

# Remember

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**I**n my current assignment as Historian and Recorder for the Church, I have the privilege of working with some incredibly bright people. The Church History Department is housed in the Church History Library, just east of the LDS Conference Center. In this building are located the archives that house a marvelous collection of documents, books, journals, correspondence, film, and other important artifacts. On the fourth floor is a state-of-the-art conservation laboratory where historical artifacts, documents, books, and even textiles are brought so they might be preserved or restored.

Let me share by video some of the work that goes on here: Emiline Twitchell is cleaning off old glue from a book spine that has become hard and inflexible. She is working on an early copy of a Welsh Pearl of Great Price. Katie Smith is removing damaging tape (a four-letter word in document conservation) from the first Relief Society Minute Book. She is also washing an early LDS Danish journal to restore it to its near original condition. Here she is sewing back together the original Mayfield, Utah, Relief Society Minute Book.

In older books the spine often breaks and needs replacing. Here Katie is preparing leather for a replacement spine for a book. This is called rebacking and involves adding new material under the original cover to compensate for the failing spine. Here you see she is working on a first-edition copy of the Book of Mormon that is undergoing this process of adding the leather to reinforce the spine. Finally, here is a finished book in which the spine has been reattached over the new material underneath. In this case the book is another Relief Society record from the nineteenth century.

Restoration work can be tedious and time consuming, but the results can be stunning. I am so pleased we have professionals who are dedicated to preserving our past by restoring these important elements of our history.

This is only part of the work of the Church History Department. Besides the library,

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where most of the precious documents, books, newspapers, and film are stored, the Church has the Church History Museum, where important artifacts are displayed and also stored. The Granite Mountain Records Vault acts as a storage facility for microfilm and digital records. We also have Church history advisors called who serve in their own countries around the world, collecting, preserving, and sharing Church history from their own lands. We work as well with the Missionary Department and other Church entities in the operation and preservation of the historic sites of the Church—from Palmyra, New York, to Martin’s Cove, Wyoming, and from Kirtland, Ohio, to the Mormon Battalion Visitors’ Center in San Diego, California.

In the past several years we have made a tremendous effort to provide Church history offerings online so the stories, documents, and journals might be shared with the entire Church without the necessity of coming to Church headquarters to view these treasures.

When the Church has so many priorities in its mission to bring the gospel to the world, some might ask why it is so important to preserve Church history. I would submit there are two fundamental reasons why we document our history.

First, it was commanded that “there shall be a record kept among you.” Through the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord revealed the importance of keeping a record in the opening lines of Doctrine and Covenants 21:1. This revelation was given the day the Church was organized, and diligent historians since that time have faithfully exercised their duty to keep the history of the Church. This duty was considered so important that early Church historians carefully packed the records into crates and loaded them in covered wagons for the westward trek. When there was scarce room for supplies necessary to build a new life in the wilderness, these crates of records were packed instead of flour or tools. These same

records are now housed in the archives of the Church History Library.

Second, our history is kept to help us remember. We gain strength from the stories of those who have gone before. We all must figuratively pull our own handcart through life. We learn from past generations how to be strong and what brings happiness and joy in our lives. We also learn that God’s children are not and never have been perfect and that He can accomplish His work through people just like you and me, even if we have obvious or hidden shortcomings.

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has said:

*Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. [“Lord, I Believe,” Ensign, May 2013]*

If you were fortunate enough to grow up in homes of faith, you were taught at an early age to pray, to study the scriptures, and to live the commandments. Your parents knew these admonitions were as important to your spiritual growth as other admonitions designed to keep you physically safe.

The prophets of God, just like parents, constantly exhorted the people of their time to remember. Nephi, speaking of his wicked brothers, said:

*I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things. [1 Nephi 15:25]*

And who does not recall the counsel of Alma to his son:

*O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. [Alma 37:35]*

Certainly such a plea reflects the desire of every righteous parent.

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Israelites were finally prepared to enter the promised land. As reported in Joshua, the Lord miraculously parted the waters of the river Jordan so they could pass into Israel on dry ground. Thereafter the people were commanded to take twelve stones and build a monument that could be prominently and perpetually seen. Why? It was so they would remember. In Joshua we read:

*That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?*

*Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.*  
[Joshua 4:6–7]

We too place monuments to help us remember. The miracle of the seagulls, the suffering of the handcart pioneers, and the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley are all examples of events and miracles remembered with monuments. Even on this campus monuments have been erected to help us remember the sacrifices of those who have gone before. But it is not just monuments we erect. As members of the restored Church we are encouraged to do certain things to help us remember:

- a. We keep journals.
- b. We attend the temple.
- c. We offer prayers of gratitude.
- d. We study our scriptures.
- e. We attend Sunday School, institute, and seminary classes to study the gospel.
- f. We partake of the sacrament.

Much of what we do as members of the Church helps form and strengthen our testi-

monies of the gospel. In addition, remembering spiritual experiences that touched our lives reinforces our faith. Learning of the spiritual strengths and sacrifices of others also helps us. Scriptural accounts, stories of ancestors and faithful pioneers, as well as the testimonies of faithful peers reinforce and strengthen our own testimonies of the gospel.

Today is a day of celebration that will always be a milestone in your lives. Some of you will begin your careers in your chosen field. Others will face board exams, bar exams, internships, or further graduate study. Wherever you are in your life's journey, this is a day you will remember. I am not confident you will remember any of my words, but while I have your attention, I would like to remind you of a few things.

Remember to be grateful. You have received a wonderful education that is one of the best in higher education, both in its quality and its affordability. Thank your parents, family, and friends who have encouraged you. Many of you have been assisted financially by your loved ones, and all of you have been supported emotionally by them. They deserve your sincere gratitude. Give them a hug and tell them thanks.

In the future remember Brigham Young University and the Church that supports and underwrites it. When you are able, give generously to BYU and support its activities. Stand on the shoulders of those who have donated to make this institution what it is. You may not be able to have a building named after you, but you can support a scholarship fund to help future generations who are privileged to attend this university.

Remember the importance of relationships in your lives. You have made friends in your time here. You probably feel that maintaining these friendships over time will be effortless. You are mistaken. As you now scatter into the world, your lives will become very busy with the demands of your family, your friends, your

profession, your community, and your Church service. You will lose track of one another unless you make an effort to stay in touch. Make that effort. You will find it incredibly rewarding. Fortunately, today's social media makes this a bit easier. Cherish these friendships and reach out. As the country song goes, "You can't make old friends" (Caitlyn Smith, Don Schlitz, and Ryan Hanna King, 2013). Keep them.

Remember your family. Your first priority is your immediate family or the family you will one day create. Nothing will bring you more happiness and joy than strong family relationships. Take care of your spouse, love your children, and give them your time. Reach out to extended family and nurture those relationships to help you and your children remember you are indeed part of a larger family unit.

The Snow tribe gathers each Fourth of July in the mountains of southern Utah. It is not a complicated family reunion. It is a one-day affair. We do the very same things each year. The menu even remains the same. For us it is an opportunity to spend time with those who have shaped our lives and made us who we are today. It is also a time for the next generation to make friends with cousins they do not otherwise see often. This time has become so popular with the new generation that some of the younger ones begin asking the afternoon of Christmas Day how long it is before the reunion.

Some of you have begun your own families. My wife, Phyllis, and I know what it is like to be married while in school. For six years we survived on macaroni and cheese, tuna fish, baloney, venison, and bottled peaches. We can recall when any purchase over three dollars demanded consultation. During many of my college years, every time I put on a Sunday suit I noticed baby slobber on the shoulder. Interestingly enough, we now look back on those times with great fondness. Living through them, however, is another thing

entirely. Make certain you remember to thank your spouse for helping you be here today. Hopefully he or she has been able to achieve their educational goals as well. If not, there will come a time when you should shoulder some of the burden to make it possible for that to occur.

While this day is a major milestone in your life, trust me, the journey is just beginning. You cannot even imagine the adventures that lie ahead. I would encourage you to record that journey. Some of the most inspiring history comes from the diaries and journals of everyday people like you and me. You need not be a prominent Church leader and copious journal keeper like Wilford Woodruff or George Q. Cannon, but your story is important. Contribute to our body of history by keeping your own story. Your journal might not be highlighted in some future Church history display, but I can assure you it will be treasured by your children and grandchildren for many generations to come.

President Spencer W. Kimball said:

*I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your families, to your children, your grandchildren, and others, on through the generations. ["Hold Fast to the Iron Rod," Ensign, November 1978]*

The truth of the matter is that if you don't write your story, it may not get written. Worse still, it might be told by someone else in a way you do not desire. The one who has the last word is the one who writes it down. Remember to keep a journal.

Remember to serve. Your family will keep you very busy, and Church service opportunities will come to you often in the future. Honor these callings and do your very best. Be a good parent, but as your time and circumstances permit, reach out to serve those in your neighborhood, your school district,

or your community. I would echo the words of Dr. Albert Schweitzer:

*I don't know what your destiny will be, . . . but I know one thing: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.* ["The Meaning of Ideals in Life," speech given at Silcoates School, Wakefield, England, 3 December 1935; translated from the French in "Visit of Dr. Albert Schweitzer," *The Silcoatian*, New Series, no. 25 (December 1935): 784–85, [myhome.spu.edu/sperisho/SchweitzerInTheSilcoatian.pdf](http://myhome.spu.edu/sperisho/SchweitzerInTheSilcoatian.pdf); see also [liberlocorumcommunium.blogspot.com/2010/10/schweitzer-on-service.html](http://liberlocorumcommunium.blogspot.com/2010/10/schweitzer-on-service.html)]

Finally, remember the importance of faith in your life. Living gospel principles as best as you are able will immeasurably bless your life and the lives of your family members. Study, pray together as a family, and faithfully attend your worship services. Some days this will seem difficult, and the temptation will be to skip Church just this once. Do not fall into that trap. Be faithful in your Church attendance and serve well in the callings that come your

way. Church service is not always convenient, but it will make you a better person, a better member of your family, and a better member of society. Don't let the demands of the world lead to compromises when it comes to your faith. Remember the spiritual experiences that have developed your testimony, live the gospel, teach your family gospel principles, and be a good example to them.

When it comes to faith, remembering is not enough. It is essential that you live so you are entitled to receive new spiritual experiences. Stay strong and stay close to the Spirit so you might be blessed with future spiritual experiences that will strengthen and enrich your faith. So when it comes to your faith, remember what you have learned and felt but also live worthily to renew your faith and testimony.

Remember to enjoy the journey. As President Gordon B. Hinckley once said, "Save your fork. The best is yet to come." I truly believe that, and I wish you a wonderful life as you leave here for the many wonderful adventures that lie ahead. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.