

Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see Mosiah 4:12, 26). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell.

In February of 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet Joseph replied: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure *to keep* the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it

will yield the fruits of the kingdom” (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 41; italics added). Of all the truths the Prophet Joseph might have taught Brigham Young on that sacred occasion, he emphasized the importance of obtaining and keeping the Spirit of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. May each of us so live *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* and thereby qualify for the blessings of direction, instruction, and protection that are essential in these latter days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Elder David F. Evans

It has been a year since I was sustained in general conference. I am grateful for this year and for all that I have experienced. I love the Lord and am so very grateful for His sacrifice and for His gospel. I love President Hinckley and sustain him as the Lord’s prophet on the earth. Together with faithful Saints everywhere, I testify of prophets and apostles in our time and pledge my life to His cause.

Appreciation for missionaries

A few years ago, I was interviewing missionaries. A winter storm was blowing in as missionaries came and went throughout the day. The storm changed from icy rain to snow and back again. Some missionaries arrived by train from nearby cities and walked to the church through the storm. Others rode their bicycles. Almost without exception they were cheerful and happy. They were the Lord’s

missionaries. They had His Spirit and felt joy in His service regardless of their circumstances.

As each companionship concluded their interviews, I will never forget watching them go back out into the storm to preach the gospel and do what the Lord had called them to do. I could see their commitment and dedication. I could feel the love they had for the people and for the Lord. As I watched them leave, I felt an overwhelming love for them and for what they were doing.

Later that night I attended a priesthood meeting in the same city. The storm had continued and was now mostly snow. During the opening song, the branch president of the smallest and farthest branch and his two missionary counselors, Elder Warner and Elder Karpowitz, came into the chapel. As they got ready to sit down, these two wonderful missionaries took off their winter hats and gloves. They took off

their outer coats. Then they each took off a second winter coat and sat down. Like the missionaries earlier in the day, despite the weather these missionaries were happy. They felt the Spirit of the Lord in their lives. Through service in the Lord's cause, they felt a certain love and warmth and joy that are difficult to describe.

As I watched these great young missionaries that evening, I had a remarkable experience. In my mind's eye, I saw missionaries throughout the mission going out into that winter night. Some were knocking doors and facing rejection as they sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some were in homes or apartments teaching individuals and families. In spite of the conditions they faced, they were doing what they could to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who would listen, and they were happy. Into my heart came a feeling that I cannot fully explain.

By a wonderful gift of the Spirit, I felt His love, the pure love of Christ that He has for faithful missionaries everywhere, and it changed me forever. I understood how precious each missionary is to Him. I caught a glimpse of what prophets would describe as the "greatest generation of missionaries" the world has ever known (see M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47). I began to understand why it was necessary to raise the bar so that missionaries everywhere would be entitled to the protection, direction, and happiness that accompany the Spirit of the Lord. I also began to understand why—as parents, bishops, stake presidents, and other leaders—we must do everything we can to help the young people of the Church become worthy of the blessings of missionary service.

President Hinckley's mission experience

President Hinckley described what happens to the heart of every missionary who commits his or her life and work to

the Lord when he talked about his own missionary experiences. It was early in his mission, and he was discouraged. The work was hard, and the people were not receptive. However, there came a time when discouragement turned to commitment. For him, the beginning was a letter from his father in which he read: "Dear Gordon, I have your letter. . . . I have only one suggestion: Forget yourself and go to work." In describing what happened next, he said: "I got on my knees in that little bedroom . . . and made a pledge that I would try to give myself unto the Lord.

"The whole world changed. The fog lifted. The sun began to shine in my life. I had a new interest. I saw the beauty of this land. I saw the greatness of the people. . . . Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that decision made in that little house" (in Mike Cannon, "Missionary Theme Was Pervasive during Visit of President Hinckley," *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

President Hinckley continued by saying: "You want to be happy? Forget yourself and get lost in this great cause, and bend your efforts to helping people" (in *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

Invitation to missionary service

To every young man I would say, do you want to be happy? If so, come and join with us, 52,000 strong and counting, and serve your fellowman as a missionary for the Lord. Make the commitment to give two years of your life to the Lord. It will change everything. You will be happy. The fog will lift. You will come to love the culture and the people you are called to serve. The work will be difficult, but there will also be great satisfaction and joy as you serve. If you are faithful during your mission and thereafter, you will look back on your life and say with President Hinckley, "Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that

decision to serve a mission and give my life to the Lord.”

President Hinckley has reminded us that it is not only young elders who are entitled to these blessings. Couples serve wonderfully and are needed so very much. While young sisters are not obligated to serve, the President has said: “We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27). We also know that there are some who, for health or other reasons, are honorably excused from service. We love them and know that our Heavenly Father will provide compensating blessings in their lives as they serve in other ways and live faithfully.

A year ago, Elder Ballard asked that parents, bishops, and branch presidents work together and help at least one more young man, in addition to those who would normally be prepared to serve, become worthy and be called from each ward and branch of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 72; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 71). Many have responded. As leaders, we should all recommit ourselves to following this inspired request.

Elder Evans’s mission experience

Brothers and sisters, many good bishops have been doing for a long time what Elder Ballard asked. Thirty-six years ago, Bishop Matheson called my home and invited me to his office. Because of world

circumstances, the number of missionaries any ward could send was limited, but an additional space had become available, and he had the responsibility to recommend one more missionary. He told me he and his counselors had been praying. He told me that he was impressed that now was the time that the Lord wanted me to serve my mission. I was stunned. Never before had anyone said to me that the Lord had something He wanted me to do. I felt the Spirit of the Lord testify to me that I should go and that I should go now. I said to the bishop, “If the Lord wants me to serve, then I will go.”

For me, everything changed. The fog really did lift, and happiness and joy came into my life. In one way or another, every good thing that has happened to me since that day has come because of the commitment made to serve the Lord and His children and give two years of my life in His service.

I say again: Come and join with us. Come and be clean. Come and be happy. Come and experience the very thing that the Lord has said is of “most worth” (D&C 15:6) to you at this time in your life. Come and be part of the greatest generation of missionaries the world has ever known.

This is the work of the Lord. Our Father in Heaven lives, and His Son, Jesus Christ, leads and directs this work today. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Wolfgang H. Paul

Confusion about the meaning of freedom

Some time ago, as I was driving, I had to stop at a red light. The vehicle in front of me caught my attention. A sticker read, “I do what I want.”

I wondered why someone would choose to place such a statement on his

vehicle. What was the message he wanted to send? Perhaps the driver of this vehicle wanted to express publicly that he has achieved total freedom by just doing what he likes to do. As I thought about this, I realized that our world would be quite chaotic if everyone would just do what he or she wants to do.