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The choir sang “Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel.”

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### President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elders Jay E. Jensen and John B. Dickson

of the Seventy. Following their remarks, the choir and congregation will sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Elders Jeffrey R. Holland and David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve will then address us, after which the choir will sing “Search, Ponder, and Pray.”

## Elder Jay E. Jensen

### The influence of hymns

This magnificent choir gives inspiring sermons. In fact, “some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns.”<sup>1</sup> My testimony and conversion to the restored gospel were strongly influenced by singing the hymns of Zion as a young boy. I grew up in the small town of Mapleton, Utah, and attended meetings in what is known today as the “old white church.” My 95-year-old mother still lives in Mapleton. When I visit her, I drive past the old white church, and a flood of sweet memories fills my mind. Among them is the converting power of the hymns we sang in priesthood, Sunday School, and sacrament meetings. My experiences were similar to that of President Hinckley when, as a deacon, he attended a stake priesthood meeting with his father. They sang “Praise to the Man.”<sup>2</sup> Later he would say, “I had an impression that has never left that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”<sup>3</sup> I believe that many of our Saints experience this again and again. Hymns play an essential role in spirituality, revelation, and conversion.

### Hymns invite the Spirit

Hymns are “an essential part of our church meetings. [They] invite the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> They often do this quicker than anything else we may do. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, “We get nearer

to the Lord through music than perhaps through any other thing except prayer.”<sup>5</sup>

Two missionaries teaching an older couple in their home in Peru were interrupted by the arrival of the couple’s son, his wife, and three children. The elders explained who they were and what they were doing. The son was suspicious of the missionaries, resulting in an awkward moment. The junior companion prayed silently, “Heavenly Father, what do we do?” The impression came to sing. They sang “I Am a Child of God.”<sup>6</sup> The Spirit touched the hearts of this family of five. Instead of two converts, all seven became members, influenced initially by a hymn.

Music in Church meetings and classes should facilitate a spirit of worship, revelation, and testimony. For sacrament meetings, the bishopric or branch presidency is responsible to select or approve music. They ensure that the music, the words, and the musical instruments are sacred and dignified and will promote worship and revelation. Music becomes a performance when it brings attention to itself. Years ago, I was responsible for the music in a meeting where a special musical number was a performance. It was a disappointment. The spirit of worship was diminished.

### Hymns invite revelation

Hymns “create a feeling of reverence.”<sup>7</sup> The words *reverence* and *revelation*

are like twins who like each other's company. When the Seventy and Presiding Bishopric are invited to meetings with the First Presidency and the Twelve, we are reminded to arrive early and reverently listen to prelude music. Doing so invites revelation and prepares us for the meeting.

President Packer taught that a member who softly plays "prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom. If we will listen, they are teaching the gospel, for the hymns of the Restoration are, in fact, a course in doctrine!"<sup>8</sup>

### **Hymns invite conversion**

The hymns of the Restoration carry with them the spirit of conversion. They came as a result of sacrifice. Hymns like "Praise to the Man,"<sup>9</sup> "Come, Come, Ye Saints,"<sup>10</sup> "Ye Elders of Israel,"<sup>11</sup> "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,"<sup>12</sup> "Redeemer of Israel,"<sup>13</sup> and many others reinforce the great truths of the Restoration—such as the divinity of the Father and the Son, the plan of redemption, revelation, latter-day scriptures, the gathering of Israel, the holy priesthood, and ordinances and covenants. These nourishing hymns create an atmosphere that invites the Spirit, which leads us to conversion.

How incomplete and empty sacrament meetings would be without hymns of worship.<sup>14</sup> Sacred among all hymns are those that capture the sacrifice and the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ and His infinite Atonement.

My earliest memories of the healing power of the Savior are associated with sacrament hymns. This sentence is real to me: "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me."<sup>15</sup>

My understanding of the doctrines of the Atonement is connected to the hymns. This verse is illustrative:

How great, how glorious, how complete  
Redemption's grand design,  
Where justice, love, and mercy meet  
In harmony divine!<sup>16</sup>

### **Teaching children hymns begins at home**

Singing hymns and listening to appropriate music begin at home. The First Presidency has reminded us:

"Latter-day Saints should fill their homes with the sound of worthy music.

"... We hope the hymnbook will take a prominent place among the scriptures and other religious books in our homes. The hymns can bring families a spirit of beauty and peace and can inspire love and unity among family members.

"Teach your children to love the hymns. Sing them on the Sabbath, in [family] home evening, during scripture study, at prayer time. Sing as you work, as you play, and as you travel together. Sing hymns as lullabies to build faith and testimony in your young ones."<sup>17</sup>

### **Worship more meaningfully through hymns**

Important lessons I have learned and seek to apply about hymns are:

1. Strive to be more punctual to meetings, sit quietly and listen to the prelude music, and experience reverence and revelation.

2. Exit meetings more reverently, allowing the postlude music to extend the spirit of the meeting.

3. Sing the hymns. I see some who have access to hymnals but do not sing.

4. Choose hymns appropriate to the meeting and messages.

5. Use hymns to introduce or to emphasize scriptures and gospel truths in lessons and classes.

6. Listen to the hymns more frequently in our homes, inviting the Spirit to prevail.

I pray that we may eliminate any inappropriate music from our lives and follow the counsel of the First Presidency: “Brothers and sisters, let us use the hymns to invite the Spirit of the Lord into our congregations, our homes, and our personal lives. Let us memorize and ponder them, recite and sing them, and partake of their spiritual nourishment. Know that the song of the righteous is a prayer unto our Father in Heaven, ‘and it shall be answered with a blessing upon [your] heads.’”<sup>18</sup> Of these truths I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. *Hymns*, ix.
2. *Hymns*, no. 27.
3. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 399.

4. *Hymns*, ix.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, 111.
6. *Hymns*, no. 301.
7. *Hymns*, ix.
8. In Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 22.
9. *Hymns*, no. 27.
10. *Hymns*, no. 30.
11. *Hymns*, no. 319.
12. *Hymns*, no. 19.
13. *Hymns*, no. 6.
14. Just as hymns are essential to Sabbath and family worship, so are hymns and carols to Christmas (see *Hymns*, nos. 201–14).
15. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
16. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.
17. *Hymns*, x.
18. *Hymns*, x.

## Elder John B. Dickson

### Message to youth: Commit now

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I would like to address the youth of the Church this morning as Sister Dickson and I would counsel our own family.

We know that you are an exceptionally bright generation of youth that will soon take our place as leaders in the home, the workplace, the community, and the Church.

Your Heavenly Father loves each of you and has sent you to earth with a purpose. He has revealed a plan of happiness that, if followed, will ultimately bring you home to His presence, having triumphed over the trials and challenges of this world. Committing yourself now to live by the pattern the Lord has set will give you great strength in the proper use of your moral agency. The sincere commitments you make to yourself and to the Lord will be vital. We learn from the book of Psalms to “commit thy way unto the Lord; . . . and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

You have come into this world at a time that has been anticipated from the beginning—a time prior to the Second Coming of the Lord, in which, on one hand, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness and, on the other, there is great turmoil, confusion, and wickedness. The proving ground that you were born into is wonderful, affording great opportunities, but at the same time there is danger in abundance, even danger to one’s very soul. Now is the time to commit yourself to the Lord as to what you will become during this mortal probation. Along with your parents, living prophets, and the scriptures, the Holy Ghost will help you distinguish between right and wrong so correct decisions can be made.

Hopefully you will prayerfully study the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* and review and carry with you, in your wallet or purse, the abbreviated copy of the pamphlet. Great happiness will come to you in this life and eternally if you decide now to live after the pattern that is set forth in its pages.