

whom she is assigned to visit teach but also any sisters who are sick or otherwise in need of help. She visits often and for years has strengthened the faith of many. I reflect on a bishop who often visited the widows and widowers in his ward. This pattern of help continued for many years after his release.

I know a priesthood leader who takes time with a young man who has lost his father. He joins with him in activities, teaches him the gospel, and gives advice the way his father would. Another family rejoices in sharing the gospel. The parents and children each testify of the gospel to those around them and are loved by many.

As part of a Primary activity, my five-year-old granddaughter places a popcorn seed in a large glass bottle each time she does a good turn. She sings this Primary song in a loud voice as she looks for good things to do each day: “Follow the prophet, follow the prophet, follow the prophet; he knows the way.”<sup>4</sup>

I do not have time to tell you about all the good things I see Church members do. They follow the counsel of the prophet—not out of duty or responsibility but of their own free will, anonymously and joyfully.

## Elder Bruce A. Carlson

### An overloaded airplane

The story is told of two outdoor enthusiasts who hired a bush plane to fly them to a remote lake for their annual fishing trip. Following a successful outing, the pilot returned to retrieve them. However, he quickly informed the fishermen that his small plane would not support them, their equipment, and the added weight of the fish they had caught. A second flight would be required.

### Seek out those in need

Sometimes we feel that we are weak and lack the strength to rescue others, but the Lord reminds us, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

I close with a quote by President Thomas S. Monson: “My brothers and sisters, we are surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. We are the Lord’s hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us.”<sup>5</sup>

May we follow the counsel and example of the prophet and each day seek out those in need, that we might be the hands of the Lord in helping and saving His children, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See *Preach My Gospel* (2004), 1.
2. See Moroni 10:4–5.
3. See Matthew 11:28.
4. “Follow the Prophet,” *Children’s Songbook*, 111.
5. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Oct. 2009, 84; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 86.

Now, the sportsmen were not interested in paying for a second round-trip. So after a promise to pack tightly and a small bonus payment, the pilot reluctantly agreed to attempt the flight.

The fishermen grinned knowingly as the pilot forced the aircraft into the air. However, seconds later the plane stalled and crashed into a large, flat swampy area at the end of the lake.

The plane had stalled as it flew out of a well-known phenomenon called “ground

effect.” Ground effect creates added lift on an airplane when air is compressed between the aircraft’s wings and the earth’s surface—when they are in close proximity. In this case, as the bush plane inched its way upward out of ground effect, it was required to fly on its own lift and power, which it simply could not do.

Fortunately there were no serious injuries, and after regaining their senses, one of the fishermen asked the other, “What happened?” The second replied, “We crashed on takeoff—about a hundred yards from where we ended up last year!”

Like the two sportsmen, occasionally we believe that there must be an easier way, a shortcut or modification of the Lord’s commandments that will accommodate our individual circumstances. Thoughts such as these fail to acknowledge that strict obedience to God’s laws brings His blessings and failure to abide by His laws leads to foreseeable consequences.

At the time of his appointment as President of the Church, Harold B. Lee said: “The safety of the church lies in the members keeping the commandments. . . . As they keep the commandments, blessings will come.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Reasons behind the choice to disobey**

When we choose to disobey a commandment, it is usually because (1) we have convinced ourselves that the commandment does not apply to us; (2) we do not believe that it is important; or (3) we are certain that it is too difficult to obey.

#### *1. This commandment doesn’t apply to me*

During the closing years of King Solomon’s reign, the Lord informed him through His prophet, “I will . . . rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”<sup>2</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the prophet Ahijah identified that servant as Jeroboam, an “industrious” man whom Solomon had made “ruler over all the charge of the house of

Joseph.”<sup>3</sup> Jeroboam’s duties required him to travel from the mountains of Ephraim, where he lived, to the capital of Jerusalem. During one of those trips, Ahijah met him along the road. Through Ahijah, the Lord said, “I will . . . give ten tribes to thee.”<sup>4</sup> He also instructed Jeroboam, “If thou wilt . . . walk in my ways . . . to keep my statutes and my commandments, . . . I will be with thee . . . and will give Israel unto thee.”<sup>5</sup>

After hearing of Ahijah’s prophecy, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, so Jeroboam fled to Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Upon Solomon’s death, Jeroboam returned from exile to the northern part of Israel and began to lead the northern ten tribes.<sup>7</sup>

However, Jeroboam’s plan to rule the kingdom involved a mixture of good and evil. He established Shechem as the nation’s capital, a city of great religious significance to his people. But sadly he introduced satanic rituals into their worship.<sup>8</sup>

Jeroboam convinced himself that some of God’s commandments were not applicable to him. As a result of his actions, all of his descendants were slain, and because of the heathen practices he had introduced into their sacred ordinances, the ten tribes of Israel were eventually driven from their inheritance.<sup>9</sup>

Just as flying out of ground effect with more weight than an aircraft’s wings can sustain will lead to disastrous consequences, our partial or selective compliance with God’s laws will fail to bring the full blessings of obedience.

#### *2. This commandment is not important*

Decades later Naaman, a Syrian war hero, “a mighty man in valour,”<sup>10</sup> traveled from his native country to Israel and approached the king, Jehoram, to be healed of leprosy.<sup>11</sup>

Naaman was directed to the prophet Elisha. “And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, . . . and thou shalt be clean.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite this prophetic promise to be cured, Naaman was offended that Elisha did not greet him in person and even more insulted with the prophet's direction to wash seven times in the small and muddy Jordan River. His pride demanded something more noteworthy and grand, something matching his stature and place in the community and nation.

Fortunately for Naaman, his servants convinced him that regardless of what the prophet asked him to do, if obeyed, it would bring the Lord's blessings. Naaman washed himself in the Jordan River as directed and, as a result of his obedience, was cured of his leprosy.<sup>13</sup>

Obedience to the Lord's commands, in spite of how trivial or unimportant we believe them to be, will surely bring His promised blessings.

### *3. This commandment is just too hard*

Following the Lord's command, the prophet Lehi led his family into the wilderness. During the first few days of the journey, Lehi instructed his son Lemuel to be "firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!"<sup>14</sup>

However, when the prophetic requirement came to return to Jerusalem to retrieve the brass plates, containing a "record of the Jews,"<sup>15</sup> the two oldest boys rebelled, saying, "It is a hard thing."<sup>16</sup>

Despite his older brothers' murmuring, Nephi's faith in and obedience to the Lord's commands led to obtaining those brass plates. A nation was built, a language was preserved, and the gospel of Jesus Christ was taught for generations to come.

At times we may rationalize that the Lord will understand our disobedience because our special circumstances make adherence to His laws difficult, embarrassing, or even painful. However, faithful obedience, regardless of the apparent size of the task, will bring the Lord's guidance, assistance, and peace.

The Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Lord on two occasions, asking if a prominent friend, Martin Harris, could take the first 116 handwritten pages of translated material from the book of Lehi from Harmony, Pennsylvania, back to Palmyra. Each time, the Lord counseled Joseph to avoid entrusting the manuscript to Mr. Harris.

Martin was seeking to use the translated material as evidence to stop his associates from spreading rumors about his friendship with Joseph Smith. On the third request the Lord granted Joseph's appeal.<sup>17</sup>

Martin lost the manuscript, and as a result the plates were taken from the Prophet Joseph Smith for an extended period. This was a painful lesson for the Prophet Joseph, who said, "I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*"<sup>18</sup> This should and can be our rule as well.

### **The blessings of obedience**

The Lord's response when we obey His commandments is sure. He has promised us, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life."<sup>19</sup>

Additionally He has counseled us, "I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and *delight* to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end."<sup>20</sup>

Obedience to the Lord's commandments provides us confidence in our chosen path, qualifies us for His guidance and direction as we pursue our efforts, and offers us the potential to become like our Savior, Jesus Christ, and return to our Father's presence.

It is my prayer that each day will find us striving to be more obedient to the laws, ordinances, and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ in order that He may more fully bless our lives.

I testify that obedience to God's commands brings the blessings of heaven; that our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus

Christ, live; that the Book of Mormon is the word of God; and that President Thomas S. Monson is the Lord's prophet for our day, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Harold B. Lee, quoted in Stephen W. Gibson, "Presidency Meets the Press," *Church News*, July 15, 1972, 3.
2. 1 Kings 11:11.
3. 1 Kings 11:28.
4. 1 Kings 11:31.
5. 1 Kings 11:38.
6. See 1 Kings 11:40.
7. See 1 Kings 12:2–3, 20.

8. See 1 Kings 12:25–30.
9. See 1 Kings 14:10, 15–16.
10. 2 Kings 5:1.
11. See 2 Kings 5:5–6.
12. 2 Kings 5:10.
13. See 2 Kings 5:11–14.
14. 1 Nephi 2:10.
15. 1 Nephi 3:3.
16. 1 Nephi 3:5.
17. See *History of the Church*, 1:20–21; Doctrine and Covenants 3; 10.
18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 160.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 76:5; italics added.

## Elder David A. Bednar

### Early warning signals

Recently I was driving my car as drops of rain from a thunderstorm began to fall on the windshield. On the side of the road, an electronic sign displayed a timely warning: "Standing Water Ahead." The surface on which I was driving appeared to be quite safe. But this vital information enabled me to prepare for a potential hazard I had not expected and could not yet see. As I continued toward my destination, I slowed down and watched carefully for additional signs of danger.

Early warning signals are evident in many aspects of our lives. For example, a fever can be a first symptom of sickness or disease. Various financial and labor market indicators are used to forecast future trends in local and national economies. And depending upon the area of the world in which we live, we may receive flood, avalanche, hurricane, tsunami, tornado, or winter storm warnings.

We also are blessed by spiritual early warning signals as a source of protection and direction in our lives. Recall how Noah was alerted by God of things not yet seen, and he "prepared [the] ark to the saving of his house" (Hebrews 11:7).

Lehi was warned to leave Jerusalem and take his family into the wilderness because the people to whom he had declared repentance sought to kill him (see 1 Nephi 2:1–2).

The Savior Himself was spared through an angelic warning: "Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:13).

Consider the language of the Lord in the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom: "In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation" (D&C 89:4).

Spiritual warnings should lead to increasingly vigilant watching. You and I live in "a day of warning" (D&C 63:58). And because we have been and will be warned, we need to be, as the Apostle Paul admonished, "watching . . . with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:18).