

preparing for baptism, missionary and member efforts can be powerfully coordinated. I am confident that more new converts will find it easier to fulfill their desire to remain active, as members and missionaries work together using the principles in *Preach My Gospel*.

The First Presidency message in *Preach My Gospel* provides great motivation to missionaries. Perhaps it will encourage you in your own missionary efforts. It states:

“There is no more compelling work than this. . . . *Preach My Gospel* is intended to help you be a better-prepared, more spiritually mature missionary and a more persuasive teacher. . . . We challenge you to rise to a new sense of commitment to assist our Father in Heaven in His glorious work. . . . The Lord will reward and richly bless you as you humbly and prayerfully serve Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Can you catch the vision? You’ll be as excited as I am when in your personal life you begin to understand and use this missionary tool. Unlike prior full-time missionary resources, *Preach My Gospel* is available to any leader or member through Church distribution.

Probably the greatest benefit of *Preach My Gospel* will be seen in the lives of returned missionaries, who will be stronger parents, more able Church leaders, and better professionals because of the growth that comes from understanding and applying its inspired content.

On behalf of our missionaries worldwide, we express profound gratitude to all

who have participated in the preparation, printing, and distribution of *Preach My Gospel*. We are grateful for each mission president and missionary who is mastering its effective use. Ultimately we are grateful to the Lord for His inspiration. I encourage you to find out how this extraordinary resource can help in your missionary efforts, either as a parent preparing a child for a mission, a Church leader helping new converts, a member sharing the gospel, or an individual getting ready to serve. May the Savior bless and inspire you as you do so, for He lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. “Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 11, 2003, 19.
2. *Preach My Gospel* (2004), v.

#### President Monson

Thank you, Elders Wirthlin and Scott. The choir and congregation will now sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Harold G. Hillam and Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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## Elder Harold G. Hillam

### Influence of one man who left the Church

One of the talks that has had an everlasting impression on me is one given in a Saturday evening session of a stake conference years ago. The talk was given by a young mother. Here’s what she said:

“I have been doing the genealogy of my great-grandfather. He and his large family of sons and daughters were members of the Church.

“My great-grandfather,” she said, “left church one Sunday with his family, and they never returned—no indication why.”

She then said, "In my research, I have found that my great-grandfather has over 1,000 descendants."

And then she said, and this is the part I have not been able to forget, "Of those 1,000 descendants, I am the only one active in the Church today."

As she said these words, I found myself thinking, "Is it only 1,000, or could it be more?"

The answer is apparent. The spiritual influence that family might have had on their neighbors and friends did not happen. None of his sons or any of his daughters served as missionaries, and those they would have touched with their testimonies were not baptized, and those who were not baptized did not go on missions. Yes, there are probably many thousands who are not in the Church today, and not in this very meeting, because of that great-grandfather's decision.

As I heard her talk, I found myself thinking, "What a tragedy! Perhaps if I had been there at that time, I could have said something to the father, to the family, to the priesthood leaders that might have helped to prevent such a calamity to their family and to so many in the future generations that would follow."

Well, that opportunity of the past is lost. But we can now look to the present and to the future. I would say to those who find themselves in the same position as that great-grandfather: Would you consider what you might be doing to your family and to all those who come after you? Would you ponder the effects of your thoughts and your actions?

### Put the doctrine to the test

If there are any concerns about Church doctrine, consider the counsel given by President Gordon B. Hinckley to a large meeting of over 2,000 members in Paris, France, last year. He said: "I plead with you, my brothers and sisters, that if you

have any doubt concerning any doctrine of this Church, that you put it to the test. Try it. Live the principle. Get on your knees and pray about it, and God will bless you with a knowledge of the truth of this work."

### Do not let pride deny posterity blessings

If you feel you have been wronged, be ready to forgive. If there is, for some reason, an unpleasant memory, let it go. Where necessary, talk to your bishop; talk to your stake president.

To all, but especially to those who someday will be great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers, your eternal blessings and those of your posterity are far more important than any prideful reason which would deny you and so many others of such important blessings. In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin reminds us:

"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness" (Mosiah 2:41).

### Children can help steady the boat

To you who are children in the homes of future errant great-grandfathers, you can continue to stand faithful; you can be a good example in the home and to those around you. You can do your part to bring peace and harmony in the home and with your associates. You can be the solution, and not the cause, of problems. Remember in the Book of Mormon when Father Lehi began to murmur, it was his righteous son Nephi who gave encouragement and found solutions to problems. So many times it is the righteous children who are able to steady the boat while sailing in turbulent waters.

### The love of a stake president

To you who are bishops and stake presidents, how I wish you could have been part of the meeting I attended with a handful of regional representatives. We heard Elder L. Tom Perry as he compared those who are prospective elders and those who are not active—the future great-grandfathers—to a thermometer. We were reminded that many of those individuals are more than just warm. They would come back if someone would just encourage and show the way.

I would like to tell you of a stake conference I was assigned to attend. It was a reorganization; the stake president and his counselors would be released, and a new presidency would be called. The stake president was young and had served wonderfully for almost 10 years. He was a spiritual giant, but he was also an administrative giant. In my personal interview with him, he told me how he had delegated much of the responsibility for the stake functions to his counselors and to the high council and had thus freed himself to interview those who needed encouragement. Individuals and couples were invited to come to his office. There he got to know them, counseled with them, and invited them to do better, to put their lives in order, and to receive the blessings available to those who follow the Lord. He helped them by putting them in the care of a capable leader, a teacher who helped them to understand the beauties of the doctrine. Then he told me that

in these interviews he would often ask if they would like a blessing. “I have placed my hands on the heads of many members of the stake,” he said.

The next day in the general session of the stake conference, I doubt I have ever seen so many tears—not because they felt the president should not be released, but for the deep love of a young stake president who had blessed their lives. I felt prompted to ask, “How many of you have had the hands of the president on your heads?” I was amazed at the number of people who raised their hands. I thought to myself at the time, “How many of these people will bless the name of this great man, not only now but throughout the eternities?” Yes, these will be the great-grandfathers who will, because of this loving leader, leave a legacy of generations of thousands who will call him blessed.

### The worth of souls

When we see the effect one person can have on the lives of so many, it perhaps is no wonder that the Lord reminded us, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

I pray we all might consider what we can do individually to assist those who will be the future great-grandparents, whether a little child, a teenager, or an adult, so that each will leave a righteous legacy of those who know and love the Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Lynn G. Robbins

### Sacrifice is never convenient

In Charles Dickens’s timeless classic *A Christmas Carol*, Bob Cratchit hoped to spend Christmas Day with his family. “‘If quite convenient, Sir,’” he asked his employer, Mr. Scrooge.

“‘It’s not convenient,’ said Scrooge, ‘and it’s not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you’d think yourself ill used.’ . . .

“‘And yet,’ said Scrooge, ‘you don’t think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day’s wages for no work.’