

by distracting and destructive pursuits” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 96). Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, taught us a valuable lesson about distractions. He had a certain stone and through it recorded what he thought were revelations for the Church (see D&C 28). On Hiram’s being corrected, an account says the stone was taken and ground into powder so it would never again be a distraction.<sup>1</sup> I invite us to identify the time-wasting distractions in our lives that may need to be figuratively ground into dust. We will need to be wise in our judgment to ensure that the scales of time are correctly balanced to include the Lord, family, work, and wholesome recreational activities. As many have already discovered, there is an increase of happiness in life as we use our time to seek after those things which are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Time marches swiftly forward to the tick of the clock. Today would be a good day, while the clock of mortality ticks, to review what we are doing to prepare to meet God. I testify that there are great rewards for those who take time in mortality to prepare for immortality and eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTE

1. See Provo Utah Central Stake general minutes, Apr. 6, 1856, vol. 10 (1855–60), Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 273 (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized): “Father [Emer] Harris said the Apostle said we have to fight against principalities and powers in high places. Bro. Hiram Page dug out of the earth a black stone [and] put it in his pocket. When he got home, he looked at it. It contained a sentence on paper to benefit it. As soon as he wrote one sentence, another sentence came on the stone, until he wrote 16 pages. Bro. Joseph was told of the fact. One person asked Joseph if it is right. He said he did not know, but he prayed and got revelation that the stone was of the devil. Then it was broke to powder and the writings burnt. It was a work of the power of darkness. Amen.”

#### President Uchtdorf

The Primary choir and congregation will now join in singing “Praise to the Man.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Carl B. Cook and LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. of the Seventy will speak to us. Following their remarks, we will hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Praise to the Man.”

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## Elder Carl B. Cook

### “It is better to look up”

At the end of a particularly tiring day toward the end of my first week as a General Authority, my briefcase was overloaded and my mind was preoccupied with the question “How can I possibly do this?” I left the office of the Seventy and entered the elevator of the Church Administration Building. As the elevator descended, my

head was down and I stared blankly at the floor.

The door opened and someone entered, but I didn’t look up. As the door closed, I heard someone ask, “What are you looking at down there?” I recognized that voice—it was President Thomas S. Monson.

I quickly looked up and responded, “Oh, nothing.” (I’m sure that clever

response inspired confidence in my abilities!)

But he had seen my subdued countenance and my heavy briefcase. He smiled and lovingly suggested, while pointing heavenward, “It is better to look up!” As we traveled down one more level, he cheerfully explained that he was on his way to the temple. When he bid me farewell, his parting glance spoke again to my heart, “Now, remember, it is better to look up.”

As we parted, the words of a scripture came to mind: “Believe in God; believe that he is . . . ; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth.”<sup>1</sup> As I thought of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ’s power, my heart found the comfort I had sought in vain from the floor of that descending elevator.

Since then I have pondered this experience and the role of prophets. I was burdened and my head was down. As the prophet spoke, I looked to him. He redirected my focus to look up to God, where I could be healed and strengthened through Christ’s Atonement. That is what prophets do for us. They lead us to God.<sup>2</sup>

I testify that President Monson is not only a prophet, seer, and revelator; he is also a wonderful example of living the principle of looking up. Of all people, he could feel weighed down by his responsibilities. Instead, he exercises great faith and is filled with optimism, wisdom, and love for others. His attitude is one of “can do” and “will do.” He trusts the Lord and relies on Him for strength, and the Lord blesses him.

### Exercising faith

Experience has taught me that if we, like President Monson, exercise our faith and look to God for help, we will not be overwhelmed with the burdens of life. We will not feel incapable of doing what we are called to do or need to do. We will be

strengthened, and our lives will be filled with peace and joy.<sup>3</sup> We will come to realize that most of what we worry about is not of eternal significance—and if it is, the Lord will help us. But we must have the faith to look up and the courage to follow His direction.

Why is it a challenge to consistently look up in our lives? Perhaps we lack the faith that such a simple act can solve our problems. For example, when the children of Israel were bitten by poisonous serpents, Moses was commanded to raise up a brass serpent on a pole. The brass serpent represented Christ. Those who looked up at the serpent, as admonished by the prophet, were healed.<sup>4</sup> But many others failed to look up, and they perished.<sup>5</sup>

Alma agreed that the reason the Israelites did not look to the serpent was that they did not believe doing so would heal them. Alma’s words are relevant to us today:

“O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful . . . ?

“If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for [our] sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead.”<sup>6</sup>

### Remembering Christ

President Monson’s encouragement to look up is a metaphor for remembering Christ. As we remember Him and trust in His power, we receive strength through His Atonement. It is the means whereby we can be relieved of our anxieties, our burdens, and our suffering. It is the means whereby we can be forgiven and healed from the pain of our sins. It is the means

whereby we can receive the faith and strength to endure all things.<sup>7</sup>

Recently Sister Cook and I attended a women's conference in South Africa. After we listened to some inspiring messages on applying the Atonement in our lives, the stake Relief Society president invited everyone outside. We were each given a helium balloon. She explained that our balloon represented whatever burden, trial, or hardship was holding us back in our lives. On the count of three, we released our balloons, or our "burdens." As we looked up and watched our burdens float away, there was an audible "Ahhhh." That simple act of releasing our balloons provided a marvelous reminder of the indescribable joy that comes from looking up and thinking of Christ.

Unlike releasing a helium balloon, spiritually looking up is not a one-time experience. We learn from the sacrament prayer that we are to always remember Him and to keep His commandments, that we may have His Spirit to be with us every day to guide us.<sup>8</sup>

### Being led by the Lord

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, the Lord guided their journey each day as they looked to Him for direction. In Exodus we read, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light."<sup>9</sup> His leading was constant, and I give you my humble witness that the Lord can do the same for us.

So how will He lead us today? Through prophets, apostles, and priesthood leaders and through feelings that come after we pour out our hearts and souls to Heavenly Father in prayer. He leads us as we forsake the things of the world, repent, and change. He leads us as we keep His commandments and try to be more like Him. And He leads us through the Holy Ghost.<sup>10</sup>

In order to be guided in life's journey and have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, we must have a "hearing ear" and a "seeing eye," both directed upward.<sup>11</sup> We must act on the direction we receive. We must look up and step up. And as we do, I know we will cheer up, for God wants us to be happy.

We are Heavenly Father's children. He wants to be a part of our lives, to bless us, and to help us. He will heal our wounds, dry our tears, and help us along our path to return to His presence. As we look to Him, He will lead us.

The Lord is my light; then why should  
I fear?

By day and by night his presence is  
near. . . .

He is my joy and my song.

By day and by night

He leads . . . me along.<sup>12</sup>

I bear testimony that sins are forgiven and burdens are lightened as we look to Christ. "Let us remember him, . . . and not hang down our heads,"<sup>13</sup> for, as President Monson said, "It is better to look up."

I testify that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Mosiah 4:9.
2. See 2 Nephi 25:23, 26.
3. See Mosiah 24:15.
4. See Numbers 21:8–9.
5. See 1 Nephi 17:41.
6. Alma 33:21–22; see also verses 19–20.
7. See Alma 36:3, 17–21; 3 Nephi 9:13.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
9. Exodus 13:21.
10. See 2 Nephi 9:52; 31:13; Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
11. Proverbs 20:12.
12. "The Lord Is My Light," *Hymns*, no. 89.
13. 2 Nephi 10:20.