

himself, “If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

Why such confusion? The prophetic model was to ask of God. Religious history suddenly repeated itself according to God’s scenario of how to answer mankind’s *whys*. Once again a vision came as an answer, this time a vision of the Father and the Son. Once again a divine testimony of the Father was given: “*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). Once again direct revelation answered Joseph Smith’s question: “Which of all the [churches] was right . . . and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong” (Joseph Smith—History 1:18–19). Once again apostasy was declared from the source of truth—by Jesus Christ Himself. And once again it had to be followed by a restoration, and indeed it was.

In the following years, by revelation, Joseph Smith received full divine doctrinal knowledge and the authority and keys of the priesthood. Finally in 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ, with all the doctrines of salvation and the ordinances thereof, was restored. Joseph Smith qualified to be called the prophet of the Restoration in modern times.

### **Book of Mormon answers ultimate *why*?**

As the Bible is the tangible evidence of divine revelation to the prophets of ancient

times, in the same way the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the modern convincing evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet who received revelation and authority as they did. A testimony of the veracity of the Book of Mormon helps people find answers to *why* the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through a prophet and *why* we have a living prophet today, namely Gordon B. Hinckley. It also answers the ultimate *why*: all the ordinances of the gospel provide the greatest blessing to prepare our salvation and to fulfill our mortal purpose to create eternal families. This message of the Restoration is true because it is divine.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Thank you, brethren, for your timely remarks.

The choir and congregation will now sing “Now Let Us Rejoice.” We shall then hear from Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, first counselor in the Primary general presidency. Following her remarks, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

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## Sister Sydney S. Reynolds

### **The Lord knows us and loves us**

Joseph Smith at age 14 had to be one of the least conspicuous human beings on the earth, and yet the God of heaven knew him and called him by name in the Sacred Grove. I believe the Lord knows my name and your name as well.

In Primary we teach the children that each is a child of God and that their Heavenly Father knows them and loves them. Primary and priesthood leaders model what the Savior would do when they call a child by his or her name. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep,

and am known of mine.”<sup>1</sup> The scriptures testify, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord not only knows who we are, He knows where we are, and He leads us to do good. One day a mother I know felt impressed to call her daughter. (This kind of thing happens to mothers all the time.) It was the middle of the day, and Mom was at work, which made the call out of the ordinary. To her surprise, her son-in-law answered the phone—he’s not usually home on a workday either. As he handed the phone to his wife, he said, “It’s your mother with her usual inspiration.”

They had just been to the doctor. She came on the phone, close to tears, and said, “The ultrasound shows the cord is double-wrapped around the baby’s neck. The doctor says we have no choice but to do a C-section and soon.” Then came the real cause for the distress: “And he says I can’t lift anything heavier than the new baby for four weeks!” She needed reassurance before going into the surgery that the Lord knew her need and loved her—and that there would be help in tending the three little ones at home, who were scarcely more than babies themselves. When mothers—and fathers—pray for the Lord to bless and strengthen their families, He often shows them the way.

### **Testimony in Portuguese touches a heart**

Sister Gayle Clegg of the Primary general presidency and her husband lived for a number of years in Brazil. Recently she had a Primary assignment in Japan. As she came into the chapel on Sunday, she noticed among the Japanese Saints a Brazilian family. “They just looked Brazilian,” she said. She only had a minute to greet them and found the mother and children very enthusiastic but noticed that the father was rather quiet. “I’ll have a chance to talk with them after the meeting,” she thought as she was quickly ushered to the stand.

She delivered her message in English, which was translated into Japanese, and then she felt impressed to bear her testimony in Portuguese as well. She hesitated, as there were no translators for Portuguese and 98 percent of the people would not understand what she said.

After the meeting the Brazilian father came up to her and said, “Sister, the customs are so different here, and I have been lonely. It is difficult to come to church and not understand anything. Sometimes I wonder if I would be better off just reading my scriptures at home. I told my wife, ‘I’ll give it one more chance,’ and I came today for what I thought would be the last time. When you bore your testimony in Portuguese, the Spirit touched my heart, and I knew that this was where I belonged. God knows I am here, and He will help me.” And he joined the others in putting away the chairs.

Was it a coincidence that the only Portuguese-speaking member of the Primary presidency was sent to Japan instead of to Portugal? Or was it because the Lord knew someone there needed what only she could give—and she had the courage to follow a prompting of the Spirit? One of the great blessings of having a calling in the Church is that the Lord, through His Spirit, will inspire us to help those we are called to serve.

### **John Orth pays tithing and is blessed**

Each of us who pays a full tithe can testify that the blessings of the Lord come to us personally and meet our individual needs. The Lord has promised that if we pay our tithing, He will open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing so great that we will scarcely have room enough to receive it.<sup>3</sup>

Many years ago John Orth worked in a foundry in Australia, and in a terrible accident, hot molten lead splashed onto his face and body. He was administered to, and some of the vision was restored

to his right eye, but he was completely blind in his left. Because he couldn't see well, he lost his job. He tried to get employment with his wife's family, but their business failed due to the Depression. He was forced to go door-to-door seeking odd jobs and handouts to pay for food and rent.

One year he did not pay any tithing and went to talk to the branch president. The branch president understood the situation but asked John to make it a matter of prayer and fasting so that he could find a way to pay his tithing. John and his wife, Alice, fasted and prayed and determined that the only thing of value they owned was her engagement ring—a beautiful ring bought in happier times. After much anguish, they took the ring to a pawnbroker, where they learned it was worth enough to pay their tithing and some outstanding bills. That Sunday, John went to the branch president and paid his tithing. As he left the office, he happened to meet the mission president, who noticed his damaged eyes.

Brother Orth's son, now serving as a bishop in Adelaide, later wrote: "We believe that [the mission president] was an eye doctor, for he was commonly called President Dr. Rees. He spoke to Dad and was able to examine him and offer suggestions to help his eyesight. Dad followed his advice, . . . and in due course sight was restored—15 percent sight to his left eye and 95 percent sight to his right eye—and with the help of glasses he could see again."<sup>4</sup> With his vision restored, John was never unemployed again; he redeemed the ring, which is now a family heirloom, and paid a full tithing for the rest of his life. The Lord knew John Orth, and He knew who could help him.

"President Dr. Rees" was my mother's father, and he probably never knew of the miracle that was wrought that day. Generations were blessed because a family decided they would pay their tithing regardless of the difficulty—and then met

a man who "happened by" and who "happened" to be an eye surgeon who was able to make a great difference in their lives. While some may be tempted to believe these are just coincidences, I have confidence that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground but He knows it.<sup>5</sup>

Our family didn't know this story until two years ago, but we know this about our grandfather: he loved the Lord and tried to serve Him all his life. And we know this about the Lord: He knows who we are and where we are, and He knows who needs our help.

### **Nothing can separate us from God's love**

I have seen you who know the Lord and love Him honestly tell a young person who was struggling to find the way, "God loves you. He wants you to be successful. His greatest desire is to bless you." I have heard you testify to a grieving friend, "I know there is a life after this one. I know your child still lives and that there is a way for you to see him and be with him again." I have watched many of you tell a discouraged young mother, "Let me help you—what you are doing is the most important work in the world." I have seen those you touch not only recognize your love but feel the Lord's love and power as His Spirit bears witness to them that what you have said is true.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, with Paul, that neither tribulation, nor life, nor death, nor any other circumstance shall have the power to separate us from His love.<sup>6</sup>

The Savior gave His life for each one of us. He knows our joys and our sorrows. He knows my name and your name. When we covenant with Him at baptism, we promise to keep His commandments, to always remember Him, and to take His name upon us. Ultimately, His is the name by which we want to be called, for "there shall be no other name given nor any other

way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”<sup>7</sup> I bear my witness that He lives and loves us and calls us by name to come unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. John 10:14.
2. John 10:3.
3. See Malachi 3:10.
4. Letter from J. Orth, Dec. 13, 2001.
5. See Matthew 10:29.
6. See Romans 8:35–39.
7. Mosiah 3:17.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Self-improvement programs

Recently I have noticed the large number of self-improvement programs that are available. There must be a tremendous demand for these products because one can scarcely turn on the television or radio without seeing or hearing promotions for products that promise everything from losing weight to growing a lush crop of thick hair. At times I wonder if the people who make these products know me personally.

Today I would like to offer my own self-improvement program. It consists of three steps that have been useful to me, and I am confident they will be helpful to you as well. What’s more, this self-improvement program is free. There’s no need for you to pull out your credit card. No toll-free number will flash on the screen warning that you have five minutes remaining to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime offer.

### Parable of the three choices

Perhaps the best way to teach these principles is by way of parable.

There was once a man named John who, although still relatively young, had experienced much suffering and sorrow. Homeless and addicted to alcohol and other drugs, John was terribly sick and weary of life. The more he descended into illness and despair, the more he knew that

if he didn’t make changes—and quickly—there was a very real possibility he would die miserable, useless, and alone.

Perhaps because he had attended Primary a few times when he was a boy, John ended up in a nearby meetinghouse where he asked to see the bishop.

“I have ruined my life,” John said between tortured sobs that emerged from the depths of his harrowed soul. He spoke of the mistakes he had made and the path of self-destruction and misery he had trod.

As the bishop listened to John’s sad story, he could tell that the man truly wanted to repent and change his life. But he could also sense that John had little confidence that he could change.

The bishop thought for a moment about what he could say. Finally, he looked up and said, “John, I have made three choices in my life that have been of value to me. They may be of assistance to you as well.”

“Please, tell me,” John pleaded. “I’ll do anything. I just want to start over. I want to go back.”

### Choose to begin repentance now

The bishop smiled and told him, “The first thing you should understand is that you can’t go back and begin where you once were. But all is not lost. You can begin where you are. Choose to begin your repentance now.”