

Enjoy It

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Find a Way to Enjoy It

I have borrowed for my remarks this evening somewhat from one of my wife's talks given recently, and I hope that I can do justice to it. The story that I refer to begins when I was appointed to be the mission president in Brazil. As we presented this assignment to our children, our nine-year-old daughter was desolated with the thought that she would have to leave home and all her friends. We did our best to settle her down and brought out some pictures and showed examples of experiences we might have. It comforted her a little, and she then asked, "How long do you have to be a mission president?"

I said, "Well, it varies. Some presidents go for five years and some go for two years."

She said, "OK, let's go for two years."
It turned out to be five.

We got our family together and suggested that most families would look forward for twenty years or more and save all their money to have that kind of an experience. So, if we were going to have that privilege, we had better enjoy it now. Out of that attitude was born one of our principal family mottoes: "Enjoy it."

We had some problems trying to enjoy it. Early in our mission, some days were dismal—especially for my wife. A little child was born to us ten days after we arrived, and that meant

two little babies in diapers. The weather was rainy, the dryer didn't work, the clothesline wasn't of much use, the maid didn't speak English, and when I came into the home one day my wife was in quite a state.

I suppose I should have given her comfort, but I tried to show her some of the enjoyment we could have while we were there in Brazil. It didn't penetrate until I suggested that someday in the distant future we would return home, and that, when we did, we would remember that experience and that particular day. We would laugh heartily with our friends about the hardships we endured in Brazil. Wouldn't it be a shame, I suggested, to go through all that experience and have so much fun over it in the years ahead and not enjoy it now?" Sister Bangerter saw the point and caught the vision. Because of the motto we had developed, she immediately brightened up and began to enjoy all those otherwise difficult experiences.

That same attitude has helped us in many circumstances up to the present time. Recently we talked with a young mother who was having a problem managing her five children.

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She was expecting the sixth. We all know that the burdens can become difficult. Things were not smooth in her home. There was a tendency to shout and scream at the children and try to get them to follow orders. It was overwhelming. My wife and I stopped her recital of troubles and said, "Let's take a little perspective of your circumstance. Think back on what you wanted to be a few years ago. If you were thirty-five years of age right now and you weren't married, what would you rather be in all the world?" She said she would rather be married and have a family.

"So you happen to have the exact circumstances you most of all desire. Now analyze what your training and background has been. You were trained as a schoolteacher. If you were hired to take care of other people's children, you would work it out very well to manage five children. You have a knowledge of psychology and how to control difficult situations. Just put that to work. You will find that you have full capability to deal with all your problems."

So we are able in many difficult situations to find our way and overcome what would otherwise be discouragement.

Our Second Estate

It is vital for us to remember who we are and to keep our perspective. What I really want to talk about is the assignment we have as explained to us in the scriptures that makes us understand something of our nature and our purpose in the world.

And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. [Abraham 3:24–26]

We must remember that we are here to keep our second estate.

How then can we enjoy the experiences of the second estate? There is a richness in the various seasons and episodes that come to us in life. I am sure there are children who have had a miserable time getting through the period of their childhood, but not ordinarily, especially among the Latter-day Saints. We were blessed in our childhood. It says in 1 Nephi that "the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory" (1 Nephi 22:24). I think that—although this reference is probably more directly to the millenium—Latter-day Saints have the privilege of living under the protection that could be compared to calves growing up in a stall. There are exceptions of course, even here at Brigham Young University. Some of the calves have been way out in the sagebrush, if you understand what I mean. In the years that I attended here, I still remember my English professor as he struggled to understand papers we were submitting. He would occasionally take exception to the expressions we used and say, "That's sagebrush, brother; that's sagebrush!" If we tried to be a little too sophisticated in our writing, he would say, "That's jargon, brother; that's jargon!" So we had a refining process going on that probably still goes on for each of you.

Life Experiences

There is in each of the episodes of our lives a great and enjoyable experience. In looking backward I can relate to some of the

tremendous blessings and opportunities that have come to me. I wonder how many of you have looked at the life of David of the Old Testament and imagined the romance that attached to his existence. He was “born into the Church” of faithful parents, brought up, no doubt, in an understanding of the gospel. In his early years he was sent out on the frontier, so to speak, to have experience with animals on the range. There he met the elemental things of nature, struggled with the lion and the bear. He had opportunity for inward reflection and developed an artistic and poetic nature. He composed great verses and became, in his own right, a musician. On an occasion he visited the army and there met one of his greatest challenges. As he faced up to Goliath, blessed by the Spirit of the Lord, he suddenly became overnight a national hero. From then on his life was marked with special achievement. I suppose if he were to live today, he would have been outstanding in almost every endeavor you could imagine. He would have been an All-American or the winner of the World Series. If he had gone to war, he would have received the Congressional Medal of Honor. He would have probably been called as one of the Twelve Apostles, and so on. What an entrancing and inspiring experience David had! He stands as one of the great figures of history. I believe that each of us can relate in some degree to the experiences that David had.

I remember listening to LeGrand Richards. I think I’m one of the few men in the Church that understands one of the things he said. He used to talk about when he worked on a header. (Is there anybody here besides me who knows what a header is?) He could talk about his enjoyment out on the dry farm with the header, and I can relate to that. I think of the experiences of my youth when one of the greatest thrills was to see the old steam-powered threshing machine come chugging up the lane, pull into our yard, and set up for

business. I had the opportunity to work and live with horses and to gain a skill that has now lost its value. We remember our family and home life, going to school, going to college. These are all tremendous opportunities.

It is interesting to notice that many young people can hardly wait until they get these things over with. They want to leave home in the midst of one of the most precious experiences of life. They want to hurry up and get college over with so that they can go out and start to really live. I wonder why we don’t start living now.

Think of the privilege of receiving the priesthood and giving missionary service. Some missionaries can hardly wait to get their missions over with, and then they remember it for the rest of their lives and wonder why it passed so quickly. Shouldn’t they live it up?

Courtship and marriage, not the way it is often publicly portrayed, but in the sweetness and glory of refreshing and vital youth, is a time to have that special association that can be treasured forever, not to be hurried through so that we can begin to live happily ever after, but to be enjoyed now.

I remember when I was taken into the military. No one dreaded going into the army more than I did. I didn’t know what was ahead of me, but fortunately I found that I was involved in one of the most choice and rewarding experiences in my life. I never dreamed before I entered the army that I would have the privilege to fly airplanes. That was something only to be dreamed about. But suddenly the opportunity came, and I was involved in a most interesting, rewarding, and trying experience that I have been able to look back on with wonder.

Each of us has to choose our life’s work, to do something that will contribute to the good of the world. All people, as they select their courses, should be sure they are worthy of invoking God’s blessing upon their work. It has often been said that a good business trans-

action must be of benefit for both parties. That truth is often lost sight of as we try to take advantage because of a few dollars.

Add to those life experiences the privilege of having children and rearing them. Some parents think it is an endless task, but suddenly it comes and is gone. At my age you realize how fleeting those moments are. If you haven't taken time to appreciate and enjoy that association while it is there, you will have lost one of the choicest experiences in life.

And add to that Church service. Let it not be wasted. Let's not be in a hurry always to get somewhere. As we have taken trips with our children, the little ones get anxious after the first fifteen minutes, and say, "When are we going to get there?"

And we say, "Oh, it will be hours from now, or maybe days."

But they say, "But we want to be there now." They can't wait. Why don't we enjoy the journey?

Discouragement Should Not Dim Enjoyment

You cannot possibly enjoy the harvest until after you have labored in the field. Discouragements are a part of life, and it sometimes becomes the attitude of those in tribulation to look upon the discouragement as persecution. Again, going back to the army days, it is a God-given right for soldiers to complain. They have another word for it in the army, but every soldier is entitled to do it, and they do it with great effect. As I indicated, I had the privilege of getting into flight training and being in a very select activity. Even there it wasn't all rosy. There was an awful lot of pressure, sometimes some real danger. If we weren't in danger of having an accident or losing our lives, we were in what was a worse danger, that of being chastised by our instructor. They kept pressure on us almost night and day, pressures of the classroom, of hoping that we could pass our flight checks. That sometimes felt like trouble, and many of our companions, knowing that

they would rather be there than anywhere else in the world, still complained about almost everything that happened. It is a common attribute of humanity.

Instead of being discouraged under stress, why not appreciate the difficult moments and look forward to what they will lead to in the future? We then who have a knowledge of the purpose of life ought to let the gospel light up our lives. I refer to what we call the good news of the gospel, to the good tidings of great joy.

Joy in Scriptural Accounts

To begin, I'd like to talk a little about Adam and Eve. They certainly had a right to be discouraged. After they had transgressed, the Lord said, "Out with you. I'm through with you, you're going to die." He didn't explain anything about the hope they might have, but cursed them and told them to go out and earn their bread by the sweat of their faces. So they obeyed and struggled. As they labored through that process, it says in the scripture that they became parents and then grandparents. Quite a few years passed, and they still didn't know what hope was. They heard the voice of the Lord speaking in the direction of the Garden of Eden, and he commanded them to offer sacrifice. One day, it says, "After many days"—you can add that up to thirty or forty years—of hopelessness, Adam was offering a sacrifice, and the angel of the Lord appeared and said, "What are you doing?"

Adam answered, "I'm offering a sacrifice to the Lord."

"Why are you doing that?"

"I don't know. The Lord commanded me to."

Then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. [Moses 5:7–9]

What great news! What he and Eve, his wife, must have felt at that time! And they blessed God and were filled; they prophesied being filled with the Holy Ghost.

There are other episodes of a similar nature. Luke wrote:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. [Luke 2:8–11]

Now you may imagine what the greatest news could be that you could receive. You may be able to imagine the joy we felt when the Second World War ended. The rejoicing in the hearts of humanity was overwhelming. But the news of the birth of the Savior was so far above that event that it has no comparison.

Another:

And it came to pass, as [the women] were much perplexed thereabout [coming to the tomb of the Savior on the first day of the week], behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee. [Luke 24:4–6]

And further, in our day, Joseph Smith was in the grove. He said,

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him! [JS—1:16–17]

Three and one-half years later:

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. . . .

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants. [JS 1:30, 33–34]

What a feeling we ought to have as we take the Book of Mormon in our hands and realize that we have what was written on the gold plates and presented eventually to Joseph Smith the prophet!

What We Ought Not Do

There is more than enough in all these messages to fill our hearts with an overwhelming joy. So I have a few suggestions about what we ought not do. We ought not get lost if we are members of the Church of Jesus Christ. We are all, all of us, on a mission. John said, quoting the words of the Savior in his prayer to the Father:

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they [the Twelve Apostles] are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [John 17:14–16]

That same concept is literally true for each one of us, that we are not taken out of the world, but that we be not of the world.

How do we avoid getting lost? Well, the commandments give us the understanding. As it is said in Doctrine and Covenants 121, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45).

Reflecting back again to who we are: the Lord spoke to Abraham as he called him to depart from his country and go unto a strange land and he said these great and inspiring words,

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations. [Abraham 2:9]

Some members of the Church do forget who they are. The Lord isn’t happy about that. In the days of Malachi the Lord corrected the Israelites:

Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?

And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. [Malachi 3:13–15]

Have you ever thought about that as you go to church Sunday morning? It’s a beautiful day, and your neighbor is shining up his equipment so that he and his family can have a holiday. Other people go to Hawaii or Las Vegas or some special place to “live it up.” And we can’t because we have duties to fulfill and commandments to keep, and we sometimes bow our heads a little and say, “Well, Heavenly Father, we keep your commandments, but we want you to know that we don’t enjoy it very much, and it isn’t all that much fun. We hope you appreciate the sacrifice we are making.”

Isaiah recorded a similar incident:

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and exact all your labours.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? [Isaiah 58:3–5]

It is not pleasing to our Father in Heaven for us to complain about the commandments. When all is considered, the things that he has set forth for us in the great good news of the gospel will bring us riches. And so in order not

to get lost—and it is a struggle even for members of the Church—we keep virtue in our thoughts. We avoid what Peter called “the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Peter 2:7). He referred there to the experience of Lot when he lived in the wicked city of Sodom. He was vexed from day to day by the filthy conversation of the wicked. We have that all around us today. We are not immune from it, and we have to put ourselves on guard.

A few things will recall to you some of these filthy conversations. Turn on the television and watch *Dallas*. It is loaded; it displays dishonesty, doing damage to other people, adultery, and all manner of wickedness. Think about it, and see if that is the uplifting vision the Lord would like you to have all the time—to have people always seeing how much they can drink and talking about how they can arrange some immorality. It is all around us—the filthy conversation of the wicked. We need to protect ourselves to avoid it.

Service and Fulfillment

Back again to the call that sets us in a special position as the witnesses, as those who have been called to bear this priesthood and ministry to all nations. Service is what brings fulfillment. The joy of living this life is exactly as the Savior set it forth—not for self-fulfillment, but for service. In the movement for women’s lib and for so-called equality there is a constant pressure to get us to be free, and the cry often is, “Let’s have self-fulfillment!” Self-fulfillment isn’t a bad thing, but taken inappropriately it can mean not much else than selfishness. Service overcomes selfishness.

Calls come in the Church—to be called as a bishop, for example. You think of the honor and glory of standing up in front of all those people and having the position of command and direction. When you are called to be a bishop, you learn that the honor and glory last only about two weeks. Then you are in the harness and giving devoted service and an awful

lot of sacrifice. But that is where the joy is. The glory and honor aren’t important anymore, but the things are that have happened to help you to influence the lives of other people. And now you feel the swelling within you when, five, ten, or twenty years later, someone comes up to you and says, “You blessed my life.” It is the same thing that happens to you missionaries as you hear those who have listened to you say, “Our lives were changed by the things you taught us.” To think back over the associations I have had as a stake president and as a mission president is overwhelming. We now know that we have associated with some of the greatest people on the face of the earth. To have been given the privilege of going to distant countries, knowing other people, and finding the Spirit and power of God resting upon them as they receive the gospel is an incomparable blessing.

I was approached soon after I was called to be a bishop by a man in a stake presidency in Salt Lake City. He said, “I understand you have been called to be a bishop.” As I answered that I had, he didn’t say what most people saith when they come to compliment a new bishop. The usual conversation we had was, “I feel sorry for you. You now have the most thankless job you will ever have in the Church.” But this great man of understanding said, “I don’t feel sorry for you. I congratulate you. If you ever wanted to be in a position to be on the firing line to give service to the Lord and touch people’s lives, you now have that privilege. It is one of the greatest honors that will ever come to you.”

This is true of all the callings that we receive in the gospel. And another thing. Some people want to have a special dispensation. The young special interest or the young adults say, “The gospel doesn’t fit us. You are always preaching families, and we don’t have a family.” Well, the fact that you don’t have an immediate family doesn’t change things very much, does it? The gospel is still the same

gospel. A third of all the adults in this church are single, and all those who aren't single will one day be single if they live long enough. It isn't an unnatural state. It is only temporary. The gospel is still true. The idea is to give, not receive.

Whatever we do counts. What can I do to advance the cause of the gospel? There was great dedication in the spirit of this nation during the Second World War before most of you can remember. It was expected that every citizen would devote himself to something that would promote the war effort. I don't think this country has ever had such a unity as we enjoyed at that time. Everybody was working for the same goal.

We have that same opportunity here as members of the Church, and all that we do counts. Everything that I do in righteousness is helping to build up the Lord's kingdom.

One More Don't

One more don't. Don't forget to pray. I spoke with one of our returned missionaries a few years ago. After he had been home for six or eight months, he said, "Why don't I have the same spirit I had in the mission field?"

I responded, "I don't know. Let's talk about it. What are you doing now that is different from what you did in the mission field? Do you remember how you got out of bed every morning and had prayer?"

He said, "Maybe that's it. I haven't prayed since I left my mission." Of course that's it, and happily he caught on.

And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. [2 Nephi 32:8]

The evil spirit is real. It enters into the hearts of members of the Church, and when you are told you mustn't pray, you have to remember that the evil spirit is there. Saul, the king of Israel, was overcome by the evil spirit, and he was unable to pray. He was led down to his destruction. How vital is this principle of keeping our connection with our Father in Heaven!

Just a final reflection on prayer. When we get up in the morning and offer our prayer, sometimes in a rush, we are tempted to hurry. That is, in our haste to get on with our activities, we repeat much of the same thing we said yesterday, sometimes unthinkingly. If we pray in this manner, we may present to the Lord a "shopping list" of the things we want him to bless us with that day. Then we come home that night and, without having given much reflection to that morning prayer, we go through a similar process and present him with another "shopping list" that will carry us through the night. We need more reflection than that. We should perceive that many of the things we asked for early that morning have actually come to us during the day in a quiet, unobtrusive way. We need to have that awareness. Otherwise our prayers will not be acceptable unto the Lord.

I will give you an example. A year ago Sister Bangerter and I were out in our farmyard. The old Ford tractor was standing there, and she said, "You never taught me how to drive that tractor."

I said, "Get on."

She got on, and I showed her how to start it and showed her the clutch. She has driven everything from a Model A on up; so she knows what a clutch is. She pushed in the clutch and put it in gear and let out the clutch and started to go. It was heading for a rail fence. She pushed in the clutch to stop it, but it didn't stop. She said, "How do you stop this thing?"

I said, "Push the clutch, push it down further." Now she was confused and I was paralyzed, and here she was going right through the fence and couldn't stop it. It went through the rail fence and down over a bank and into a gully and came up against another bank and stopped all by itself. As I followed the trail of that tractor, I knew that I wouldn't have been able to drive it over that bank and through that gully without having it tip over on me, but she was spared. No harm had come. Then we thought of what we had asked for that morning, protection against problems, troubles, accidents, and dangers. We made sure we went to the Lord and thanked him right then for the blessing that had come.

I offer you my testimony of the knowledge that God has restored the truth to his people in the last days; that we represent those who have been called out of the world to help in bringing salvation to all mankind; and that we are on a mission of service and devotion that requires us to live differently from the way people live in the world. That ought to make us the happiest people alive. There couldn't be a more blessed situation than the one we have at the present time on the face of the earth. God bless you to appreciate and enjoy what you have, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.