of the Lord’s promise: “I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying . . . , Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and living Savior. I testify that He lives and extends His loving hand to each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

I bring you greetings from the Philippines Area, with its 520,000 members in 80 stakes and 80 member districts and its 2,200 missionaries in 13 missions. We are

progressing against the challenges the Church encounters where it is not yet fully established.

In these developing areas, we rely heavily on senior missionary couples. I stress this because there are many within the sound of my voice who need to know how much their service is appreciated, and there are others we pray will decide to be available for this vital service.

### **People forsake old ways, follow the Lord**

My introduction is something said in my presence by one of these valiant missionaries. “As I look back on my life,” he said, “I can hardly imagine a barefoot surfer from Hawaii completing his third mission. But when I felt the warm embrace of the Savior, I wanted to serve Him, and I changed.” Yes he did! Stanley Y. Q. Ho told me that until he was 30 years old he did nothing but “hang around the beaches at Waikiki.” Then he found the gospel, he married a Latter-day Saint girl, and he changed. Since then he has fulfilled many callings, including bishop and stake president. Now, Elder Ho and his beloved Momi, who is responsible for so many of the changes in his life, have served three full-time missions.

For another example, I turn to the Gospel of Luke:

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully” (Luke 19:1–6).

Here the Gospel records that Jesus’ followers “murmured” because of His go-

ing to the house of a sinner (v. 7). But that did not matter to Jesus. His gospel is for all who will forsake their old ways and make the changes they need to be saved in the kingdom of God.

Now back to the account of the man who opened his house and his heart to the Lord:

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house. . . .

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (verses 8–10).

Zacchaeus of Jericho and Stanley of Hawaii stand for all of us. They are examples of what we pray will be experienced by all of us who decide to receive the Lord “joyfully” and follow where He leads.

### **Repent of practices contrary to the gospel**

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to change. “Repent” is its most frequent message, and repenting means giving up all of our practices—personal, family, ethnic, and national—that are contrary to the commandments of God. The purpose of the gospel is to transform common creatures into celestial citizens, and that requires change.

John the Baptist preached repentance. His listeners came from different groups, and he declared the changes each must make to “bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Publicans, soldiers, and ordinary people—each had traditions that had to yield to the process of repentance.

The teachings of Jesus also challenged the traditions of different groups. When the scribes and Pharisees complained that His disciples “transgress[ed] the tradition of the elders” by omitting the ritual washings, Jesus replied that the scribes and

Pharisees “transgress[ed] the commandment of God by [their] tradition” (Matthew 15:2–3). He described how they had “made the commandment of God of none effect by [their] tradition” (v. 6). “Hypocrites” is what He called those whose adherence to their traditions kept them from keeping the commandments of God (v. 7).

Again, in modern revelation the Lord declares that the “wicked one” takes the innocent children of God away from light and truth “through disobedience . . . and because of the tradition of their fathers” (D&C 93:39).

### **Give up traditions that conflict with gospel**

The traditions or culture or way of life of a people inevitably include some practices that must be changed by those who wish to qualify for God’s choicest blessings.

#### *Chastity*

Chastity is an example. “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” the Lord commanded from Sinai (Exodus 20:14) and repeated in modern revelation (D&C 42:24; see also D&C 59:6). “Flee fornication,” the New Testament commands (1 Corinthians 6:18; see also Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Always the prophets of God have condemned whoredoms. Yet these eternal commands have frequently been ignored, opposed, or mocked by powerful traditions in many lands. This is especially visible today, when the movies, magazines, and Internet communications of one nation are instantly shared with many others. Sexual relations out of wedlock are tolerated or advocated by many. So is the rapidly expanding culture of pornography. All who have belonged to these cultures of sin must repent and change if they are to become the people of God, for He has warned that “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19).

#### *Church attendance and service*

Weekly attendance at church is another example of a commandment contrary to popular traditions. The Lord has commanded us to attend church and “offer up [our] sacraments” on His Sabbath day (see D&C 59:9). This requires more than passive attendance. We are commanded to participate in worship and in service, and that requires a wrenching change for many non-Christians and even for those Christians who have attended church only as irregular spectators.

#### *Word of Wisdom*

The Lord’s command that we abstain from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee (see D&C 89) also runs counter to the traditions of many. Long-standing addictions or habits are not easily broken, but God’s command is clear, and the promised blessings more than compensate for the challenges of change.

#### *Honesty*

Another example is honesty. Some cultures allow lying, stealing, and other dishonest practices. But dishonesty in any form—whether to appease, to save face, or to get gain—is in direct conflict with gospel commandments and culture. God is a God of truth, and God does not change. We are the ones who must change. And that will be a big change for all whose traditions accustom them to thinking that they can lie a little, cheat a little, or engage in deceit whenever it brings personal advantage and is not likely to be detected.

#### *Movement in Church positions*

A less serious worldly tradition that conflicts with gospel culture is the idea of upward or downward movement in positions. In the world, we refer to the up or down of promotions or reductions. But there is no up or down in Church posi-

tions. We just move around. A bishop released by proper authority and called to teach in Primary does not move down. He moves forward as he accepts his release with gratitude and fulfills the duties of a new calling—even one far less visible.

I saw a memorable example of this a few months ago in the Philippines. I visited a ward in the Pasig stake, near Manila. There I met Augusto Lim, whom I had known in earlier years as a stake president, a mission president, a General Authority, and president of the Manila temple. Now I saw him serving humbly and gratefully in his ward bishopric, second counselor to a man much younger and much less experienced. From temple president to second counselor in a ward bishopric is a beautiful example of the gospel culture in action.

### **Contrasting the Lord's way, world's way**

In these examples I am not contrasting the culture or traditions of one part of the world with another. I am contrasting the Lord's way with the world's way—the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the culture or traditions of every nation or people. No group has a monopoly on virtue or an immunity from the commandment to change. Jesus and His Apostles did not attempt to make Gentiles into Jews (see Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:11–16; 3:1–29; 5:1–6; 6:15). They taught Gentiles and Jews, attempting to make each of them into followers of Christ.

Similarly, the present-day servants of the Lord do not attempt to make Filipinos or Asians or Africans into Americans. The Savior invites all to come unto Him (see 2 Nephi 26:33; D&C 43:20), and His servants seek to persuade all—including Americans—to become Latter-day Saints. We say to all, give up your traditions and cultural practices that are contrary to the commandments of God and the culture of His gospel, and join with His people in building the kingdom of God. If we cease to walk in darkness, the Apostle John

taught, “we walk in the light, . . . we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

### **The unique gospel culture**

There is a unique gospel culture, a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This gospel way of life comes from the plan of salvation, the commandments of God, and the teachings of the living prophets. It is given expression in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives. The principles stated in the family proclamation are a beautiful expression of our gospel culture.

Those who are baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ make covenants. In modern revelation the Lord declared, “When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men” (D&C 101:39). To perform our covenant duty as the salt of the earth, we must be different from those around us.

As Jesus taught: “I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men” (3 Nephi 12:13; see also Matthew 5:13; D&C 101:40).

This requires us to make some changes from our family culture, our ethnic culture, or our national culture. We must change all elements of our behavior that are in conflict with gospel commandments, covenants, and culture.

### **The doctrine of personal responsibility**

The gospel plan is based on individual responsibility. Our article of faith states the eternal truth “that men will be

punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression" (Articles of Faith 1:2). This requirement of individual responsibility, which has many expressions in our doctrine, is in sharp contrast to Satan's plan to "redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost" (Moses 4:1). The plan of the Father and the Savior is based on individual choice and individual effort.

The doctrine and practice of personal responsibility and personal effort collide with individual traditions and local cultures in many lands. We live in a world where there are large differences in income and material possessions and where there are many public and private efforts to narrow these differences. The followers of the Savior are commanded to give to the poor, and many do. But some gifts have promoted a culture of dependency, reducing their recipients' need for earthly food or shelter but impoverishing them in their eternal need for individual growth. The growth required by the gospel plan occurs only in a culture of individual effort and responsibility. It cannot occur in a culture of dependency. Whatever causes us to be dependent on someone else for decisions or resources we could provide for ourselves weakens us spiritually and retards our growth toward what the gospel plan intends us to be.

The gospel raises people out of poverty and dependency, but only when gospel culture, including the faithful payment of tithing even by the very poor, prevails over the traditions and cultures of dependency. That is the lesson to be learned from the children of Israel, who came out of hundreds of years of slavery in Egypt and followed a prophet into their own land and became a mighty people. That lesson can also be learned from the Mormon pioneers, who never used their persecutions or poverty as an excuse but went forward in faith, knowing that God would bless them when they kept His commandments, which He did.

### **Love others and help them change**

The changes we must make to become part of the gospel culture require prolonged and sometimes painful effort, and our differences must be visible. As the "salt of the earth," we are also the "light of the world," and our light must not be hidden (see Matthew 5:13–16). The Apostle John warned that this will cause the world to hate us (see 1 John 3:13). That is why those who have made the covenant to change have a sacred duty to love and help one another. That encouragement must be extended to every soul who struggles to come out of the culture of the world and into the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John concluded, "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

No one shows love for their fellowmen more impressively than the noble men and women of this Church who leave comfortable homes and surroundings to serve as couple missionaries. They provide the most authentic and the most valuable assistance to those who are struggling to change. God bless our couple missionaries!

### **Repent and obey to show love for God**

Jesus commanded us to love one another, and we show that love by the way we serve one another. We are also commanded to love God, and we show that love by continually repenting and by keeping His commandments (see John 14:15). And repentance means more than giving up our sins. In its broadest meaning it requires *change*, giving up all our traditions that are contrary to the commandments of God. As we become full participants in the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we become "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19).

I testify that this is what our Lord and Savior would have us do so that we may

become what His gospel intends us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Thank you, brethren.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Come, Ye Disconsolate.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Keith K. Hilbig of the Seventy.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene

in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave this session of the conference, we ask that you obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express also our thanks to the single adult choir from the Utah South Area for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon. Thank you, from each one of us to each one of you.

## **Elder Richard G. Scott**

### **The extraordinary potential of our youth**

Recently I watched over 20,000 young Latter-day Saint men and women listen to a spiritual message. They took notes and concentrated on the speaker, anxious to learn. There radiated from them an intense spirit of purity, righteousness, and devotion. No one had forced them to come. They wanted to be there.

Later I met with over 2,000 full-time missionaries preparing to serve. The room was charged with the Spirit. I asked them difficult questions. They responded extremely well, often citing supporting scriptures. As I shook missionaries’ hands and looked into their eyes, I felt purity and a spirit of devotion. It was an inspiring experience. Each had set aside personal interests to accept a call to join what can become our greatest generation of missionaries.

I have had like experiences with youth across the earth. The faculty at our three universities note a significant increase in capacity and spiritual sensitivity of students. Something extraordinary is happening. Do you sense it? Truly, as obedience and morality decline in the world, the Lord is sending more exceptional spirits to

earth. As a body they excel the average capacity of their forebears. Their potential for personal growth and positive contribution is enormous.

As parents and leaders, how are you cultivating that potential? As a young man or woman of this generation, what are you doing to realize your extraordinary potential? Will you nurture it and rise to exceptional heights of accomplishment and happiness? How will you avoid Satan’s efforts to undermine your potential through transgression? Only you can answer these critical questions.

### **Make choices to realize your full potential**

With all my capacity I encourage you to discover who you really are. I invite you to look beyond the daily routine of life. I urge you to discern through the Spirit your divinely given capacities. I exhort you to prayerfully make worthy choices that will lead you to realize your full potential.

I will share one sure way you can begin to accomplish such growth. I have seen valiant missionaries brave icy wind, resist torrential rains, slosh through slippery, muddy streets, and conquer fear. Often they bear a powerful testimony, only to be