

# “Choose the Right”

JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN

Welcome back! All of a sudden, summer’s over, and it’s time to head back to school. The long, warm, delightful days are left behind as the invigorating brisk, fresh air of autumn begins. To all of you here in the Marriott Center at BYU and to all of you joining us via satellite in meetinghouses throughout North America and the Caribbean, I extend to each of you the abiding love and warmest greetings of the First Presidency and the Twelve. All of the General Authorities pray for your continued growth and success in life. Joining our faith with that of your local Church leaders, we pray that you will find happiness and joy through strict obedience to God’s loving commandments.

## **New School Year Brings New Experiences**

While September sees the calendar year growing old, this back-to-school time is, nevertheless, a season of new beginnings. Many of you are starting new chapters in your young lives. Look around you. You will see brand new freshmen still somewhat dazed as they leave high school behind and begin their adjustment to university life. You will also find the seasoned college graduate settling into new challenges of graduate school or other

professional training. Recently returned missionaries who are now resuming their studies or returning to the work force are here, along with future missionaries who are anxiously awaiting their call from the Lord’s prophet to serve a full-time mission. Some of the married couples who are here tonight are newlyweds who are just learning to share their lives together, and some are new parents who are just learning to share their lives with very demanding new arrivals.

## **Experience Develops Wise Use of Agency**

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ powerfully teaches that a loving Father in Heaven has placed us here upon this earth to learn from our experiences, both good and bad. The Lord spoke with tender reassurance to a tortured, disheartened Joseph Smith suffering in the cold, dark dungeon of Liberty Jail to remind him that “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good”

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(D&C 122:7). In order to maximize our education, our Father has given us the gift of agency to learn to use wisely during our sojourn on earth. The power to choose, to control our own destiny, was so important that a war in heaven was fought to preserve it. Our Father bore the grief of seeing one-third of his spirit children lost to Satan as casualties of the evil one's determination to destroy the plan of life and exaltation. Your choice to follow the Savior saved you from being cast out and brought you to this mortal probation.

Reflect for a moment upon how you have used the tremendous power of agency in your life thus far. Consider the choices you have made. You have chosen wisely to pursue an education or a vocation.

### **Blessings and Challenges of Education**

You will come to understand more profoundly than you possibly can today that education has eternal worth. It bears repeating that the Lord has revealed that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18).

President Brigham Young taught that education should "improve our minds and fit us for increased usefulness; to make us of greater service to the human family" (JD 14:83). "Education," he said, "is the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world's work, and the power to appreciate life" (quoted by George H. Brimhall in "The Brigham Young University," *Improvement Era*, vol. 23, no. 9 [July 1920], p. 831).

### **To Be Learned Is Good If We Harken unto the Counsels of God**

Your education should include courses in religion to teach you the importance of seeking knowledge in light of revealed truth. Hence, religion courses are required for graduation from Church schools. I hope that you who are enrolled at other centers of learning will take advantage of the institute of religion classes

that are offered in your area. These courses are open to all young adults, whether or not you are attending any specific school. The Church institute program is for everyone. Don't miss this great opportunity to expand your knowledge of the gospel, to deepen your faith, and to strengthen your testimony while enjoying the association of others who share your beliefs and support your chosen commitment to high standards.

### **Three Principles for Making Wise Choices**

To help you "graduate successfully" from the college of life, to help you "earn some honors" in the rigorous curriculum of adult mortality, to help you "choose the right when a choice is placed before you" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 239), may I suggest three simple guidelines. Though simple and familiar, these three principles are eternal and will serve you as well as they have served your ancestors and as they will yet serve your descendants.

First, Follow the Christ.

Second, Follow the Prophet.

Third, Follow the Spirit.

### **Follow the Christ**

The Savior lovingly beckons to everyone, to all of our Father's children everywhere throughout all time. His invitation to "Come, follow me" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 116; see also Matthew 4:19) is universally extended to all people across all eras of human history.

*He marked the path and led the way,*

*And ev'ry point defines*

*To light and life and endless day*

*Where God's full presence shines.*

[*"How Great the Wisdom and the Love,"*

*Hymns*, 1985, no. 195]

That which Christ declared in the meridian of time stands as unassailably true today as it was nearly 2000 years ago when he proclaimed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"

(John 14:6). In 2 Nephi, Jacob powerfully exhorts us to come unto Christ and to follow the Lord's straight course:

*O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name. [2 Nephi 9:41]*

Jacob's elder brother, Nephi, queried, "Can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments?" (2 Nephi 31:10). The resounding response is found in the Redeemer's own words: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "For the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21).

### **To Follow Christ, We Must Obey His Commandments**

My brothers and sisters, I am reminded of the compassionate words of Father Lehi when he declared, I "exhort [you] with all the feeling of a tender parent, that [you] would hearken to [my] words" (1 Nephi 8:37). With all my heart I echo the Savior's admonition that you choose to hear and heed the word of God. "Keep the commandments. In this there is safety and peace" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 303). In our world today the only protection from "all the fiery darts of the adversary" (D&C 3:8) is to choose to "Put on the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

And Satan is certainly wily. He is cunning—the master of deception and the father of all lies. Only by keeping *all* the commandments are you protected by "the whole armour of God" from Satan's incessant, insidious efforts to lead you carefully into his power. Peter taught us of

Satan's ferocious devotion to our destruction when he wrote to the Saints of his day:

*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. [1 Peter 5:8]*

And so we must keep all the commandments. You cannot approach the gospel as you would a buffet or smorgasbord, choosing here a little and there a little. You must sit down to the whole feast and live the Lord's loving commandments in their fullness.

You have been taught the commandments. You know what to do:

*Pray.  
Study the scriptures.  
Fast.  
Pay your tithes and offerings.  
Attend your meetings.  
Partake of the sacrament.  
Magnify your callings and serve others.  
Sustain your Church leaders.  
Do your home teaching and visiting teaching.  
Make and keep sacred covenants.  
Share the gospel.  
Be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, and virtuous.*

The righteous King Benjamin, who loved his people dearly, gathered his people together near the end of his righteous life to share with them the deepest feelings of his heart. After reviewing the basic beliefs and commandments of the gospel of Christ with his beloved people, he offered this simple but powerful exhortation near the conclusion of his great sermon: "And now, if you *believe* all these things see that ye *do* them" (Mosiah 4:10; emphasis added).

### **Stay Morally Clean**

As you strive to follow the Savior by keeping his commandments, please be aware of Satan's powerfully persuasive efforts to confound and frustrate the plan of happiness by

tempting you to misuse the sacred powers of procreation that our Father in Heaven has entrusted to you. Satan would have you believe that chastity and virtue are outmoded traditions of the distant past, that you can indulge yourself in immorality and not suffer the consequences. Such are the lies that he spreads by any and by all means possible. In contrast to Satan’s deception, ponder the following words from President Spencer W. Kimball, who spoke plainly on this subject:

*That the Church’s stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably, it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and his covenants and doctrines are immutable; and when the sun grows cold and the stars no longer shine, the law of chastity will still be basic in God’s world and in the Lord’s church. Old values are upheld by the Church not because they are old, but rather because through the ages they have proved right. It will always be the rule.* [“President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality,” *Ensign*, November 1980, p. 96; emphasis added]

### **Be Lifelong Missionaries**

May I take a moment here to speak to those who have completed full-time missions. Like no other experience, a mission prepares you for a lifetime of faithful service in preaching the gospel. You have learned eternal truths and strengthened your testimony as you vigorously proclaimed the message of the Restoration. You have learned to serve and sacrifice, to be exacting in your obedience to the commandments, to set and achieve challenging goals. Do not allow Satan to lull you into an apathetic stupor with such superficial returned-missionary rationalizations as “I’ve served my time; it’s time to relax.” If such thoughts have crossed your mind or similar words have escaped your lips, please take a moment to ponder these words from 2 Nephi:

*And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. [2 Nephi 28:21]*

Don’t let an apathetic attitude rob you of the progress you’ve worked so hard to achieve. Choose, instead, to remain stalwart and true. Choose to follow the Savior.

Continue to be missionaries. May I suggest that you set a lifelong goal to bring at least one individual or family into the Church every year. Live lives that will attract people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Seek to emulate the works of our Great Exemplar. The Lord could not have been more direct in seeking our allegiance than when he taught the Nephites during his ministry in the Americas. He asked, “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?” Then came this response of awesome magnitude: “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27).

### **Don’t Delay Marriage**

And to you returned missionary elders, let me remind you of your responsibility to seek and find a worthy eternal companion. This is a sacred obligation. Marriage is nothing to rush into, but neither is it to be overly delayed or unduly postponed. After you complete your mission, you are charged with the responsibility to diligently prepare for temple marriage and for the duties of serving as a husband and father.

From the beginning of time on this earth, eternal marriage between a man and a woman has been fundamental to God’s plan for the happiness and joy of us who are his children. In the early years of the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that marriage began in the Garden of Eden. In the *History of the Church*, we read the Prophet’s own account of his teachings

regarding the marriage of our first parents that he proclaimed while solemnizing the marriage of Newel Knight and Lydia Goldthwaite:

*I requested them to rise, and join hands. I then remarked that marriage was an institution of heaven, instituted in the garden of Eden; that it was necessary it should be solemnized by the authority of the everlasting Priesthood. . . . I then pronounced them husband and wife in the name of God, and also pronounced upon them the blessings that the Lord conferred upon Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. [HC 2:320]*

We cannot “follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments” (2 Nephi 31:10). For you returned missionary elders, entering into the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage is a step forward in your lives in obedience to a divine commandment that should not be unwisely postponed.

No more powerful invitation to follow the Savior can be found in scripture than Moroni’s valedictory admonition to “come unto Christ” found in Moroni 10:32: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness.”

Follow the Christ to a rich, full, abundant life of peace and joy. When we are from time to time “heavy laden,” his promise of soul-refreshing rest is sure (see Matthew 11:28–29). Follow the Christ to life eternal to dwell forever with him and with our Father who is in heaven.

In a powerful message entitled “He Invites Us to Follow Him,” published in this month’s *Ensign*, President Howard W. Hunter explains what it means to follow the Savior:

*Christ’s supreme sacrifice can find full fruition in our lives only as we accept the invitation to follow him. . . . To follow an individual means to watch him or listen to him closely; to accept his authority, to take him as a leader, and to obey him; to support and advocate his ideas; and to take him as a model. . . . Just as*

*teachings that do not conform to Christ’s doctrine are false, so a life that does not conform to Christ’s example is misdirected, and may not achieve its high potential destiny. [Ensign, September 1994, p. 2]*

I commend President Hunter’s complete message for your prayerful study. I exhort home teachers to ponder it and to present it to your assigned families with all diligence. This is the word of God that the Lord’s prophet wants the entire Church to hear and heed today.

### **Follow the Prophet**

The Savior has declared that whether we receive the word of God “by [his] own voice or by the voice of [his] servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38). If we are to follow Christ, we must follow the prophet, the Lord’s mouthpiece on earth. As you know, this past summer saw the passing of President Ezra Taft Benson, a great and stalwart man of God whom we dearly miss. The Lord has prepared and chosen President Howard W. Hunter as the “prophet to guide us in these latter days” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 19). May I share a personal experience that taught me a great deal about the Christlike man who now leads the Lord’s Church?

### **Elder Hunter Journeys to Hammerfest**

While I was serving as president of the European area, Sister Wirthlin and I traveled throughout Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway holding meetings and conferences with members and missionaries in these northern lands. As we neared the end of our rigorous travels, we arrived, along with President and Sister John Langeland, in the small city of Alta, Norway. We held a meeting with the members and afterward climbed a beautiful mountain and at midnight enjoyed a picnic with them. It was as light as noon-day. At that time of the year there was no sunset in Alta, which is located near the top of the world, lying well inside the Arctic Circle. We watched



the sun hover in a straight line as it moved across the horizon, and we marveled at the precision and exactness that the Savior employed in creating the earth in all its majesty.

As President Langeland and I reviewed our many meetings and travels, we were happy that we had made the extra effort to meet with the members in such a remote part of Norway. Over the years there had been few General Authorities who had visited these small and widely scattered branches. But, while chatting with the local Church leaders, we learned that there was yet one more small branch even further north. We learned that in the city of Hammerfest, which is located on the other side of a high mountain north of Alta, a branch of the Church had been established, a small branch that was not on our itinerary. Hammerfest is one of the world's northernmost cities, making its tiny branch one of the most remote units of the Church. To our surprise, we learned that several years earlier, Elder Howard W. Hunter had been the first General Authority to visit the Hammerfest Branch, a visit that was accomplished with considerable difficulty. The story of that visit is worth telling because it says so much about the man who the Lord has now chosen as his prophet, seer, and revelator:

*“Hammerfest is difficult to reach by normal transportation. It was originally planned that the visitors would fly . . . by seaplane. A change in the weather eliminated any possibility of using a plane, as is often the case. It was decided that they should travel by car from Alta, the closest city to Hammerfest with a commercial airport. Snow had started to cover the roads. Several times en route Elder Hunter and Pres. [Leo M.] Jacobsen had to push their car through the snow. When it seemed as if further progress was impossible, a truck came by and towed the car over the summit to Hammerfest.”*

*They finally arrived at ten-thirty that night for a meeting that was to have started at seven o'clock,*

*and found that most of the members had waited. ‘They had come from a number of places along the north cape and from as far as Kirkenes near the Russian border.’ [Eleanor Knowles, Howard W. Hunter (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), pp. 175–76]*

The members in Hammerfest, anxious to meet an apostle of the Lord and to hear the voice of one called as a special witness, waited three and a half hours for Elder Hunter's delayed arrival. Their faith, hope, and prayers were rewarded as he shared with them his powerful testimony of the Savior. Despite great hardship, Elder Hunter, with God's blessings and protecting care, kept his commitment to minister to the Lord's sheep in that faraway small branch.

*As a result of [his] visit, “missionaries report[ed] a more friendly attitude among the people of the town and a new feeling of strength among the local members.” [Knowles, Hunter, p. 176]*

While impressive and moving, this is not an extraordinary event in the life of him who now serves as the Lord's mouthpiece on earth. Rather, it is quite typical of President Hunter's wholehearted devotion to the work of the Lord. He has traveled in nearly every corner of the earth. He possesses an indomitable zeal for preaching and proclaiming the gospel. He is ever undaunted in his determination to encourage the members of the Church to be faithful in obeying God's commandments.

We all remember President Hunter's experience at this podium as Cody Judy rushed him and threatened him with a bomb. President Hunter would not flinch or read the message demanded by his attacker. The students began to sing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” A doctor came up and took President Hunter's pulse following this frightening incident. His pulse read seventy, which is normal. This is another good example of a man with a purpose

who was not distracted from his sacred calling regardless of danger. He resumed his speech by saying, "Life has a fair number of challenges in it." He stopped, looked over the audience, and added, "As demonstrated."

### **Follow the Prophet by Showing Compassion**

President Hunter has asked us all to "live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed." President Hunter wants us to "treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness" (in Jay M. Todd, "President Howard W. Hunter," *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 4). In short, he is asking us to develop and demonstrate Christlike attributes in all our dealings with others. He is reminding us that we have been commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves (see Matthew 22:39). To show compassion, we must possess charity, "the pure love of Christ" that the Father bestows "upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ" (Moroni 7:47-48).

Recently the Church has rushed humanitarian aid to flood victims in Georgia and to refugees fleeing the carnage and tragedy of Rwanda. We are, as a Church, working to heed our prophet's counsel to show Christlike compassion toward our neighbors in all parts of the earth. But what are you doing individually to follow the prophet's call to provide compassionate service to your fellow beings?

John Walsh is known to most of you as the latest in a long line of outstanding BYU quarterbacks. John had an impressive sophomore season in 1993, and we are all hoping for his continued success this year. He is an outstanding football player and a fine young man. More important, however, I want to congratulate John for his patient and caring labors with Ryan, Amanda, and Varun. Some of you may not know that John Walsh is majoring in special education. Ryan Wright, Amanda Leners,

and Varun McDonald were in John's class last year during a student teaching assignment at Westridge Elementary. These children were the beneficiaries of John's determination to do great things off the football field as well as playing football. When asked about his work with these second graders, John responded, "Working with these kids gives me the opportunity to give something back to the community, and it is important to me that I do that" (*Daily Universe*, 13 April 1994, p. 13). I hope that all of you will likewise choose to follow the prophet and find meaningful ways to give of yourselves to show compassion toward others.

### **Follow the Prophet to the Temple**

President Hunter has also asked us "to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of [our] membership and the supernal setting for [our] most sacred covenants," and he encourages us to draw closer to the Savior in his holy house as "a temple-attending and a temple-loving people." "Let us hasten to the temple," he says, "as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow" (Todd, "President Hunter," p. 5). I hope that those of you who are of age and are eligible to do so will take the time to attend the temple regularly. Even if a temple is not close by, work to become and remain temple worthy. President Hunter has said that it is the "deepest desire of [his] heart to have every member of the Church temple worthy."

### **Read, Hear, and Heed the Word of God as Given by His Prophets**

Just as you must seek a healthy balance in your temple attendance, you must "see that all . . . things are done in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27) in regard to your gospel study and especially in regard to hearing and heeding the counsel of our prophet and of the others whom the Lord has called to lead his Church. I hope that you will not grow so busy

in your studies that you thoughtlessly fail to “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3). These firesides are recorded and sent out on video tape so many young adults throughout the world can be taught by the Brethren. Participate in whatever additional programs your local institute may sponsor to bring you desired messages.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking in April’s general conference, said:

*The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, called and ordained to hold the keys of the priesthood, have the authority and responsibility to govern the Church, to administer its ordinances, to expound its doctrine, and to establish and maintain its practices. . . . All incumbent members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and of the Council of the Twelve have been the recipients of the keys, rights, and authority pertaining to the holy apostleship. [“God Is at the Helm,” Ensign, May 1994, p. 54]*

### **Don’t Miss Devotionals**

For you who are students here at BYU, you should attend the weekly 11:00 a.m. Tuesday devotional hour and set aside the temporary cares of the world to devote your full attention to the things of eternity. The lasting values and the permanent things that will never go out-of-date or fall out of fashion are taught and discussed and presented for your consideration and edification.

What you learn in the weekly devotionals will surely stand the test of time. Why would you trade away the unequalled opportunity that these assemblies provide to hear Church leaders teach eternal truths? The blessing of attending these assemblies is one of the principle distinguishing elements of the unique learning environment available only on these few campuses. You who do not take advantage of the gospel-based learning environment found at these institutions are wasting the precious resources that are expended to ensure

your knowledge of the gospel. Failure to take full advantage of these unique learning opportunities significantly diminishes the spiritual element of your overall education. And for those of you who are not at BYU, you should know that many of the devotionals offered here are sent out on videotapes to institutes of religion throughout the world. These tapes are then replayed at Friday Forums so that young adults throughout the Church can have the opportunity to be taught by General Authorities. In addition, regular devotional assemblies are held at Ricks College, BYU—Hawaii, and LDS institutes at many colleges and universities.

### **Follow the Spirit**

All who teach in the Church should teach by the power of the Spirit. We have been instructed that “if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). The prophet Nephi testified that the Holy Ghost “will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). Follow the Spirit. Heed its quiet promptings. Learning to follow the Spirit requires considerable effort and ongoing attention. Let me tell you of how I was reminded to always be alert to the quiet whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

### **Sharing the Gospel on Molokai**

Recently while on Church assignment in Hawaii, Sister Wirthlin and I visited the island of Molokai. One of the world’s few remaining leper colonies is found there. We drove into the mountains to a trail that leads to an overlook where the colony can be seen in the distance below. After laboring up the trail, we were disappointed to discover that rain and fog obscured the valley beneath us, and we could not see the colony. As we walked back to our car, we came upon a young man headed toward the overlook. I offered a polite greeting. From his answer, I could tell that he was from Germany.



I served a German-speaking mission in Austria and Switzerland in my youth. Here was a young man whose countenance bespoke a sincere heart and an approachable personality. And I spoke his language and understood his culture. The Spirit prompted me to open my mouth and introduce the gospel to him. However, due to other people being around us, our brief encounter was interrupted, and we went our separate ways without my having said a word about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I failed to be the missionary that every member of the Savior's Church ought to be.

As we drove away, I had the disturbing feeling that I had failed in my duty to proclaim the gospel. I remembered the Lord's words in section 60 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

*But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them. [D&C 60:2]*

I was then troubled and ill at ease while we drove around the island to see Molokai's beautiful waterfalls. After many miles, the road came to a dead end. We got out of our car to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. We had been there only a few moments when another car drove up and stopped. The young man we had seen on the overlook trail got out of his car, smiled, and gave me a warm handshake. As I grasped his outstretched hand, I thought to myself, "This time I will do my duty!"

In a few brief moments we introduced ourselves. I learned that he was a university student in a small city south of Dusseldorf, Germany. We spoke of my experiences in his country, of my fond memories of Germany, and of my admiration for the German people. Speaking of my work in Europe gave me an ideal opportunity to explain some of the basics of the gospel. As we parted, I asked for his

address and telephone number, which he gladly shared with me. I felt that he was truly a newly found friend and an interested investigator.

Upon my return to Church headquarters, I promptly wrote to President John F. Charles of the Germany Dusseldorf Mission. I explained how Sister Wirthlin and I had met this outstanding young man and gave him his address. I asked President Charles to immediately send missionaries to continue the gospel discussion that I had begun on a dead-end road on Molokai.

I don't believe that it was happenstance that my wife and I met this young man twice. Our meetings were not chance encounters or mere coincidence. But the Lord doesn't always give us a second chance to share the gospel. I failed to follow the Spirit the first time that the still small voice unmistakably spoke to my heart and mind to prod me to action. I didn't do what I was being directed to do. When I saw that young man get out of his car that second time, I was relieved and said to Sister Wirthlin that I had been given a second chance. I quickly made up my mind that I would not fail a second time and that I would open my mouth as the Lord so emphatically commands in revelations that apply to all of us. In section 33 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord commands us three times in three verses to "open [our] mouths." In verses 8,9, and 10 of section 33, we read:

*Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old. . . .*

*Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.*

*Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. [Emphasis added]*

In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reveals that one of the

principal purposes of the Restoration is to proclaim the gospel—to bring truth and priesthood authority back to the earth so that missionary work can be organized and carried out as a mighty effort upon the earth in the last days. In verse 23 of section 1, the Lord explains that one of the reasons why he called Joseph Smith to his prophetic work was “that the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.”

Each one of us has the sacred responsibility to proclaim the gospel. The Savior’s commandment applies to all members of the Church, not just to full-time missionaries or to returned missionaries. Whether or not we are serving or have served a full-time mission, we have the responsibility to follow the Spirit when it prompts us to share the gospel so that others can come to follow the Savior.

**Move! When Moved upon by the Spirit**

We must act when the Spirit speaks! When I hearkened to the Spirit, the young man responded positively to my message. But it wasn’t really my message. It was God’s message, brought to my mind by the Spirit of the Lord. I was but an instrument in the Lord’s hands, led by his Spirit to open my mouth and proclaim the message of the Restoration. In opening my mouth, I became, as the Lord promises in section 33 of the Doctrine and Covenants, “even as Nephi of old” (D&C 33:8). Father Lehi gives this explanation of why his son was so adamant in proclaiming the gospel:

*But behold, it was not [Nephi], but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.*  
[2 Nephi 1:27]

I would emphasize that the Spirit will always guide and direct aright. It will protect you from temptation, enlighten your mind, and comfort your heart. In verse 12 of section

11 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord directs, “Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.” He then goes on to promise in verses 13 and 14:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy;*

*And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive.*

The Holy Ghost will keep you ever vigilant, always remembering that Satan desires to have you, to “sift you as chaff before the wind” (Alma 37: 15). Listen to the still small voice and “suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing” (Alma 39:11). Avoid Satan’s siren song, his alluring attractions to get you to spend your labor and money “for that which cannot satisfy” (2 Nephi 9:51; see also Isaiah 55:2). Follow the Spirit to focus your energies on that which matters most and to avoid wasting your life laying “up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt” (Matthew 6:19 and 3 Nephi 13:19). Do not trade away your eternal spiritual birthright for a mess of materialistic pottage.

**Conclusion**

Eight years ago, when I spoke in the October 1986 general conference, where I was called to serve and was sustained as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, I shared some fundamental feelings of my heart that the Spirit brought to my mind. On that occasion, greatly humbled by the sacred trust that the Lord and his prophet President Ezra Taft Benson had placed upon me, I shared these thoughts:

*This truth, like a towering mountain, stands out. Our religion is really the only thing we will have left ultimately, and we must love it dearly. . . .*

*. . . The gospel of Jesus Christ is more enduring than fame, more precious than riches, more to be desired than happiness. Understanding and living the gospel leads to the possession of a Christlike character. The aim of each of us is to live a great and exemplary life. A noble character is needed especially in this age when evil is rampant. . . .*

*Our Heavenly Father has endowed us with hearts of courage and faith, with strong wills, and with the ability to understand and to see clearly the difference between right and wrong. He has mercifully clothed us, each member, with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives us insight and personal power. . . .*

*. . . The light that emanates from our Savior beckons us on, undismayed. A righteous self-discipline can and will rule our lives. ["Pulling in the Gospel Net," *Ensign*, November 1986, pp. 60–61]*

### **Personal Testimony**

The truths of the gospel do not change. The words I spoke eight years ago ring just as true today as then. As one who has been called as a special witness of the Lord, I leave you my love and blessing. If you will follow the Christ, follow his prophet, and follow his Spirit—you will always choose the right. And as a result of your wise choices, your testimony of our Heavenly Father's plan and purpose for your life will grow stronger and great blessings of joy, happiness, and peace will be yours.

I testify to you that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. Joseph Smith was the prophet who brought in the Restoration. We have a living prophet in our midst, President Howard W. Hunter. I so testify in humility, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.