

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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An Alternative Life-Style

While at the U.S. Courthouse in Des Moines, Iowa recently, I learned that Iowans had filed over 7,000 bankruptcies for the year 2003. I asked the Clerk how many of these were due to the misuse of credit cards. Her answer was, "about 95%".

Remember, these bankruptcies were for people who live in the Southern part of Iowa. In theory at least, these Iowans are more conservative, God fearing, middle Americans. Why are so many Iowans filing for bankruptcies? By the way, the number of bankruptcy filings in Southern Iowa has been increasing every year. You will find the same increase in bankruptcy filings across America.

Why is the number increasing? I suggest the underlying reason is that Americans are not following the gospel law of stewardship. This failure is due to the falling away from Christianity; breakdown of the family; lust for things of world; and, the unwillingness of Americans to wait. We want everything now, and hurry! "It doesn't matter what it costs if I don't have to pay for it today", is the attitude.

There is one basic rule of stewardship that needs to be rediscovered. It is called Micawber's Economics 101 (20 pounds income - 19 pounds wants = happiness. 19 pounds income - 20 pounds wants = misery) In the gospel of Christ, is it called living in such a way as to create a surplus. In other words, you don't spend everything you earn. (It has been said that the cost of living in America is your income +

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Challenged To Be the Best

Barbra Jordison had just sung hymn, "As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you." Brother Gordon Winkler commented that he hoped we had all come in the spirit of that song, "For", said he, "He is our only hope, and we do long to worship Him." Then he read 1 Peter 2:21-25, his choice of a scripture on which to base his sermon for the Communion service of June, 2004.

"For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

"Have you ever been intrigued by a word," he asked, "just a common, everyday plain word? Did you pay attention to the context of it's use - wonder at the apparent varied meanings it must have? Lately I have been conscious of the word best. I listen for it in everyday conversation. I hear, 'It's probably for the best,' denoting acceptance. I hear, 'I'm making the best of it,' indicating it was not just what you wanted, but you would make do.

"In athletics I hear, 'Give it your best,' and sometimes 'Give it 110%'. How can you give 10% more than perfect? Maybe it means 10% more that you have done in the past. I hear, 'To bring out the best in you.'" Gordon questioned whether this could refer to anatomy and concluded it must mean to be all that you can be! He referenced the saying, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times," attributing the saying to Charles Dickens and questioning, "How do you know?" Then facetiously he referred to an advertisement by Gillette announcing 'The best a man can get', questioning whether a man should aspire to be a razor!

The Best are Chosen

"Twice yesterday on TV, the best were chosen. The Olympic trials selected the best to represent the USA in women's wrestling,

the first time that has been a sport recognized by the Olympics, and these women will have their spot in Greece. And the recent national spelling bee determined the best speller in the nation; but all of the contestants had been prior contest winners; so weren't they therefore also best? he questioned. "Does the choosing of one best among them mean that the rest are no longer best?" he asked.

In his work Gordon cited a CMS initiative which strives to design the best practices conceived: 'Favorable outcomes are associated with a specific diagnosis and treatment path. For example, in case of pneumonia a chest X-Ray, blood work noted as 'CBC', antibiotics within 24 hours, pneumonia vaccine, and smoking cessation if that is appropriate. Data are being collected, tied to reimbursement. Individual hospital results are to be published on the web site in the second quarter of 2005.

"On the second day of the recent meeting of hospital administrators, on a lighter note, Kirk Ferentz, University of Iowa head football coach, spoke to the group concerning what is necessary to make the best team both on the football field and in business. He said preparation is the secret to execution and execution is the key to being the best. Talking about preparation, he said, 'You have the same amount of time as the next team to get ready. What you decide to do in those hours will determine if you will be the best.'

Defining The Best

"So what does best mean? How do you define best? By reference to a dictionary and review of the different contexts in which the word is used, there are several choices.' Brother Winkler listed some of those choices: 1. Excelling all others - 'The top'. Examples are the Stanley Cup, NBA Championships, 100 meter time. 2. To outdo. To get the better of. 3. (And the one to be remembered) One's maximum effort. In education, a C student may be doing her best while a B student may have the higher grade but not be doing her best. 3. Productive of the most good. The one who produces the most good is best.

Gordon observed, "I think this has been an interesting study and discussion so far. Maybe you don't, but what does best mean in your relationship with God? Or is best even relevant to a discussion about God and the nature of our relationship with Him? I think it is! I used restoredgospel.com to do a scripture search for the word best. There were approximately 80 references to the word, a few of those were for bestowed, but I didn't count those out. Let me highlight just a few of the references found throughout the scriptures.

"In Numbers 18:12 the Lord is speaking to Aaron telling him what offerings the people are to give. He says, 'All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the first fruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee.' The best we have to offer to God, He gave us first. That is a concept that we need to keep in mind. Psalms 24:1 says, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.' When we receive from God, we receive the Best. Is God not entitled to receive His gifts back in the same condition in which they were given?

"In the story of the Prodigal son, recorded in Luke 15:22, 'But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet; ,,,.' The father asked not for a horse blanket from the barn, but for the best robe, wrapping him or encircling him in the best he had to offer because his son whom he thought was dead had returned home. Isn't that a comforting picture?

"Micah 7:4 and 7 talks about the general corruption and not trusting in man but in God. Of men he said, 'The best of them is a

brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge; the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity; Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the Lord of my salvation; my God will hear me.'

1 Corinthians 12 speaks of the spiritual gifts that minister in the body of Christ and asks whether all have every gift. Verse 31 of the Corinthian letter replies, 'I say unto you, Nay; for I have shown unto you a more excellent way, therefore covet earnestly the best gifts.' Doctrine and Covenants 46:4a-7f details what those gifts are. "Wherefore, beware, lest ye are deceived, and that ye may not be deceived, seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given; for verily I say unto you, They are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do, that all may be benefited, that seeketh or that asketh of me, that asketh and not for a sign that he may consume it upon his lusts. And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto the church, for all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God: to some it is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby; to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world; to others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life, if they continue faithful.

"And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men. And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether it be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal. And again, verily I say unto you, To some it is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom; to another it is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed, and to others it is given to have faith to heal. And again, to some it is given the workings of miracles; and to others it is given to prophesy, and to others the discerning of spirits. And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues, and to another it is given the interpretation of tongues: and all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God.'

People of God to be Examples of the Best

"Sometimes we identify best through example to be emulated or replicated. Paul said the church at Thessalonica had become an example of faith, perseverance and joy to all who believed in Macedonia. (1 Thes. 1:6-7). And in 1 Timothy 4:11-12, he said, 'These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.'

When we consider the best as producing the most good, we can certainly agree that the life of Jesus is one to be emulated. In fact, God sent His only Son Jesus into the world as an example for us of the best so that we can have salvation and share in His eternal plan. 1 John 4:9 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.'

"We have scriptures and examples. Why are we not the best? It's all that will keep you from doing your best:

1. 'I am doing what everybody else is doing!' If you choose to be like everybody else, you will never be your best. You will always

be there in the middle of the pack with everyone else. If you are going to do your best, you have to break out of the pack!

2. 'I don't understand what the scriptures say, so I don't read them.' You cannot be your best without knowing what the scriptures say. It is only your job to read them. The Holy Spirit will lead you to the meaning and truth.

3. 'I am self reliant and so I pray only when all else fails.' In Phillipians 4:6 Paul says, 'Be afflicted for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.'

4. 'I don't go to church like I should, but my life is so busy!' The busier we are, it seems the less time there is for church, but the truth is that we always make time for that which we consider important. If church is not important, we will never find time for it. As Kirk Ferentz said, we all have the same hours!

5. 'I don't share my faith because I don't want to impose my beliefs on other people.' We impose our beliefs on others in many ways. The signs in our yards supporting political candidates for positions as sheriff, supervisor, etc. show that plainly. Yet in the most important area, the spiritual, we choose to be silent.

Our Choice

"Each of us has a choice - to be best or to be in the middle of the pack. God wants you to be the best. He made you for that purpose, and He sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world to be your example. It is this Jesus we are all here to remember this morning through the representation of the bread and wine that we share. Alma 14:82 reads, 'And this is the blessing which has been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.' Be the best instrument you can be!"

When There Is No Way, Jesus Is The Way

Seventy Ronald K. Smith read John 14:1-6, the words of Jesus to His disciples just before he was crucified. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know; and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Ron asked the Lord's blessing on the reading of the scripture and announced that he would be speaking specifically about the way, and Jesus who makes that way for us.

Michael Jordison questioned whether the song he had chosen as special music would fit in with Ron's announced topic. His song detailed how above all nature, above all the suffering of the cross, the crucifixion, burial, the resurrection, above all else, Christ, You were thinking of me. "You took the fall, God of love, above all! for me!" Ron responded by thanking Michael and remarking, "If that doesn't fit, in, I don't know what will!"

Jesus Is the One Who Makes the Way

"There are a number of things that have happened in the last few weeks that have got me to thinking of "The Way". And Jesus is the one who makes the way. I was with Di over at Larry Oiler's house

on Memorial day. Di is on the board that provides homes for developmentally disabled adults. They had a picnic and we were asked to come and entertain a little. As Larry was grilling, I went up and talked with him. He used to have an office right next to mine, and he had to retire this year because of pancreatic cancer. As many of you know, pancreatic cancer is one of those things that usually kills very quickly. Larry was very upbeat and positive and said, "You know, I had a chance to give a sermon the other day." He told me a little about his sermon in which he talked about Jesus making the way. He was, of course, referring to himself as well. He said, "You know, things are positive. The original mass is apparently shrinking. Wherever it has metastasized it's alive and well! But, he says, 'I still have time and things are going well.' He was very positive in his outlook. He got me to thinking about some of those times in the scriptures where, when there was no other way, Jesus made the way. And so I would like to share some of those with you. "From 1 Nephi chapter 1, this is kind of Nephi's motto. He says, 'I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save He shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.' As you know, Nephi lived this out a number of times in a number of situations. I thought of particular interest was the time that he and his family reached the sea.

"They had been in the desert for eight years. I don't know whether they were in the desert all of that time or whether they were at the sea part of that time, but there was an eight year period here, and they had finally reached the ocean. They were at a place that was very beautiful. It had lots of plants. It had water. It had all the things that they would need for sustaining life, and the Lord said, 'Now I want you to build a ship and go out into the ocean!'"

"As far as we know, Nephi had never built a ship before. I don't know about you, but if I even had to build a garage, I would be in trouble! As we contemplate that, I just think that Casey Jeannes is something else. He can just look at something and make a few measurements and pretty soon, he's got something built. I think if I was to try and build a ship, where would I start? You read the account, and there's no way that you can build a ship that is going to take you and your family and all those whom you love across the ocean without -" He paused. "There's just no way!"

"So what did Nephi ask the Lord? He said, 'Well, Lord. Show me where I can find some ore so I can make some tools - so I can build this ship!'" Brother Smith laughed appreciatively as he repeated. "His request was, 'Give me some ore!' The Lord showed him where he could find some ore, and he started with making a fire. Nephi says that they had not had a lot of fire in the wilderness because the Lord wanted them to know that He was leading them. So He hadn't had them make fire, but He had made the meat sweet so that they could eat the wild, raw meat and it wouldn't hurt them. So Nephi made a fire and started with melting some ore so he could make tools. I thought of that again as George Knotts came over and helped us with making the scenery for the musical. Steve had wrestled for a long time with how to make those pillars. We came over and cobbled something together and in one day, George came over and got those things painted and ready for our musical." (George protested that he had done little. Ron responded, "I know; but if the rest of us had been there without George, we would still have been working on it. But the Lord made a way that it could be done.)

"I think of the brother of Jared. At the end of the Book of

Mormon you have the story that Ether tells of Jared and his brother. When they got their ships made - some barges that you could close up tight - there wasn't any light in them; and the Lord says, 'Now, I want you to go in there, and go in the dark!' The Lord didn't really say that. It was the brother of Jared who said, 'We're in the dark! What are we going to do?' And the Lord said, 'Well, what do you want me to do? You're an intelligent person? I've made it so you can get across the ocean. I've done my part. What do you want me to do?' So the Brother of Jared starts off his prayer saying, 'Lord, I have these sixteen small stones that I melted down and made. If You would just touch them, they would glow, and we would have light.'

"When you think about it, we don't have any little battery systems that will last for a whole year - power packs that are small enough that they would fit into a stone, or something that would glow that long! Jesus took His finger and made the way! He touched those stones one at a time, and they began to glow! They took those sixteen small stones, and that was the source of light for this community for a whole year while they were living on the barges. And when there was no way, Jesus made the way!

Jesus In the Fiery Furnace

"I thought of the story of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and you all remember that story. Right? How many of you know the story of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? A lot of you! They are better known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are their Hebrew names, their real names. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were the names they were given by their captors when they went to Babylon.

"We have been so fortunate in this country in the last two hundred years or more that we haven't known what it's like to be taken captive or even contemplate being taken captive for the most part. Some do. Some have been there. Some are still being taken captive. But these young men were taken from their homes. We don't know about the specific families of these young men, but we know that most of the families living in Jerusalem were killed. The captors kept the young men to be slaves in Babylon. In Babylon, they had some measure of freedom, but they were certainly slaves to the king, required to do anything he wanted.

"This king Nebuchadnezzar was, in the ways of men anyway, pretty wise. He had a policy of taking those who were the best and the brightest of the captives and integrating them into his kingdom. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego were among those. There came a time when he set up a golden idol in the plain of Dura. It was three score cubits high, which is about a hundred feet. A cubit can vary in length from about one and one half feet to twenty two inches, almost two feet. So it's between ninety and a hundred and ten feet high!" Our speaker inquired whether there is anything around that is that high, grain elevators, Graceland's gymnasium? "Anyway, this is petty tall. For you football people, that's more than thirty yards, and it's made of gold! Not only that, but everybody was worshipping that thing! They had a commandment from the king that when you hear the music of the psaltery and the harp and the sackbut and the horns and all the other instruments, you are supposed to fall down and worship. If you don't, of course, you will go into the fiery furnace and be killed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego said, 'No! We won't do that. We are going to serve our God only.'

"Now, we don't have anybody telling us we will die if we don't worship our golden image, but we don't need anybody to tell us that. Most of us do pretty good at worshipping a golden image anyway! Where do we spend our time? Making money. Right? What do we want to do with our lives? Make money. What are our goals in life?

Usually they are expressed in terms of how much stuff we are going to get. There's a golden image that everybody is worshipping. Everybody is doing it, so it must be OK. Right? And all they had to do was to bow down and worship it. But do you think they would? Samuel is saying 'No-o-o they wouldn't!' And it's kind of interesting what they told King Nebuchadnezzar. I want to read it for you. This is in the third chapter of Daniel. 'Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said unto the King, 'O, Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.' In other words," Ron interrupted the reading, "We are not going to give you a misleading, half answer that is kind of true but that will wiggle us out of this. We are not even going to be careful how we answer you in this. 'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' They weren't very careful in their answer. They said, 'God could deliver us. We know that, but even if He doesn't, we're not going to do this.' Nebuchadnezzar was hacked! He was mad! And so he said, 'OK. you guys are going to get one more chance. When you hear the music, I want you to worship this thing. you don't even have to worship. All you have to do is just fall down and pretend to worship it.' He's not picky about this. I think he kind of liked these guys. 'Just get down on the ground and pretend.' And when they wouldn't do it, he said, 'OK. I'm going to have you thrown into the fiery furnace, and we are going to make it seven times hotter than it's ever been!' The king had the strongest men of his army go down there and get those three guys and bind them. They had all their clothes on, and the soldiers bound them just like they were and had them taken to the oven; and when the soldiers threw them in, it was so hot that the soldiers who threw them in all died!

"But then, when King Nebuchadnezzar looked in, he saw not only Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, but he also saw one other person in there. And who do you think that person was?" 'An angel', one of the children in the congregation spoke up confidently. Ron responded, "An angel? Well Nebuchadnezzar identified Him as the son of God. He said, 'He's like the Son of God!' And He was walking around in there. Jesus was walking around in there with these guys. They were in the fire, but not only did they not get burned. They didn't even smell like smoke when they came out. That was the kind of protection Jesus had given them. Jesus had made the way when there was no other way! Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. If you want to come to the Father, come by me. I'll make the way even though you don't know what it's going to be. Even though you can't tell what it's going to be like, I'll make the way!'

Jesus Made The Way For Moses

"I thought of Moses and the children of Israel as they got to the Red Sea and Pharaoh's armies were pursuing them. Do you remember that story? Remember what happened when they got there? Did the army catch them because they couldn't get away from them then?" a number of children responded, 'No!' Ron singled out his granddaughter and asked, 'Do you remember what happened, Cede? Do you know?' Cede responded promptly, 'The good people got through the ocean. The bad people got drowned.' Ronald repeated her response and then said, 'You've got it right, and there's an interesting part of that story that I had not really paid any attention to before. You know it's like that. You read these things over and over all your life and you don't always pay particular attention to it.'

“The story is in Exodus the fourteenth chapter. It says that Pharaoh and his horsemen and his army overtook them encamping by the sea. ‘And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, (‘Didn’t we tell you this?’ Ron interrupted his reading with a chuckle. ‘Didn’t we say that it wouldn’t be a good idea to leave Egypt?’) saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,” (‘OK guys,’ Ronald interrupted his reading again. ‘Stop moving. Just stand there. You’re going to see what the Lord can do. There is absolutely no way for us right now, but the Lord’s going to do something.’ “At this point, Moses didn’t know what the Lord was going to do, apparently.” Again Ronald chuckled. “He just said, ‘the Lord’s going to do something!’” He repeated the instruction, ““Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me?” (Why are you talking to me?) ‘Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward; But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.’ (So God says, ‘Just tell them to go forward. I’ll take care of them, but you just divide the sea now’. And the interesting thing is found in the 21st verse: ‘And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.’ (It took all night for those waters to be divided. It wasn’t like Cecil B. DeMille’s depiction of it where he just holds his hand out and the waters are divided. That would be nice if it was that way, Everybody could see. But I can just see Moses. He puts his hand over the sea, and the wind comes up. You know, ‘Now what, Lord?’” Again Ronald chuckled at the thought! “:The wind comes up; and the wind went all night and divided that sea and made the dry land so they could go across. And when they went across, they were on dry ground. There was water on the right side and water on the left side of them, and they walked through.

“And when Pharaohs army saw that they said, ‘Hey! We can go, too’. And when they did, they went across, but the Lord made the wheels come off of their chariots. I’ve always wondered how He did that. Maybe they got stuck in the mud. Maybe that was the problem. But at any rate, the water came back after Moses again lifted his hand. But there was no way for the Children of Israel until Jesus made the way! It was impossible, and Jesus made the way. He made it happen!

What About Us?

“Now you and I aren’t Moses. We are not the Brother of Jared, and we are not Nephi. The Lord probably isn’t going to ask us to build a boat, but He has asked us to build the kingdom. He says, ‘We need to build the Kingdom, and we need to establish His will here on the earth.’ You don’t hear a lot of people saying that these days. The humanists say that you need to establish wealth and have education and between the two of them, that’s what the humanists look at to

solve all of the world’s problems. Really - education and wealth. ‘Distribute the wealth and educate people. That’s going to work,’ they say. ‘Well, it hasn’t ever worked yet, but something has got to work, and that’s got to be it! Right? More education’ I’m not against education, I think education is important. As it says in the Book of Mormon, ‘To be learned is good, if they hearken to the counsels of God.’ Education is not the answer. But God says to build the Kingdom.

“The Evangelicals tell us what we need to do is to get off of this planet before it’s too late. If we will just say that Jesus is our Lord, we’ll be taken off before all the bad stuff happens to everybody, and that’s what we need to do - to look forward to getting out of here before it’s too late! But several times in the last few weeks, my Mom has asked the question, ‘Where is the voice that says the Kingdom is here? The Kingdom is to be on the earth. Even though we don’t see the way, we need to be the ones saying, that the Kingdom is to be on the earth! That’s what the scriptures tell us. That’s what the Restoration is all about! That’s what we have been told to proclaim to the world, before princes and rulers and kings and poor people and everyone else, that the Kingdom of God is going to be HERE, on the earth; and we need to start looking for the ore to make the tools to get it done, and not to wait just because nobody else is saying that the kingdom is important. That’s what is important. That’s our job! That’s what He’s asked us to do - to build the Kingdom.

“He’s asked us to go into the dark. Sometimes we don’t see very well, and there’s a lot of darkness out there. Just the other night Di and I got a movie It was called Antoine Fisher. I don’t know if you all have seen it or not. It’s the first movie that Denzel Washington directed. It deals with an abused young man who overcomes all odds and makes something of himself. To all intents and purposes it’s an uplifting movie. I wouldn’t take young kids to see it, but it’s uplifting if you can handle the stuff that’s in it. And yet, underlying it there’s an assumption that if you haven’t been with a woman by the time you are old enough to be in the navy, there’s something wrong with you. We need to know that the scriptures say that having sex outside of marriage is not of God. It’s not a worthy thing! It’s not good even if everybody else gives lip service to that idea. It’s not good for us. If we have been involved in that, we need to repent We need to not do that. We need to do better. He can light the way. We need to start by getting Him some stones, probably ourselves, and saying, ‘Lord, touch us! Help us to be the light! We need to be that if we are going to survive the darkness! He’ll make the way!

“We don’t have the golden image to worship, and yet we do when we talk about money and do all of those things, and that consumes us. That’s our golden image which everyone worships. We need to say, ‘We’re not going to be careful about this. That’s not going to be our goal. Our goal is the Kingdom of God, and we will worship God and no other. Jesus makes the way when there is none!

“I was really excited this week, and I have told some of you at prayer service, that we just got word that Tom Okeyo is going to be here for our reunion. You guys don’t know what that means to me. Tom is from western Kenya, and he is one of those wonderful, wonderful people who is articulate, bright, and one of the first ones to accept the gospel and be baptized. He was Eric’s very good friend and room mate at college. The two of them graduated together and Tom has been one of the stalwarts of the faith. As I was thinking about this service, I remembered it was at Tom’s house where I had the experience with George. Most of you have heard this before, but just briefly: When I went to Tom’s parents’ home, our car broke

Make God's Goal Your Goal

down and we had some guys help us push it to get in to their house. The family was gone, and two of the fellows stayed with me to wait for them. So I just asked these guy's names. One says, 'My name is George and this is Zaccheus'.

"I said, 'George, are you a Bible scholar?' He said, 'Well, somewhat.'" I said, 'Get a Bible. I've got some things I would like to show you.'" George sent Zaccheus to get a Bible, and I started showing him scriptures about the Kingdom. He would read them, or I would read them. I would ask questions and he would answer. At the end of the day, the family came home from a funeral they had attended, and I taught scriptures well into the night, even into the wee hours of the morning.

"The next day I went back into the city where Tom was and Tom was asking me for an account of my day. So I told him the story that I have told you, and I gave a little more detail. But Tom said, 'I'm really interested in that story about when you talked with George. When you were talking with George, who was interpreting?' I said, 'There wasn't anybody to interpret. We were just sitting there, the two of us.' He says, 'What language were you using?' I said, 'English!'. And Tom says, 'But George doesn't speak English.' I said, 'He was speaking English to me!' He says, 'How did George's English compare to Philip's?' Philip was another young man that we talked to there, and I said, 'Oh, George's was lots better than Philip's. He says, 'But Philip speaks English. He went to high school. George didn't go to high school. George doesn't know English!' Jesus made the way! Jesus made the way when there was no other way.

Jesus Is the Waymaker

"So you young people, Sam and Isabel, you guys that are here on the front row, and Tyler and all the rest of you, I want you to know that even though it seems impossible, Jesus is the waymaker. He is the one who makes the way, and if we will follow Him, He will make a way for us to do what has been commanded.

"Back in the seventies when I was in College, it was all the rage to play psychological games. Someone would pose problems like, 'You have thirty people on this ship and there's only one life boat and only five of you can get off. Here is what all the people do, and how do you decide who is going to live and who is going to die?' (Maybe some of you did that sort of thing. I see some smiles,) And they never would take the answer, 'You get everybody together and you start praying!' That just wasn't good enough. 'No, that's not the way!' was the message. 'What you have to do is to decide who is going to be best for the group and everybody else isn't worth that much.'

"Let me tell you what. Everyone is worth that much, and it's worth it to get down and pray. Sometime you may be in a situation where you have to make a decision about who lives and who dies. Sometimes that's life. But when the time comes, I hope you don't base it on what the world would say are the important skills that we have to have or these are the important people that we have to have alive. I would hope that you would base it on, 'Let's get down on our knees and let's pray, and let's ask the Lord, because Jesus can and will make the way. He told His disciples, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, and if you will follow me, I will show you the way!'

"After some consideration," Elder Rodney Bastow announced, "The scripture I have chosen for this morning is from Matthew 6:19-24: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 'The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single to the glory of God, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light which is in thee be darkness, how great shall that darkness be. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.'

As was his custom, Brother Bastow opened his sermon with an expression of faith that with the faith and prayers of the Saints God would provide direction for the message needed. "Today I would ask for your prayers that I might be led by God's Holy Spirit to say those things that He wants me to say." he said. "I know God has blessed us already with His Spirit, and I hope that we can continue to acknowledge that Spirit through this service; and I would ask that if we are able to feel that Spirit here this morning, you will give thanks to your heavenly Father as we leave this place today. I feel grateful to be able to share with you this morning. I thank God that He saw fit to use even me. I am still striving to be the person God wants me to be, and I ask that He might forgive my weaknesses. Our class this morning fits in quite a bit with what I want to say, but it also revealed to me how inadequate I am to be doing this.

"A few weeks before school was out, Debbie had a banquet at Northwest Missouri. Her school was being honored along with some other schools in the Northwest area of Missouri for a distinctive award for excellence in education based upon several different criteria, mainly its test scores. If test scores improved over a certain amount, you get recognized. Her school got it. Mine didn't. I didn't let that bother me too much, and I went with her to the banquet anyway. I saw a lot of faces there. I saw a lot of principals that I had been in the same conference with back twenty years ago. It didn't seem possible that it had been that long since I had last seen those people. A lot of people had become principals since I was a principal. It was somewhat humbling for me to see some of those people that I had known before who had gone up to bigger and better things. They had bigger positions and bigger schools, and I had gone kind of down the other direction, or so I felt. I expressed those sentiments to Debbie as we were on our way home, and she said, 'Rod. That has never been your goal. Your goal has always been one thing, and that's your farm.'" And that has been very true. The farm has always been my main focus, and the thing I have cared about the most.

What Is Your Goal?

"But as I thought about what she had said to me, and I thought about what my goal was, and I liked what we talked about today in class. What should my goal be? What should all of our goals be? And what are we really working for? On down from the scripture that I read for you this morning Jesus says this, from the 38th verse, 'Wherefore, seek not the things of the world, but seek first to build

up the Kingdom of God and to establish His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto you.' It really doesn't matter what kind of a job we have, how much money we make, or how much status we feel like we have. Jesus says to love Him and He says to build up His Kingdom.

"When I was little, I had a lot of good Sunday School class teachers. I remember several of them. Probably the one I can remember the most things from was Florence Irving. I remember one time she told a story to us that went something like this. She said there was a rich woman who died and went to heaven. When she got there and she met St. Peter, he said, 'I will be taking you to where you will be staying. So they started down this lane. They walked by some of the homes, fairly common homes. She asked, 'Who stays in those?' St. Peter says, 'Well, that's your neighbor over there. That lady was in your social club over there; and so on and so on. She didn't know what to say, but she thought to herself, 'Wow! I must have something really nice if that's what they got! I'm better than they were, so I must have something really special!'

"A little ways further, they came to a street with huge, beautiful mansions - you know, just a really, really nice place. She said, 'Oh! this must be my place! Is this my place?' St. Peter said, 'No.' That belongs to your servant lady. Your place is on down the road.' She said, 'Oh, my! What could be better than this? This is awesome!' "So they went on down, until St. Peter said, 'Here's your place.' She looked around and there were just a few boards there. She said, 'How am I supposed to live here?' Peter said, 'We build these from the materials that you send us, and the materials are the good works that you do. You just didn't give us much to work with.' "Sometimes I wonder," Brother Bastow mused, 'How much am I sending up there for them to work with?'

"Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love your God with all your heart, with all your mind. Florence used to say that if we would do this (and we talked about that this morning too) - if we were really doing it, we would keep all the other commandments as well. If you love God, you will love others and you will do God's will. You won't be breaking any of His other commandments. "John 14:21 says, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' Do we love God? Are we keeping His commandments? One of the gems that Debbie picked up from her weekly yard sales was a 'Soup' book, and I studied it a little bit. In the front I found a quote that came from Mother Theresa. It goes like this, 'Spread love everywhere you go, first of all in your home. Give love to your children, to your wife or your husband, to the next door neighbor. Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness - kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.'

This is Father's Day. My dad Was Like That!

"My Dad was like that. People who met Dad left feeling better and happier. He never met a stranger. A few weeks ago Mom and I went to a pot luck supper at her home. There were so many people there that I didn't know. I said to Mom, 'If Dad were here, he could tell us who each of these people is, where they live, who their parents were, what their kids were like. He was just that way. I wish I could be more like that!'

"Another story I found in that same book is about a fairly typical couple, you know. They would get along, maybe had their squabbles like a typical couple. One day the man did something strange. He started complimenting his wife, and she got very suspicious. She thought, 'What is he up to? This isn't like him. He

is either wanting something or something is up!

"Time went by and he did it again. He told her what a good job she had done with the check book. She had gotten fifteen out of the sixteen entries right, and he told her how much he appreciated that. She just thought, 'He's being sarcastic, because he usually gets on the me about doing a poor job with that.' Then he started paying more attention to what she was doing. One day he told her how nice she looked. She thought, 'This is really strange!' One day her daughter came down and she says, 'You know, I was wearing this strange outfit and Dad said how nice I looked! What's wrong with Dad?' And the woman just thought, 'This is really different!' One day he came in and said, 'Here. You go sit down and rest yourself and I'll do these dishes.'

"She had not figured out what had caused this change in his behavior. But as it became more and more obvious, she finally just accepted that he had made a change. She became happier and less depressed; and she started doing those things to him that he was doing to her.

"You know, I need to be nicer to people that I am around, and I need to show them more acts of kindness." Rodney declared.

"A couple of weeks ago I was torn between a couple of readings I wanted to share with you. I used one and here's the other. It really kind of tells what I want to say today.

"I'm Glad You Are In My Day"

'I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on her tomb stone from the beginning to the end.

He noted that first came her date of birth,

And spoke the following date with tears.

But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth,

And now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth. For it matters not how much we own - the cars, the house, the cash. What matters is how we lived and loved, and how we spent our days.

So think about this long and hard. Are there things you would like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged."

If we can just slow down enough to consider what's true and real,

And always try and understand the way other people feel,

And be less quick to anger, show appreciation more.

Love the people in our lives like we have never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile,

Remembering that this special day might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, your life actions to rehash,

Would you be proud of the things they say, and how you spent your day?

May your guardian angel watch over you faithfully.

Don't frown. You never know who is falling in love with your smile.

What I Have Learned About Reaching Our Goals

"Today is the day that is set aside to honor our fathers. I had considered the fact and had written some words that were in memory of my father that I had intended to share with you. They had been on my thoughts and they had been with me the past several days, but somehow it just didn't work out. It didn't seem that was

what I was to say at this time.

“When I was scheduled to speak, I didn’t know what I would be saying, but I thought, I had a lot of time. And I thought, ‘I wonder what kind of experiences I will have by the time that time comes.’ There have been a lot of experiences that have happened, both to me and my family in the past few months. They weren’t necessarily what I was expecting. But from some of these experiences I have learned some things that I would like to share with you in closing. “First of all, when we try to do good, it doesn’t mean that good things are always going to happen to us. I believe strongly that since we are in the Latter Days that Satan is really working hard to try to bring us down so that we will choose to follow him rather than to build up Christ’s Kingdom. I think Satan really knows. He’s really crafty, and I think he really knows how to get at us. And I think he really knows how to find areas where we are most vulnerable. He knows how to exploit those areas and I believe he’s doing that.

“The other thing that I have learned, or have been reminded of, God answers our prayers. He always does. But sometimes He does it in ways that we don’t expect. It’s important during this time that we try to build up the kingdom of God - that we bring ourselves closer to Jesus by studying His word and by doing good works so that God’s plan, His goals will be fulfilled here on earth. I would pray that in the weeks ahead we might be more loving, that we might be more in touch with our heavenly Father.

“I have a favorite scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants. I will just read the whole eleventh section. It must have been a favorite of someone else’s because it’s used over and over and over again in the Doctrine and Covenants. To me it has always been pretty powerful:

“A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men. Behold, I am God, and give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore, give heed unto my word. Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God; yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God; therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive, if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.

“Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion. Behold, I speak unto you, and also to all those who have desires to bring forth and establish this work; and no one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things whatsoever shall be intrusted to his care. Behold, I am the light and the life of the world, that speak these words; therefore, give heed with your might, and then you are called. Amen.”

Keeping the Commandments - This Is Your Work!

Elder Tom Okeyo from Kisumu, Kenya, East Africa, was the guest minister for the Mt. Ayr Restoration Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ on June 27. Elder Okeyo came to the United States to

attend the Seventy sponsored Missionary Family reunion just completed at Graceland U. He brought greetings from the Saints in Kenya, and announced that he was going to talk about Restoration and what it means to him. For his text, he used 1 John 2:3 - “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” “Restoration all boils down to what I need to do in order to please my God.” he declared. “The scripture that I read today gives me my own standard measure as to how I am performing today. We only know that we know God if we keep His commandments. And if we do not keep the commandments, then it doesn’t matter what we say or what we think we are doing. What matters is, ‘Do we obey His laws?’

“If we look throughout history from creation, when Adam was placed in the garden of Eden with Eve, they were given laws to follow. ‘Do not eat from this tree!’ And when they disobeyed that, that was the beginning of problems. Adam was himself, as was Eve, perfect, and God loved them so much that He placed them in the Garden of Eden, just as He loves you and me. That is the first thing - God loves all of us; and yet, if we do things which are contrary to what He has good for us, then we fall from His blessings just like Adam did. Throughout the history of man’s relationship with God we find that every single time that they obeyed, God was walking with them. Every time they failed to obey the law, God would draw away from them.

“That is a very which much what we find in examples from the days of Noah when the floods came. Noah tried to preach repentance and for the people to obey the laws, but when they would not, they were swept away. Only Noah who could obey the laws and the commandments of God managed to escape. The days of the Israelites when they were being saved from the yoke of the Egyptian rule in the wilderness, we find that when they disobeyed the laws of God, they lost God’s favor; and most of them never advanced to the land of Canaan here they were going. This happened even in the days of the Nephites. When they obeyed God, they were prosperous and God walked with them. But when they disobeyed, they faced destruction. In the early church, after Christ came, we found that the Christians were being persecuted because they were obeying the Lord’s laws, but when finally apostasy came in, they became one with the world. If you look at God’s dealings with them before they lost their way, God was walking with them with power, and they could even perform marvelous miracles. But when they introduced the doctrines of men amongst them, God withdrew, and the church lost all that it had.

“What about the present day? The Lord has restored His church in power, and He has given it authority to spread the gospel to all the ends of the earth in these Latter Days. But does that mean that we are doing what we are supposed to do? Do we worship Him in truth and in spirit? How are we to become partakers in His plan for His kingdom? Are we aware that the Lord has laws for us to follow, and how do we go about trying to follow those laws? Do we even know the laws in the first place? That is the question you need to ask yourself. How do you even know the laws? We are being challenged to go through the scriptures, read them and understand them. And we need to pray always for His Spirit to be with us, because unless His Spirit is with you as you study His scriptures, you will not get the appropriate relation.”

Is Yours The Covenant Relationship God Wants?

“When we look at the Lord’s relationship with man, it has been through a covenant relation; and that is why that we today are called upon to have that relationship with Him. Just like in olden days, He

made a covenant with Abraham, He would want us to have that covenant relationship with Him - and this time, you personally with Him. I know most of us have done that through baptism, but also you may get baptized without having necessarily enjoyed that personal covenant relationship with the Lord.

“When we are talking about covenant, we mean that you are undertaking to do something on your part, and the Lord also to do His part. And what are we undertaking to do? To follow His laws. And if you look at the preaching of Jesus, you will find that most of the covenant promises have conditions attached to them. If you want to see God, you must be pure in heart. What are we talking about here? We are saying that Zion is what we are hoping for and working toward. Are we really working toward Zion? Zion requires you to be pure in heart! And for you to be pure in heart, apart from the grace of our Father, it requires a conscious effort from you and me to be able to enjoy all those benefits.

“Let me read from the book of Hebrews 8:10-12. It is telling us that when Zion finally comes, the laws of God will be written in your heart. This time we try to know and follow them, but when Zion comes, there will be no need for you to read, because the laws of God will be written in your heart. This scripture says: ‘For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; ...’ We find that even when the Lord brings to us Zion, which we so much yearn for, it will not be a shortcut as if there will be no laws to follow. We will have the laws, but this time they will be written in our hearts. So, before Zion comes, then it is for us to work toward making that to come to pass by knowing the commandments of God and following them.

“We know right now the law that the scriptures teach us and tell us how we are to live between ourselves and how we are to relate with God Himself. The scriptures talk of love, patience, charity, kindness. I wish to quote them all. I wish to ask each one of us, ‘How far have you gone in terms of trying to have love? How far have you gone to show charity? How far have you gone to show kindness? How are you a better person today than yesterday? If you follow the commandments of God, you become a better person, and the Lord wants you to become a better person. If we as a people become better, then we make the conditions of Zion to become possible. Jesus asked at one time, “Why call me Lord, Lord, and you do not do the things that I command you to do?” It doesn’t matter what we do. It doesn’t matter whether we call Him, “Lord, Lord”. It is important for us to obey His commandments.

God Gives Us Measures

“In the scripture that I read it was talking about, ‘By this we do know that we know Him if we obey His commandments.’ If we obey, and that is a measure that we can use ourselves. You can measure yourself on that scale, how “But, let’s see God’s measure on this. John 14:21. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” This is now God’s measure. You need to have the commandments and you need to keep them. That is the way the Lord is going to know that you love Him. That is the way you are going to be measured of the love you have to your Father. And that is where the authority is when Christ will also love you and show Himself to you. - manifest Himself to you! So we have seen you have your own scale which is the same thing, commandment, and you can see where you are. Then we have this scale of Christ, again command-

ment, and you can now see where He’s placing you. When we are talking about the commandments, it really means how far better are we at the end of the day. It amounts to that.

We know that it is quite normal to many of us to pass some white lies, excusing it because that is convenient for that purpose. Some of us may have a little problem - they are little problems. I know we don’t have big problems, but the little ones are the ones that sometimes matter. We might have a little pride. We think that’s OK. We can away with it. Maybe you have kept a little ought against someone - very little - so you think the Lord will accept that. Little children, even simple things like disobedience to your parents. Well, we don’t need to go far. We don’t need to look for big things for us to be able to repent and to be able to address for us to come back before the Lord. There are small little things like we have hidden back in our closets.

Follow The Desire of Your Hearts

“We just had a wonderful reunion that ended yesterday, and I can tell you I was so much uplifted with that! It is an experience I have never had in my entire life, and I was so much touched with the love of you Saints that I found here. It was so wonderful! Apart from the marvelous classes that were there, the part that really touched me the most was the dedication service. How individuals would stand up, and families would stand as families and rededicate themselves to the service of the Lord - that was so great - so wonderful! It really showed the desire of our hearts to serve the Lord, and that is very good! And I would like to urge you to continue in that desire - continue in that spirit, because that is what is going to enable you to get rid of those little things that may still be outstanding between you and the Lord - between you and obeying His commandments - how we go about doing that in our daily lives.

Sometime back, I can’t remember the exact year, I did history, but I’m twelve years away, Dale Stafford and Ron Smith came over to Kenya. Just at the end of their trip Dale decided to bequeath me a tie, the one I’m putting on today. I was glad when I walked in and George Knotts recognized it so fast and said, “Does it read, ‘What Would Jesus do?’” I said, “Yes, I treasure the tie, not because it was a tie that was given to me but because of the message that it has - What Would Jesus Do? It strikes me that really this kind of thing is a lot here, and the challenge that I get from the message is in our everyday life. If you can’t remember what is expected of you at that time - if you cannot remember what the Lord expects - if you can’t remember the commandments, why don’t you ask yourself, ‘What would Jesus do now in this situation?’

“What would Jesus do can also be replaced by, ‘What would Jesus say?’ when speaking to your friend. ‘What would Jesus eat?’ at a buffet or meal. ‘What would Jesus wear?’ ‘Where would Jesus go?’ on deciding where you would go. So this is really the kind of challenge that I found personally from the message, and I believe that it would be of much worth to each one of us if in every situation of your life, whatever you are doing, wherever you are going, whatever you are eating, ask yourself, ‘What would Jesus do?’ or ‘What would Jesus say?’

“In short, we are finding that the whole story of the Restored Gospel is just about you obeying the commandments of God and subjecting yourself to His will. Doctrine and Covenants 10:10a says: ‘Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments; yea, with all your might, mind and strength; seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; ...’ That is your work! It means it’s like there is no other work we have. Your work is to keep the commandments, and you

are told to do that with all your might, mind and strength - the whole of your time, the whole of your strength, and that is a big challenge. I believe that when we all leave here, you will come up with that result to really find out what the commandments of God are and obey them, because that is the time that is going to show that you are with Him, and that He is with you."

"Thank you very much, and may you be blessed!"

Testimony from the 2004 Seventy Missionary Reunion

*(Shared by Linda Winkler during
Family Worship, June 27, 2004.)*

I am a different person that stands here this morning than I was a week ago because of my reunion experience and things that I have learned this past week. One of those experiences I would like to share with you this morning.

Gordon and I had planned to take the week off work and stay on campus as we had done in the past but our work situations would not allow that this year. Even though I was disappointed I was looking forward to spending as much time as I possibly could at the reunion this past week. I knew that Monday I wouldn't be able to come over until the preaching service that night but was hopeful that I would be able to make some classes the rest of the week. The Lord blessed me in that I live in Mount Ayr which is only a 30 minute drive and my patient load was such that I could arrange my appointments so that I worked early in the morning and could then leave in time to make it for the 10:15 AM class, leave immediately after class to drive back to Mount Ayr so I could work a few more hours and then make it back for the 3:45 PM class and stay through the preaching service each night. I looked at the classes and studied out which ones I wanted to attend with my goal to learn and gain more knowledge in the scriptures. So I took my little pocket program and had each class that I wanted to attend marked for the week so as I was hurrying to get to class on time I would know exactly where to go.

Tuesday morning when I awoke I didn't feel the best. Periodically since my cancer a year ago I have trouble with episodes of dizziness, headaches, and in general I just feel lousy. It usually lasts 3-5 days when I have it and I usually miss a couple days of work. I was determined to go to reunion; so I got through work that morning and headed to Lamoni anticipating Brother Verle Cornish's class: On Becoming the People of God. As the day wore on I knew that I was becoming sicker. After returning for the afternoon class, I was wearing down so I rested in one of the classrooms after supper reading my scriptures before going to the preaching service that night.

Heidi and Gordon had driven over for the service that night which turned out to be a good thing. By the end of the song service I was so dizzy I could not only stand up very well. I was having trouble sitting up and very nauseated. Gordon took me home so that I could go to bed and Heidi stayed for the preaching.

Wednesday morning came and I thought that I was a little better but still knew that it was going to be a long day to get through. The Lord blessed me on my drive over to Graceland that morning for the second half of Brother Cornish's class and upon my return to Mount

Ayr to work and back again for the late afternoon class. Again I could tell that I was struggling to maintain an upright position, but the Lord blessed me with great concentration in the classes and I was able to learn so much. I stayed Wednesday night because I really wanted to hear Brother Frye preach but I wasn't able to stand for the hymns and by the end of the service I was really sick again. I was sitting in my seat after the benediction thinking I would like to be administered to and at about the same time Gordon turned to me and asked me if I would want administration. I responded, "Yes", and in front of us was Elder Doug Smith. Doug asked Seventy Richard Neill to join us. Both Doug and Richard visited briefly with Gordon and me before the administration. In asking me what I desired, I responded that I would like a physical healing so that I could come to reunion the next couple of days because I didn't want to miss any more preaching services and I wanted to attend class.

Brothers Smith and Neill laid their hands upon my head and as the administration prayer was given, I felt a gentle spirit come upon me. One of the things that Brother Neill prayed was that I would get a restful night's sleep as well as healing.

As Gordon and I traveled home that night I got worse. I went right to bed when we got home but my sleep that night was fitful. At 2:30 in the morning I got out of bed so that my tossing and turning wouldn't awaken Gordon. By this time I was so dizzy that I was stumbling around and my head felt as if it was going to explode it hurt so bad. I went into the living room, sat back in our recliner chair and tried to focus on all the things that Brother Cornish had taught in class the past 2 days. The gentle spirit that had come to me during the administration was still present; and it was brought to my mind that I was not in the right spiritual condition to receive the blessing that the Lord had to give me. I knew at that moment that I needed to repent. I asked the Lord for forgiveness and asked Him to cleanse me so that I could receive the blessing He had to offer.

At that moment the spirit that had rested upon me since the administration became stronger and more intense; but I still felt lousy and my head was pounding. It was then that the words that Brother Neill had asked me prior to the administration came to me "Do you believe that the Lord can heal?"

He had asked both Gordon and me that question and we both had said, "Yes". It was at that moment that the question came to me in another way "Do I believe that the Lord could heal me?" I realized at that moment that I strongly believed that the Lord could heal, but that belief was in relation to healing other, not me. I realized that my belief in healing was in my mind but not in my heart, and that I had to believe that God could love me enough to heal me, not just others.

As I sat there in the dark, I told God that, yes, I believed He could heal even me and that I desired to be physically healed so that I could go to reunion and learn more so that I could grow spiritually. At that time the Spirit became even stronger upon me, the pain in my head was instantly gone, and I fell asleep shortly in the recliner chair.

The next morning when I woke up about 3 hours later so that I could go to work I felt well and rested as if I had slept 8 hours instead of 3. All day on Thursday and Friday I just wanted to soak up every scripture and every thought that was presented, and I was able to participate fully during the times I was present at reunion. I was truly blessed and I am so thankful for all that I learned this past week and I look forward to studying so that I might fully understand what the scriptures are saying to me.

News and Notes

A Successful Reunion Completed

The Seventy sponsored 2004 Missionary Family Reunion held at Graceland University is a beautiful part of our history! The Mt. Ayr and Decatur City Restoration congregations can praise their God that they were major participants in its organization, direction and ministry. There is no way we can name all who made it possible nor thank all who participated in its successful completion. When we tallied the evaluation forms, it was a delight to see the overwhelming four stars accorded it with extra stars liberally added to the question concerning "The Field Is White" the Book of Mormon musical written, directed and performed by our own.

Tuesday Class Moved

During the month of July, the 8:30 Tuesday morning class will be held at the home of Gloria Slayton, 630 Bobbitt Drive in Lamoni. All ages are invited. We are studying the Doctrine and Covenants, currently Section 6.

Internship Granted

Brandy Anderson is chosen as a Book of Mormon Intern this summer. The youth selected for the ministry receive intensive training in the history and teachings of the Book of Mormon then share their understandings with congregations, vacation Church Schools, camps, etc. In their training, they travel to places significant in the history of the church. One day a week is given to rendering a variety of services to needy persons in the Centerplace.

Vacation Bible School in Mexico

Heidi Winkler has volunteered to join in helping with the Vacation Bible School in Matamoros, Mexico this summer. Steven Smith's sons Keston and Thoric are also planning to take part in the event.

From the Pastor's Desk

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10%) Jerry Runkle taught his Economics students a plan to be rich. If you want to be rich, live on half of what you earn and save the other half. You might ask, how can I save any money on what I am earning? Look around! You will likely find that many people live on half of what you earn.

Surplus is created by reducing your wants to a sum less than your income. Surplus is that part of your income that provides the ministry to others and to God. Out of our surplus, we give our offerings and our tithing. Out of our surplus, we are able to give sufficient money to fund the Missionary Reunion for those who cannot afford to pay the cost of attending. Our surplus funds most of the ministry we are able to give. When the Scriptures say, "there were no poor among them", it is another way of saying that all the people lived at a standard of living that allowed them to accumulate surplus. That surplus was used to provide for the "poor" among them, so there were no poor.

Moses taught the Hebrews a system for caring for the poor. The corners of the fields of grain were not to be cut and were left for the poor. (Lev 23) The scattering

of the grain was not to be picked up and were to be left for the poor. (Lev 23) Before the owner of the grain was allowed to use his own grain, he was required to make an offering of the grain to God. (This was known as the principle of "first fruits". The principle of first fruits is taught throughout the Bible.) An orchard owner was not allowed to use the fruit for himself for the first 3 years. The entire 4th year crop was to be given to God, and then, the owner could use the crop for himself. (Lev 19)

My mother told me many times, "poor people have poor ways". Sometimes rich people have poor ways, too. But the basic stewardship plan requires everyone, rich and poor alike to live in such a way that more is produced than consumed. This stewardship plan requires a change in attitude, particularly for Americans, but it is true for everyone in the world. Eliminating poverty simply cannot be done by equally dividing all the wealth. Without a change of attitude, the poor would be poor again in 30 days. To have no poor among us requires a life-style based on the gospel principle of creating surplus. Zion will be built by those saints who understand and practice this life-style. (See DC 106:1-2b)