

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

rejected and roundly criticized. I have seen them struggle to communicate the truth in a new language. Sometimes the listener stares in puzzled silence. Then there dawns the shattering realization that the message is not understood. But I wouldn't change any of it, even if I could, because there are those golden moments of success that make all of the hardships worthwhile.

Such rewards come when the Spirit touches a heart for eternal good because someone like you was there. To share truth in difficult circumstances is to treasure it more. When you push against the boundaries of experience into the twilight of the unknown, the Lord will strengthen you. The beauty of your eternal soul will begin to unfold.

Prepare to be an exceptional missionary

The challenges are greater now than ever. That is why the Lord needs more capable, better prepared missionaries. He needs those who are clean and pure so that they can be guided by the Spirit and can testify with converting power. Qualify to be one of those exceptional missionaries. It will not be easy. But when was anything really worthwhile easy?

The First Presidency has defined high standards of moral worthiness and the physical, mental, and emotional stability missionary service now demands. The standards are rigorous, but you can meet them. You will rejoice in the feelings of peace and confidence that come from living them. The standards were raised not to make it harder but because missionaries now serve in an environment where spiritual guidance is absolutely essential. Also, adjustments have been made in the presentation of the discussions. They are not now memorized; rather, the basic content is learned and given as guided by the Spirit. Personal worthiness is essential to do that (see "Statement on Missionary Work" attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002).

You are of a singular generation with exceptional potential. No wonder Satan wants to cripple that potential by tempting you to violate the laws of God. He knows that he has no power over a righteous individual. Yet he is a master at making sin appealing to the undecided.

Preparation at home and church

Preparation for a mission and a meaningful life best begins in the home. As a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give a son or daughter is to consistently nurture a growing testimony of truth, patiently nurturing each child's spiritual capacity. Carefully explain the doctrines of the Church and the power they give when well lived. That foundation will equip a child to resist evil in the world. Encourage every son who is physically and emotionally able to prepare to serve worthily a full-time mission.

Bishops and stake presidents, work with priesthood and auxiliary leaders to strengthen the spiritual capacity of your youth. Do that by encouraging their participation in Church activities that fortify the teachings of parents.

As a young man, actively participate in your priesthood quorum. As a young woman, attend class activities and complete your Personal Progress goals. Both of you, be active in Sunday School discussions to retain what is taught. Take part in seminary and institute to gain vital understanding of truth. Don't just listen to pass a test. Incorporate what you study into your life.

Study the scriptures and gain a testimony

Study the First Vision as recorded in Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. Learn of the subsequent events that brought the full restoration of truth, with the priesthood authority and ordinances essential to exaltation. Gain your own testimony of these things. Fix them in your mind and heart.

Try reading the Book of Mormon because you want to, not because you have to. Discover for yourself that it is true. As you read each page, ask, “Could any man have written this book, or did it come as Joseph Smith testified?” Apply the teachings you learn. They will fortify you against the evil of Satan. Follow Moroni’s counsel. Sincerely ask God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, with real intent, if the teachings of the Book of Mormon are true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Ask with a desire to receive a confirmation personally, nothing doubting. There has to be an explanation of that book you can hold in your hand. I know you can receive a spiritual confirmation that the book is true. You will then know that Jesus Christ lives, that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s Church (see introduction to the Book of Mormon, especially the last paragraph). You will confirm that the Savior guides His Church through a living prophet. These truths will become a foundation for your productive life.

One may say, “I don’t have all the blessings of an ideal family and full Church experience.” Neither did I enjoy all those advantages, nor did some other members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Compensate by obtaining your own unwavering testimony of truth. Obtain a personal conviction that the Church of Jesus Christ has been restored to earth and that His doctrines are true. There are different paths to that treasured gift. They begin with your sincere desire to know. The flickering flame of faith can die if you do not nurture it. But that tiny flame can grow into a brilliant, unquenchable fire through sincere prayer and consistent study of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Such faith will be sustained as you apply the principles you learn.

Remain worthy. When you really understand who you are, it is not difficult to resist Satan’s temptations. Then he can’t

thwart the development of your true potential.

Serving a mission brings greatest growth

As a young man, the greatest growth and strengthening experience you can have at this time, bar none, is serving a worthy full-time mission. While a mission is not for personal advantage, the Lord richly blesses those who valiantly serve. Be one of the army of remarkable, well-prepared, devoted missionaries who are qualifying to the high standards of worthiness. Join those who have chosen to serve the Lord, wherever called, however challenging it may be.

Missionary work is extremely demanding. If you have emotional challenges that can be stabilized to meet the rigors of a full-time mission, you can be called. It is vital that you continue to use your medication during your mission or until competent medical authority counsels otherwise. Recognize that emotional and physical challenges are alike. One needs to do all that is possible to improve the situation, then learn to live within the remaining bounds. God uses challenges that we may grow by conquering them.

Your physical or emotional circumstance may be such that you have been excused by the President of the Church from full-time missionary service (see “Statement on Missionary Work” attached to First Presidency letter, Dec. 11, 2002). For you there are other ways to render meaningful service compatible with your condition. Your bishop or stake president can help you identify such service where you live. It could be in a Church family history center, temple, welfare project, or employment center, or in a local hospital, care center, shelter, or elsewhere. There are many places where help is needed. You can live at home and contribute powerfully. Such a call can be for a few months or longer. Your stake president will come

to know where you should serve and for how long. He will then issue a formal call. Whatever your call may be, study the message of the Restoration with materials the full-time missionaries can provide. Then look for opportunities to share that message. As you conscientiously do that, you will be led to individuals who will be touched to learn more.

Be what the Lord expects you to be

As I have spoken of missionary service, you may have thought, "That's not for me." I plead with you to prayerfully reconsider. All that I treasure most in life began to mature in the mission field. You can also earn such blessings.

If you have made bad choices, repent now. Remove any such barrier to your progress and happiness.

You are a precious young man or woman. Realize your full potential. Be the leader and example the Lord expects you to be. Young man, be a part of the greatest generation of missionaries. Worthy youth, prepare to receive the temple ordinances and to raise your eternal family. God loves you. I testify that as you seek His help, He will guide you to fulfill your worthy dreams, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Ye Disconsolate."

Elder Keith K. Hilbig offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 4, 2003, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 173rd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Missionary Training

Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Provo Missionary Training Center, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" The invocation will then be offered by Elder William R. Bradford, who received emeritus status this afternoon.

The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder William R. Bradford offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

This magnificent choir will now sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go." After the singing, Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker, after which we shall