

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

H. Alan Smith • 607 E. Madison, Mount Ayr, IA 50854 •
641-464-2949

Our Countenances

"Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced his might change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you?"

These questions from Alma in his epistle to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land as recorded in Alma 3:27-30 have been shared many times over the years since.

I've always thought of them as being personal questions for reflection in one own's life. Is the Spirit such a part of our life that others can see Jesus just by looking at our faces? To do that, certainly our every action would have to indicate that there is something different about us. Have our hearts changed like that of Enoch in his experience when he finally understood the love of God for every person? Are we certain enough of our redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we can put behind the guilt and suffering of sin and see ourselves and our lives through new eyes? All of those are good questions.

Recently, however, I've been wondering if we shouldn't be trying to answer this on a corporate basis as well. If the reason for the existence of the church is to bring forth the kingdom of God, as I believe the scriptures indicate, should we be asking ourselves how we as a branch could answer these questions together as well?

Can someone coming to our branch for the first time see Christ's image in our countenances in how we treat one another and how we worship together? Have our collective hearts been changed so that we rejoice when one of us rejoices and mourn when one of us mourns? Do we have a view of where we are headed that isn't clouded by past mistakes? I wonder.

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Why Would You Want to Do Anything Else?

The Communion Service of January 1, 2006 Was graced by special music played by Nathan and Julie Smith, Nathan on the piano and Julie with her violin, and by Beth Knotts singing "Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees!" Elder H. Alan Smith, in charge of the service, introduced Elder Peter Cornish as not just his son-in-law, the husband of Erin and father of Eli but as an Elder standing in the stead of Jesus to bring ministry to us this morning.

Peter began by thanking those who had provided the beautiful music saying, "I feel there are many ways in which to experience the love of God, and most certainly music is one of those. Another is sharing in His Word, and I hope and pray that that which the Lord will provide for us in this will be as good as the music was."

I would like to read a scripture for you. This scripture I like a lot, but I always have a hard time reading it because before I could read the scripture, I knew the song that goes with it, and probably most if not all of you did as well. When I try to read it, I always jump out of it and start singing, but, hopefully, I won't sing it this morning.

1 John 3:1-2: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

These past few weeks I have been trying to think of what I should bring and share with you today, it being a Communion Sunday and also the first day of the new year. One of the first things that came into my mind was something a little different than what I had expected, but it was something I remembered that Ron said when I was in college. You might not think this will relate to what I will ultimately share with you today, but I assure you it does.

There are many things that Ron shared with me while I was privileged to be in his classes that I am still trying to work out to this day. One thing that I remember in particular, which wasn't related to the classes I took, is that he told us a story of when he and Di were married. He told us that his major professor from graduate school came to his wedding, and while he was sitting there watching, he

was working a math problem. When Ron said this, I was completely flabbergasted and puzzled as to why someone would be working a math problem on such an occasion at such a time. But I think I have an idea.

How Science Captivates

At Graceland I was able to take a lot of science courses from Ron and I also had a few from Gerry and some other professors who were quite exceptional. So the opportunity that I had at Graceland, and also my father being a scientist, led me toward science as a career and as something I would be interested in and pursue as a course of study. So these things were kind of the birth, if you will, of the desire to research in my life. Many people who go down these fields have the same sort of starting place that I did. Another reason that others end up on this path, and you might laugh, is simply because the beauty of science itself inspires people to pursue research and to have a desire to understand the mystery of nature. Those who haven't pursued science in their life may not understand what I am talking about. Like I said, sometimes if I tell people this they might laugh and think it is silly. (I assure you all of this will make sense in a short while.)

After Graceland I went to graduate school at Texas A&M University. I finished this past September and I graduated in December with my doctorate. Now I am at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, continuing further research in the hopes that someday I will get a job. And I have found through the last number of years that I have begun to understand what Ron's major professor was doing. Because, as you study science and understand what is going on, the beauty of science draws you in and allows you to see what's there. And it is quite amazing.

I chose one example for you to see a glimpse of what's there, and it is quite amazing. As we know, and maybe Gerry has shared in some of his sermons about astronomy, that we can see deep into the Universe and see many, many wonderful things. Since that is not in my research field, I have chosen to talk about the opposite end of the spectrum - to the very finite and small. In my graduate studies, I was privileged again to do research studying the structure of very small molecules. Obviously, these molecules are too small to be seen by human eyes, but through various techniques that the masters of science have developed, we are able to delve far beyond that of the cell. Currently, using lasers and fluorescence we are able to see very small changes in molecules and measure the difference between different states. In order to understand how small a distance I am talking about imagine a regular twelve inch ruler, the distance change on that ruler that can be measured would be one ten millionth of an inch. If you could scale up the dimensions of that ruler to the size of Missouri, north to south, the distance change we can measure within error of the measurement is approximately one foot. This is really, really small. So, if you take one step into Missouri, as you might imagine, we can measure that distance using lasers and fluorescence. It's quite amazing and astounding!

After the long studies of my previous research in graduate school, during the time that Erin was up here in Iowa, you are probably well aware that I was working on my dissertation. When writing a dissertation, you completely immerse yourself into what you are doing. Those of you who have written a dissertation, know that this completely captivates your whole life, and eventually it is not laborious - actually kind of fun, and it is quite interesting. At some point you get to the level of delving so far into the subject that you start questioning and wondering why anybody in the world would want to do something else besides research science! I sat

there while writing many times, and still today, I think, "Why in the world would you want to go out and be a lawyer or to be a doctor or whatever your profession is? Why wouldn't you want to just study science because it is so wonderful and beautiful?" I'm still trying to figure that question out! But I think I understand now what Ron's professor was doing working math problems at Ron's wedding. I could see, as I got closer and I was diligent in researching and working in science, that it wasn't until I was at that level that I was able to essentially taste the beauty of science.

Scriptural Application of the Principle

So the question you probably are all asking is, what am I trying to say? Well, in the first book of Nephi there is a vision that Lehi and Nephi both had. All of you, I am sure, are well aware of this vision, but I will just talk it through briefly. I'm sure most of you know the story well and probably better than I. As Lehi and Nephi were in this vision, they were in this place, and they saw this rod of iron that was stretched out. At the end of this rod of iron, there was a tree. And all around there was a tremendous mist of darkness that covered the whole land. And they could also see a river of water and a great and spacious building. Just to remind us what those things represented, the rod of iron was the Word of God. The mists of darkness were the temptations of the devil. The great and spacious building was the pride of the world. The fountain of dirty water was the depths of hell. And, of course, the tree of life was the love of God.

As a scientist, I ask lots of questions. Have you ever asked yourself, and maybe you have, why the Lord equated the tree of life with the love of God? Do you ever wonder why He didn't choose something else? Why, for instance, was not the tree of life salvation? Or why was not the tree of life Celestial Glory? I think that He made the right choice with the love of God.

As I go through this, let's try to pair this with what I was saying about my life with research and science. So what makes us grab onto the rod of iron? When we grab onto the rod of iron, we don't necessarily know what is on the other end. As in the story in the Book of Mormon, somebody we know might have held onto the rod of iron at some point or they may actually be at the tree. If you remember Lehi called for his children and his wife to come. Also, we might have experienced at some point in our lives the beauty of the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We here have all reached the rod of iron at some point. I have to ask myself this question, "Are there those that I know that don't even know that the rod of iron exists?" I think this is a tremendous burden for all of us and it is important for us to realize that there might be those we associate with every day who will never find the rod of iron unless we say something. There are also those who will fall astray. It is our job to call them back.

The Goal - The Tree of Life

So, what then should make us be dedicated to the Lord? What is it that keeps us holding onto the rod of iron? Obviously, it is the goal. There is no purpose to hold onto the rod of iron to walk to the tree if the tree weren't there. And the tree is the end goal and is the important thing. So if the tree of life, represented something else like a reward, for instance Celestial Glory or salvation or something, then maybe that would not be the way God wants us to follow Him. We are not on the path - we are not holding onto the rod of iron for a reward. What's there is the love of God. The Lord does not want us to follow Him because we seek rewards. He wants us to follow because we love Him, because He loves us, and because we seek His love. Unfortunately, it is possible once we reach the tree that we can fall away.

This reminds me of a story, to jump back to the science aspect of things. I am sure everybody is well aware of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein. I just finished reading a book about Richard Feynman, maybe some of you have heard of this man. I am sure Gerry has, being in the physics field. Morally he was not the greatest guy in the world but he was a very, very smart man. In the book, they related stories where people would come to him because he was such a master of science and ask him questions about something they had staked their whole careers on. They had done this research and they wanted to present it to him and ask if he thought it was okay. A couple of times people would go up to him and say, "This is my research. This is what I have been working on for my whole career. Do you think it is right?" And he would say, "Well, yes. I think it's right." Then he would open his drawer, pull out a piece of paper and say, "Yes, that's right. I did that awhile ago!"

Here was a man that just loved science and he worked on it and he solved all these many problems; and he did not publish everything he did because he didn't necessarily care for any praise or acclaim that might come to him. Some might seek science to win the Nobel prize. Or some might seek science to get awards or to get publications. But these people who truly love science didn't care about all of that. There are similar stories about Isaac Newton and I am sure there are stories about Einstein as well. So the reward for us, not really the reward but the end of the journey, is at the love of God.

Another way of looking at this is to think about your parents. We all have parents and some of us are parents. Some of us are still children, and some of us were children just a few years ago. When did you recognize most that your parents loved you? Was it when you did something bad and they had to scold or punish you; or was it when you did something that they asked you to do? I am sure most would agree and say that when you did something your parents asked you to do, when you always tried to follow their commandments, if you will, the love that your parents had for you was most evident. So, in the same way, as we are diligent and dedicated to the Lord, as we hold fast to that rod of iron, as we travel down that path, we get closer to the tree of life, and our experience with that love of God is more complete.

The other thing I like about the story of the tree of life is if you go read Nephi's account of Lehi's vision and then read Nephi's vision, there is commentary between the explanation of the vision that assists Nephi in understanding it. If you remember, the angel asked, "What do you want to know?" and Nephi says, "I want to know the meaning of Lehi's vision." And what was the first experience that the angel shared to help him understand? If you go back and read, he talked about Mary and about Jesus and His birth. The angel then asked Nephi, "What does the tree of life mean?" After he shared that experience, he said, "Now I know. The love of God!" If you look and read John 3:16 which we all know: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, ...," that's His love - Jesus Christ and sending Him to die for us sinners.

One more scripture relative to the testimony. This is the first book of Nephi 3:64-65: "And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying, Yea, and the most joyous to the soul."

I am sure that many of us have experienced that great love from God, and maybe we have gotten to the point where I did with my scientific endeavors to say, "Why would anybody want to do

anything else? Why would you not want to serve God? Why would you not want to go out and preach the gospel in Africa or wherever it is? Why?" And until we get to that point in our lives where we fully experience the love of God, we can never say that about witnessing - and about being God's children. Until we taste of the fruit of the tree of life, we will never be able to have those desires.

The Most Desirable Above All Things!

We all know or have heard the scripture, "Do not procrastinate the day of your salvation." For the young people who are here, I have learned one important lesson now that I am finally out of school after twenty seven years. When I was in high school, I remember thinking, "Yes, God, I really want to dedicate myself to You, but I just want to finish high school." If I could just get through high school, then I could do it. The feeling was that I wanted to finish up. Then I realized when I got to college, the same thoughts came - "You know, God, I just want to finish up college. Then when I finish college, I will go off and do what You want." Even sometimes recently, "When I finish grad school." You know the next chapter - whenever I get married or whenever it might be. There is always an excuse that we can make in our lives, especially when we are young people; because when we get out and we get into jobs it might be a little bit easier to rationalize serving God with all your heart. But I know it is a difficult decision when you are a young person because it wasn't too long ago that I was there. But if you are contemplating the same sort of things that I did when I was in high school, don't put it off any longer; because as many in your families and in the church will testify, and you may have already discovered, the fruit of the tree of life is the most desirable above all things.

I always like to talk about examples of people so we might have a real idea of what it might be like. I gave the example of Richard Feynman in science, but there are far more wonderful examples of those who fully tasted the tree of life, and there are those in this congregation who have as well. There are those that have lived that kind of life that we can look up to and see what it was like, and maybe we can understand from them.

Some of my favorite people come from the Book of Mormon, and I would like to read a few scriptures that are attributed to them. I will mention just two. The first is the four sons of Mosiah. We know that story. They, with Alma, were bad people. They went around trying to destroy the church. Alma's father prayed for them. Alma and the others were visited by an angel. Then they got to the point where they received the forgiveness of God and they fully tasted of the love of God that He had for them. And what was the response that they made? This is one of my favorite scriptures in the Book of Mormon. It comes from Mosiah 12:5-7: "Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; Yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment, did cause them to quake and tremble. And thus did the Spirit of the Lord work upon them, for they were the very vilest of sinners." Do we have that kind of love and desire for people? I am sure some of us do.

My other favorite person is Moroni from the book of Alma. He was the chief captain of the army and he did many wonderful things. Particularly, I would like to read from the twenty first chapter of the book of Alma, starting with verse one hundred thirty two. "And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery; Yea, a man whose heart did

swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people: Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath, to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.” And my favorite part of this chapter is from 140 -141: “Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken for ever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. Behold, he was a man like unto Ammon, the son of Mosiah, yea, and even the other sons of Mosiah; yea, and also Alma and his sons, for they were all men of God.”

So being that it is Communion Sunday and the birth of a new year, what can we do this year different than we have done in the past? I feel that we as Saints can strengthen each other. We can dedicate ourselves to prayer and study and continue to strive to follow His commandments. As we do that, we will travel down that path toward that great love which God has for us, which at times when we are not serving Him we are not fully capable of feeling. As we do that, we will sense that great love and we will be more dedicated; and we will get to the point as Saints and as a congregation wondering why anybody in the world would want to do anything else besides serve God.

So my hope and prayer is that as a congregation and as a people we can do this. And can you imagine, if just this congregation - those people who are here right now and even those who were unable to make it today - if we all were dedicated and became like Moroni and the four sons of Mosiah - If we all had that desire and that love, what a change in the world it would make? I will leave that to your imagination, but I feel it would change the world!

Pastoral Prayer

A pastoral prayer by pastor Alan Smith followed the serving of the emblems.

“Our kind and loving heavenly Father, as we have shared here this morning and You have seen the desires of our hearts, we would ask that You would give us a taste of that love - the pure love of Christ - this morning that we may say, “There is nothing else that matters in our life but knowing You and serving You.”

Father, we come with burdens of various kinds and with joys of various kinds as we meet before You on this first day of the new year. As we have shared in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, as we have repented and have seen with new eyes what we need to be about in this new year, help us, Father, to rely on You. May we be able to say, like Jacob, “Because we have so many witnesses of Your love, that our faith may truly become unshaken - that in this new year we may, in your name, move the trees, the mountains and the rivers in terms of the places where we see Your word and Your work needing to be brought forth and that we will do it remembering that it is in Your power and not anything that we do ourselves that makes this great and marvelous work take place.”

Father, we yearn for Your kingdom. We yearn for a world where young people can be brought up free from sin and knowing You and Your love from the very beginning of their lives through all of their days. You have promised us, Father, that there cannot be a happier people on the face of the earth than those who will love You with all their hearts, might, mind and strength.

May we be able to come closer to that kingdom in this new year in all of our relationships -- in our homes, in our places of work, in our worship together.

We pray these things in the name our your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Access To The God of Heaven

Elder Norman Nelson read Doctrine and Covenants 22:23 - “And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, The heavens, they are many and they can not be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man. “Robert Rolfe sang, “Deep Were His Wounds”, a song of the agony of the cross and its value winning for us the eternal life of which the scripture spoke. Then Dr. Nelson began his sermon.

I have learned a lot of things over time, but one of the major things I have learned is that regardless of what I say, unless you understand what I am saying, it doesn’t mean anything to you. So I would like to give the children some knowledge that I have gained about our Lord. There was a time in my life when I wondered, “Does it really matter? Does the Lord really hear me?”

What happened? A voice came to me, “I have heard every word of every prayer you have ever said.” And that’s what He says to you today. Every word of every prayer you say, He will hear, and He will answer if you will listen. But you have to believe He will hear you, and you have to believe that you need to listen to what He says to you, and He will answer your every prayer.

A poem in the Nov.-Dec. 2005 Tidings of Zion goes like this: ‘Twas a sheep, not a lamb, that went astray in the parable Jesus told. ‘Twas a grown up sheep that wandered away from the ninety and nine in the fold.

And out on the hilltops and out in the cold, ‘Twas a sheep the good Shepherd sought, And back to the flock and back to the fold, ‘Twas a sheep the good Shepherd brought.

Now why should the sheep be so carefully fed and cared for still today?

Because there is danger if they go wrong they will lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the sheep, you know, wherever they wander, wherever they go.

If the sheep go wrong, it will not be long ‘til the lambs are as wrong as they.

So, still for the sheep we must earnestly pray for the sake of the lambs today.

If the lambs are lost, what a terrible cost some sheep will have to pay!”

The Testimony of the Scriptures

I like to study John, the beloved friend of Jesus. (John 5:24-35) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who heareth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they who hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.

“Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust. And shall all be judged of the Son of Man. For as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just; For I can of mine own self do nothing; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who hath sent me. Therefore if I bear witness of myself, yet my witness is true. For I am not alone, there is another who beareth witness of me, and I know that the testimony which he giveth of me is true.

“Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness also unto the truth. And he received not his testimony of man, but of God, and ye yourselves say that he is a prophet, therefore ye ought to receive his testimony. These things I say that ye might be saved.”

We like to think of ourselves as good people. But if we really think of ourselves truly, we know that we are actually the worst of sinners; because we have so much given to us, and we treat the things we are given so lightly and accuse others of not doing what they ought to do. How many of us are still actually abiding by the advice of the Patriarchs? Are we studying the time we should? Are we praying and fasting as they asked us to do? Are we witnessing as we are asked to do? The time is so short and we forget so quickly, don't we?

In the Doctrine and Covenants we are advised that we were condemned because we treated so lightly the things that God has given us. We don't study the Book of Mormon. We don't pray continually. We don't do so many of the things that God has asked us to do. Just because you are only seven or eight or nine or whatever age, doesn't mean that you are excused from that, either. You need to - of course your parents need to help you - but you need to be doing that yourself. You need to be studying the scriptures - to read and to try to understand what God wants you to do.

God Seeks To Aid Us

Remember in the Book of Mormon, when Jesus was here among the people, one of the first things He did was to call the children together and blessed them and had the angels from heaven come down and teach them. And the children were able to speak such wonderful things that their fathers and mothers had never known. The children were the ones He blessed greatly at that time. And because of the love of all the people at those meetings, it was four generations - four hundred years before they forgot what the Lord had done for them, and the love that He had shown them, and the love they had for Jesus.

So now is the time for us to find that love, that devotion through study, through prayer, to make it very important that we commune with God and Jesus at all times - not just on Sunday - not just when a meeting is called together, but when you are in your private places - when you are out with your friends - when you are doing all the duties that you have to do, you must do them to honor God. Christ, you remember, said, “I do the things that please My Father.” “I do the things that please My Father!” Everything I do should be to please Him.

Remember when Christ was here with the people, as recorded in the Third book of Nephi, he talked to the disciples and said, “Didn't I tell Samuel the Lamanite to say that when I arose from the dead that many souls arose from the dead and ministered to the people?” The Disciples said, “Yes.” Jesus said, “Why didn't you write it?” “Why didn't you write that?” And so they did, and it is in Helaman 5:80. “And many highways shall be broken up, and many cities shall become desolate, and many graves shall be opened and

shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many.

Read the entire conversation from 3 Nephi 10:36-41. “Verily, I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me, that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them, Were it not so? “And his disciples answered him and said, Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

“And Jesus said unto them, How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many, and did minister unto them?”

“And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written, therefore it was written according as he commanded.”

The same thing is repeated in Matthew 27:55-57 - “And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and the bodies of the saints which slept, arose, who were many, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, went unto the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

I think, as I have told you before, those Saints are still here and available to help you and me to fulfill the mission we have of ministry to those who do not know He is God. If you look back, all of the prophets speak of ministering of angels. Nephi was ministered to by angels. He knew what was going to happen because the angels told him what to expect and what to do. Do you know one reason why we are not doing all we ought to do? We haven't lived for nor expected that ministry of the Church of the First Born, the angels and Christ Himself to be with us, to teach us and to lead us where we need to go. Unless we begin doing what we need to do, to continually live in the Spirit with God, we can't have that ministry to help us do the thing that we want to do for God's work. We must be more diligent in keeping the commandments - in remembering what we promise every first Sunday. We must do this if we will be the ministers that God needs to spread His gospel to those who know Him not.

“Oh Lord, I heard You calling in the night, with tears of anguish for me.

You showed me a long straight road that led to Calvary.

I caught sight of you standing there, so sad. You were hoping I would win.

You waved encouragement to keep me safe from sin.

You told me so many things when Your Spirit was in my heart.

I would climb spiritual mountains, You said, right from the start. You are so good when I am weak, as I cry unto you in my prayers, Then I feel the warmth of Your Spirit like climbing some heavenly stairs.

And courage floods my soul, There is in me a wakening power. For eternal life is my goal, Your Spirit fortifies me in this hour.”

(Poem written by Brother Bill Davies)

Jesus Takes Our Sins to Make It Possible

There was another experience that I had, and I told you before, but I think it is important that we think of it now. One day when I was over in Nigeria, I was talking to a group of men and women, and one of them asked me a question. At that point it was just like the Pharisees talking to Jesus and trying to tempt Him to find an answer that He couldn't give. A gentleman asked me, “Why did Jesus sin

in the Garden of Gethsemane?"

Of course my answer was, "He didn't!", but I didn't have a clue as to what more should have been said. Then Jesus spoke to my mind, and I answered, "You think I was afraid to die on the cross. You are wrong! The reason I sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane was because I knew the pain of having to be separated from My Father in order to take upon Me your sins, if you repent."

We are wholly dependent on Jesus Christ to take upon Himself our sins; but we have to repent and seek diligently to do the things He tells us to do. And remember, I said, this starts at any age - whether you are five or seven or ten, seventy five or older. We must repent and depend on Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, to give us remission - to give us access to the God of heaven. We have to do our part, study, pray, continually keep Him in mind.

Nobody is a Nobody in the Body of Christ

Yvonne and Aquila Galusha had accompanied Yvonne, Jazmyn Galusha and Elizabeth Swartz singing "Let Us Pray For One Another" just before Gordon Winkler opened his scriptures to begin his sermon Sunday, January 15, 2005. Gordon thanked them for the music and commented the song was most appropriate for the hour. We should be praying for each other and we should be exhorting each other so that we can accomplish all that has been set before us to get accomplished. He then read from Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Paul on "Two Are Better Than One"

We are going to talk this morning considerably about Paul and the writings of Paul. You might find that starting with Ecclesiastes is a far stretch from Paul. We are a way back in the Old Testament, and I want to talk about Paul in the New Testament, but we are going to get there. The reason I think we are going to get there is because I think the principle of two are better than one helping the fallen and providing comfort to each other, providing strength and support is a message that is across the writings that Paul has given.

I don't know whether the Apostle Paul has familiarity with this writing in Ecclesiastes, but it seems to me that it is the foundation for his ministry, is a common thread through his journeys and his preaching, and was the need for what he expresses as the significance for understanding the body of Christ. So to illustrate this common theme, I would like to read several passages attributed to Paul's writings and his ministry throughout the people and the cities of his day. I am going to start with Romans 12:4-8. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office;

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth,

on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

From Galatians the third chapter, 26th through 29th verses, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ :For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

We will continue on to Ephesians 4:11-16, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" Edifying of the body of Christ? Does everyone know what edifying means? Sometimes we read through these scriptures and read words but don't understand them. To edify means to instruct and improve, especially in a moral and religious knowledge. So if we were to read that sentence again, maybe, it might read something like, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the instruction and improving of moral and religious knowledge of the body of Christ." Continuing with the original scripture, "Till we, in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Paul continues in that same theme in writing to the Hebrews, chapter 10 verses 23-25, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised; And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." So Paul is telling the Hebrews that they should assemble themselves. They should get together often as the day approaches. And if Paul was concerned about "the day approaching" in his time, how much more concerned should we be about that day?

But finally I would like to turn to Corinthians the twelfth chapter, and this contains the most elaborate description that Paul gives of the body of Christ. He compares the body of Christ with the anatomy of our physical bodies through the relationship of the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye, the nose and the head. This is contained in the twelfth chapter of first Corinthians, verses 12 through 27, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath

God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

I would like to take a few minutes and make some comments and observations about Paul’s writing there. I hope that you did notice the common thread in that which Paul has written. It seems to be the message that Paul really wanted to get across to all those that he contacted was how important it was that each individual be a part of the body of Christ.

God Placed You Here And Is Pleased

In verse 18 it read, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” I think that is really important. It is right in the middle of this whole section, but I think it is very important. It says that God has placed you here and it has pleased Him. If you remember nothing else this morning, I hope you remember that! God has placed you here and it has pleased Him that you are a part of the body of Christ.

Did you ever wonder how you got to be where you are? Wonder how you got to be doing what you are doing? I’ve thought about that. And I’ve thought about that because I grew up in suburban Detroit. I spent my whole life in suburban Detroit. I started college in Wayne State University in down town Detroit. And here I am on my 19th year living in Mount Ayr, Iowa. How did that come about? What am I doing here? I hope maybe that eighteenth verse answers some of that for me. God has placed me here, and He is pleased! What further was of interest to me was, not only am I from Detroit and now here in Mount Ayr, but one Sunday morning when we were still over at the church on Lincoln Street, I walked into church and there sat Diane Nash - Diane Anderson now, and I thought that can’t really be because Diane and I grew up together in Detroit International Stake and spent lots of time together going to church and youth activities, and I thought, strange as it may seem that I am here in Mount. Ayr, it seems almost unimaginable to walk in and see Diane Anderson there. And I have really enjoyed the association and the ministry of being together with Diane and her family since we have both been here in the Mount Ayr area.

Verse 21 says, “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” I think that is significant. I think God set every member in the body, and He was pleased. So how can we, from congregation to congregation act as if we don’t need each other? There is something about each one of us that is needed here. Did you ever think about that? There is something about each one of you being here that’s needed.

Verse 23 uses a word that I wasn’t really comfortable with, and is actually kind of hard to read. That word is comely and comeliness. I wanted to read it as common and commonness, but that is not

what it says at all. So I went and looked up what comely means. Comely means attractive or pleasant because of good looks. So I think what is being talked about here in verse 23 which reads, “And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.” So what in effect is being said there is that our unattractiveness individually becomes more attractive being a part of the body of Christ. Or in other words, our individual flaws and our faults are not as recognizable as our contribution which is magnified by our being part of the body of Christ. Isn’t that a good thought? We don’t have to stand with our individual faults and shortcomings being out in front if we are members of the body of Christ because our collectiveness and our goal of trying to reach the Kingdom of God is magnified.

An Outline of the Way to the Kingdom

Verse 25 says that there should be no schisms in the body, but that the membership have the same care one for another. Schism is another word for division or separation. Paul is addressing those saints and saying that we need to be together, and we need to draw our thoughts and our learning together so that we don’t find ourselves separated. But I think, much more than a narrative on getting along, as sometimes it is interpreted here, I think it is an outline of what it will take to build the Kingdom of God. It is not just how do we come to church and sit so that nobody is offended or somebody has to be next to somebody they don’t really care for. It is more of an outline as to how we go about to build the Kingdom of God

Verse 26 says that whether one member suffers, all members suffer. If one member is honored, all members rejoice with them. As I was preparing and reading through this, I couldn’t help but think of the Jordison family and just how heart wrenching it is to see what their family is going through at this time with the illnesses that have beset them - with Barbra having her bout with cancer - with Merle being near death from the cancer that has taken his body -and with the effect it has had on Jan trying to keep all that together, and I just couldn’t help but feel the hurt that there is in that family. And that is a part of being the body of Christ that we suffer when our members suffer.

I couldn’t help but think of the Anderson family. Although I know that there is suffering there because of the separation of Sam from what the family believes and what the family has taught him and has tried to raise him up, that they do rejoice in the love of grandparents that they have for their grandsons. We have to recognize the burden on that family although in their suffering there is rejoicing.

And I thought also of the Danny Kinnaman family and the suffering that he has had in trying to do what he feels the direction of the Lord would lead him to do, and how that has tugged at his family in trying to keep the family together. So I would ask you to remember his family also.

We do a fair job of rejoicing and honoring those things that happen to our members. We rejoice and honor the marriages that have occurred in our congregation, the birthdays, and I understand we have another birthday coming shortly - is that right Gable? - and anniversaries. We rejoice and we honor the awards that are given to our members in athletics and in terms of musical performance and ability. We honor and rejoice in the educational accomplishments of many of our members. And all of that is part of being the body of Christ.

In verse 27 Paul kind of wraps it up and says, “Now, ye are the

body of Christ and members in particular.” So what does it mean to be particular. what does it mean to be the ears? To be the eyes? To be the head, hands and feet of the body of Christ? If you are to be an ear in the body of Christ, what do you think that means to you? If we are the ears to listen and/or to hear the voice of God, what does that mean to you?

In the 85th Psalm, the Psalmist writes, beginning with verse 8, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly. Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.”

If we are in the body of Christ and we are the ear, it says we will hear what God the Lord will speak. If I think of myself as an ear, I am kind of like the radio station that is not coming in too clearly. There is a little static coming between God and myself. I am not getting the message that I should be getting. And so I think I am just not quite tuned in. And maybe you feel that way sometimes. Maybe what we need to do is turn the knob a little bit so that the reception is better so we are getting that clear message that God wants us to hear when He speaks to us.

What are we if we are an eye in the body of Christ? We are eyes that need to be open to see the opportunities that God sets before us. Proverbs 29, verse 18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Where there is no vision the people perish. That’s kind of concerning, isn’t it? We need to have our eyes open, and we need to have that vision of the Kingdom of God in order to prevent people from perishing. John, chapter 4 verse 37 says, “Say not ye there are yet four months, then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” That scripture would lead us to believe that the body of Christ sees things differently than we might otherwise see things. Somebody in this scripture being discussed here thought that the harvest was four months away, but through the spiritual eyes, the harvest is ready - it is white!

Second Kings, chapter 6 verses 15 through 17 tell the story of Elisha..

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

Sometimes our eyes just are not open, and we just don’t see what the Lord has there for us. Elisha’s prayer should be a prayer on our hearts, that we should ask the Lord to “open my eyes that I may see”.

A man by the name of Steven Samuel Wise once wrote, “Vision looks inward and becomes a duty. Vision looks outward and becomes aspiration. Vision looks upward and becomes faith.” As the body of Christ, let us look upward.

If we are the hands in the body of Christ, they must respond to the work that is to be done. Dr. Albert Switzer once said, “One thing

I know. The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

In the ninth chapter of Matthew, verses 43 through 44 it reads, “Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.” That’s what it means to be a hand in the body of Christ.

The account that Paul gives also talks about feet. So, if we are the feet, what does that mean? I think if we are the feet in the body of Christ, that means that we must be ready to go! I am reminded of Brother George (Knotts) sitting behind me who went and got his passport in order and then was called and asked to go to Honduras. His feet were ready to go!

The sixth chapter of Ephesians talks about putting on the armor of God. Verse 15 of that account instructs us to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We need to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost and into the dying world.

We have talked a lot about Paul, and we have had most of the scriptures this morning out of the Bible, but I would like you to hear for a moment part of Mormon’s experience. This is recorded in the ninth chapter of Moroni. I am going to read verses 3 through 6 and then I am going to read the end of that chapter also. Mormon is writing to his son, Moroni these words: “And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people, for they do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually to anger, one with another. Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness, they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness, they harden their hearts against it; wherefore I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them. For so exceedingly do they anger, that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually. And now my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest out souls in the kingdom of God.” Mormon describes himself as having a labor to perform while in this tabernacle of clay - while in the body that he was in. I think we could all agree that in the situation he was in it would be kind of hard to know how to minister and to speak. If you spoke sharply, and the people angered against you and if you didn’t speak sharply, they just refused to hear you; yet that didn’t deter Mormon from what he felt was his calling. So he concludes his writing to his son by saying, “My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written, grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death, but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the shewing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long suffering, and the hope of his glory, and of eternal life, rest in your mind for ever. And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you for ever. Amen.”

So sharing the good news of the gospel has been hard at times, but it is what the body of Christ is called to do. You must realize that the gospel is not something we go to church to hear but it is something we go from church to tell. Proverbs 4:18 says, “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

As I mentioned earlier, I think Paul’s expose on the body of

Christ is more than just how to get along. It is an outline of what it will take to build the Kingdom of God.

The Body of Christ and a Jigsaw Puzzle

Gable (a recently baptized child), does that seem a little hard to understand? Does it seem a little confusing, the foot not knowing the hand and the eye not knowing the ear? I thought so. So let me try and explain it to you from a different way. I believe what Paul is talking about is that we are like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. We got this jigsaw puzzle at Christmas time. It's a picture and it is called, "Sunday at Grandma's". It is of a painting that is done by Pearl Buckley Moss, one of Linda's favorite artists, and so we have a number of her paintings around the house. In that picture you can see Grandma and Grandpa around the table. There's a cat and a little baby with a doll, and a mom and dad and two other sisters and a brother; and they are at Grandma's on Sunday. If you notice in looking at that picture that there are many smaller pictures. There is a picture of a teakettle here. There is a cat down here. There is a wash basin here. There's a lamp here, but all of those little pictures go together to make the one big puzzle. And if you notice, if any of those little pictures were missing, you wouldn't have the whole big picture.

One of the things that I am sure you know about puzzles is that puzzle pieces are all shaped differently. Some are very similar, but if you try to put one in the wrong place, you will notice that even if it is similar, it won't go in that spot. Sometimes you turn them and turn them and they still don't fit. I have had the experience of putting that piece down and looking around and looking around and picking up the same piece again because I was sure that had to be the piece that went in to fill that picture. But it doesn't. So the pieces may look very similar but they are not exact.

And that's kind of like people. Wouldn't you say, Gable, that we all have eyes? We all have ears. We have hands and feet, but we are still different. We have different finger prints. We have different hair colors. Some of us are tall. Some are short. Some of us are males. Some of us are females. So we are so much alike, but still we are different. So I am hoping you can see the correlation here because each individual piece helps to complete the picture like each individual person helps complete the body of Christ. And that makes you an amazing piece, because you are necessary to complete the body of Christ. You have talents and abilities that maybe you are still developing, but you will have talents and abilities that will help us together, like the interlocking pieces of a puzzle.

As we said, a puzzle has many pictures within a picture, like the church in Mount Ayr is part of the world of believers in Jesus Christ. We are just the teakettle in the whole picture of the world in relationship to Jesus Christ.

When you are putting a puzzle together, you start with something that looks familiar. That leads you to other areas and after a few more pieces that you may have struggled to get together, a new area becomes familiar. As we learn and grow spiritually as members of the body of Christ, our lives in relationship to the Kingdom of God will become clearer, just as getting all the pieces together makes the picture of the puzzle become clear. One piece missing and the puzzle is not complete.

Well, who is missing? We look at our congregation this morning and we can see that there are people missing, but most of those people that we are used to seeing here will come back. They are out ministering in other capacities today. But who is missing? Last weekend, we had a prayer and fasting weekend and we prayed for those who know not God. Those people are missing from the

body of Christ. We also prayed for those that have strayed and left from the body of Christ. Those people are missing, and our picture is not complete. We have to find a way to minister to those people to get them back so that our picture will be completed.

You know I had a thought just in closing here. What if everyone in the body of Christ were like you? As I thought about that, I thought, "Boy, that's not good idea if you guys were all like me!" For one thing, there wouldn't be the music that we shared in. That's not one of my talents. I appreciate music and I try to sing, but that would be missing if everyone in the body of Christ was like me. And you can see that those things that I don't have, many of you have. That's why we need each other. That's why we gain strength from being together. It allows us to work toward building up the Kingdom of God.

While it is just a closing thought, I would like you to think about the fact that nobody is a nobody if you are a part of the body of Christ.

Come To The Rock of Your Salvation

High Priest Robert Rolfe read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." We meditated on the scripture while Nancy Short played "How Great Thou Art on her violin." When Brother Rolfe spoke, he spoke especially to the young. Those under ten were invited to the front with a promise that they were going to get to fall on the floor and have some good times in a little bit. He then read some of Jesus' own words from Matthew 7: 34-35, which he assured the older folk would be pretty familiar. "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Young folk, is Jesus trying to teach us to build strong houses? Is that what those verses are about? In a sense that is true. He is. Lynda and I moved into a house after it got fixed, but the problem was the foundation of that house fell off one side, and the roof actually opened up right at the peak with about a six inch gap. Now, if you don't think strong foundations are important, you should have seen that house! It actually just opened right up just like somebody was pulling the top apart.

Wisdom Vs. Knowledge

With that Brother Rolfe went to a table on which he had placed a stack of books and asked, If you could read everything that is in those books and remember it - not just read but also remembered - would you be able to be sure that your house wasn't going to fall down? Not necessarily. the reason is that you can have a lot of knowledge but not necessarily wisdom. Jesus said in that scripture

that those who were wise built their house upon the rock. Wisdom doesn't have anything to do with Knowledge. You can be wise and not know very much about things. And you can know a lot of things and not be very wise about anything. You will run into people like that. You might even look in the mirror. Jesus is talking about a test here. If you are wise, you won't have a problem.

Let me just show you something. If you take these books here. Let's just say that instead of laying them flat on this table, I take this same set of books, set them here where the foundation isn't as good, and see what is already beginning to happen. A little bit of force - a little bit of wind and they all fall over. And that is what Jesus has said is going to happen to us if we don't build upon the rock that He has been telling us to build upon.

Ron Smith stepped forward with his guitar and Brother Rolfe explained, Ron has agreed to play the song that had been distributed for all to sing, with appropriate actions, including the children falling on the floor at the appropriate time:

"The wise man built his house upon a rock. The rains came down and the floods came up. And the house on the rock stood firm.

"The foolish man built his house upon the sand. The rains came down and the floods came up. And the house on the sand went "splat"!

"So be wise and build your house upon the rock - on the rock of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings will come tumbling down.

"The blessings come down as the prayers go up, so build your life on the Lord."

I want to point out to you that wisdom is putting knowledge into practice. I have had lots of people come into my office who had advanced degrees. They would tell me what they had done, and they would hide their eyes while they told me because they recognized themselves as foolish. It was really a dumb thing to do. I have been there, too. Just because you have a lot of knowledge doesn't mean that you don't do foolish things. The scriptures teach us that we should be filled with knowledge and wisdom. If we read all the books that are available to us and remember everything that is in them, we have knowledge, but not much wisdom. Some people know a lot about Jesus. They know what He taught and they put those teachings into practice. Those are the wise people. And there are a lot of people who know a lot about Jesus. They know what He taught, but they don't put those teachings into practice. Those are the foolish people that He talked about. Now, is that simple enough that everyone can understand? That's what He was saying in there. If you were wise, you will build upon the rock.

The Object - Build Upon The Rock

Who is the Rock? (The answer came from the congregation - Jesus Christ.) Yes, that is the answer. I have another passage now for the adults that is a little clearer. It comes from the Book of Mormon. This is what Jesus said to the people when He visited over here after His resurrection and ascension. I am starting at the thirty ninth verse of chapter 5 of Third Nephi. It says, "And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things. And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them."

Notice that you are building on the rock, and Jesus is talking

about that, and near the end of His teaching in the Book of Mormon He said that if ye shall always do these things, blessed are ye because ye are built upon my rock." That's the object. You want to build upon the rock.

For those of you who aren't in construction, you may not see the importance of this, but if you have ever seen what happens when you don't have that foundation right, you know you can have big trouble. Was there anybody here when we were trying to jack up that trailer house at Andover Church other than me? (There was response). Remember what happened? We were getting this thing up and everything was going well when all of a sudden that thing just went right on down! Something we didn't do right an all of those beams and all of that work we did for naught because the trailer house was sitting right back on the ground and we had to start over, and hopefully not have anybody under there if it falls!

You saw the Tsunami in southeast Asia, and you probably noticed, as I did, that there was a hurricane at New Orleans. You may have noticed that we have problems with AIDS in San Francisco and in New York particularly. Are those God's work? Did those people get it because they deserve it? Are we looking at rotten, nasty people so God is punishing them and destroying them? Does God sit around at night dreaming up new ways to torture us and cause us misery when we don't do what He wants? I heard somebody say, I won't mention names, but someone said God was punishing those Muslims in Southeast Asia and that was why that happened.

Scriptures do talk about God judging people, and there is a time when you don't escape the judgment, but I think that if we go so far as to say every time this happens, "That's God doing it!" There is a problem in that. Do you know what the problem is? Because it was all the poor people who had their houses destroyed, and the scriptures say God loves poor people. My mother always said He loved them and that was why He made so many of them - he loved them the best. But if you looked a little closer, and the media didn't show that, the mosques in Southeast Asia were left standing. Did God just have poor aim and miss? Was He trying to get them and missed again? I might point out to you that the reason that the mosques were still standing was because they were not built on the sand. They were built up on high ground on good solid foundations. That's why they withstood it. It was all those that were built upon the sand that got destroyed.

One of our problems is, and it has always been that way for thousands of years, we think our cities are permanent. We think of our cities as secure places. They are permanent structures and they will last forever. But if you go into the archeological record, you can just find hundreds of cities for which you might find a foundation here and there, but nobody lives there any more. They are all gone - every single one of them! All the buildings are gone. Everything is gone. Our cities are temporary whether you think of them that way or not. In fact, as a Christian, all of Christianity could be based on a tale of two cities. Remember the book you had to read, The Tale of Two Cities. What are the two cities? One is the City of Enoch, the city of God. The other is the city of Cain - the city of Babylon or Rome, it depends on the time Those cities exist in every age. those who aspire to get to one city go toward God. Those who aspire to wealth and fame go toward the other city.

There is an interesting scripture in the book of Helaman that answers that question, and I want to read that. I asked the question, "Is God really bombarding these people and giving them that problem? So I would like to read Helaman 2: starting at the 74th

verse. And I would like you to hear who it is that is causing the problem, if you wonder who is doing this to whom. "And now my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation, that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds; yea, his shafts in the whirlwind; Yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you, to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build, they can not fall."

Was Helaman talking about building houses? Not really. He was talking about building your life - your spiritual life on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. And believe me, Jesus didn't tell us this just to teach us to build houses on rocks. He taught us this because He wanted us to know that if we want a strong life, we have to build it on strong things, and that is our Lord, Jesus Christ. So, you notice Matthew 7 again said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings". Has anybody heard them this morning? John said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Anybody here not have ears? Do you have at least one ear? (Grant Snethen always said that he had two ears. the little ear was the intake ear and the big ear was the exhaust ear, which made it easier for things to go right on through.) I kind of say that, tongue in cheek, because Jesus says whosoever heareth these sayings and doeth them I will liken unto a wise man. Then He says, "Whosoever heareth them and doeth them not, I will liken them unto a foolish man." So it's not only the hearing that counts.

The Rock Can Be A Stone of Stumbling

The second part of this is that if you want to trace this concept of Jesus as the rock, there are two ways that this splits. One is a rock of offense and a stone of stumbling. to those who don't believe. To them He is a rock, all right, but, He is something that is going to cause people trouble. How many of you have read in Hebrews 11:7 that Noah's building the ark condemned the world? How did him building an ark there condemn the world? That's what it says in Hebrews 11:7. I just ask you that again. How did building that ark condemn the world? There may be more than one answer to this, but let me put it this way. Noah preached for a hundred and twenty years, and until the last seven days before the rain started the ark set there with the door open and all were invited to come in. How many went in? Eight, right? Eight people. That is all that got saved. Now if you think of that in terms of odds, I don't know how many millions were alive, but you have eight against millions. You math people can calculate that pretty quickly. That isn't very good odds, is it? It's pretty poor odds if you were going to bet on it. The ark is sitting there, but the people would not believe. That's why Jesus said if you hear the sayings and do them, then you are built upon the rock. Not just hearing them. Lynda says, "Are you hearing this?" She has that little phrase that comes out over and over again to make sure I am listening.

How many of you have watched a ball game on TV and you see somebody holding up a sign that says John 3:16? I don't know why they carry those to ball games, but somebody always has that sign, and the camera always shows it before long. John, 3:16 - what does that say? Almost everyone here can recite that verse because it is such a familiar verse to most Christians. But the interesting thing is John 3:18 says, "He who believeth on him is not condemned; but he who believeth not is condemned already, ..." "Now, you might think about that because Jesus told the people when He was here that He didn't judge anybody. The word that My Father gives me, that's what is going to be judging you.

So when you get to the other side, all of those words are what are going to be used to judge you. And if you remember, in the book of Revelation, that says all the dead, small and great, stand before God and, it says, the books were opened. What were they judged by? The things in the books. So at that point you find out whether you heard and did what you were told to do, And in John 3:19 it says, "This is the condemnation that light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

I don't know about you, but we always think, if we are doing something we don't want to get caught doing, it is better to do it in the dark, or when Mom, or whoever it is that is going to try to catch you, isn't around. You choose the dark because you want to hide whatever it is you are doing. As one person said, "Who is going to know?" I have the answer to that. You are going to know and God is going to know. There are two people all ready who know what you are doing

Romans 9:33 says,. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offense; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." That is actually a quote from Isaiah 28. And in second Nephi 9:52. it says, "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both of the houses of Israel, for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." That was a specific reference to what was going to happen to the people who lived in Jerusalem and Israel. A gin is a noose for catching animals. It is another name for a snare. Sometimes it is a hook used for a hook in your nose. If somebody had a hook in your nose with a string on it, would you follow along? Noses are pretty sensitive. I think you probably would. In some places that was the way they kept the slaves coming. You don't have to encourage them so much if you have a hook in their nose! We used to take care of big dairy bulls that way. You put a ring in their nose and attach a chain to the ring and a stick to the chain and lead the bull around. He will follow that most of the time. Once in awhile, if they get really crazy, they rip the ring out of their nose and then you find out how fast you can run!

To most of our nation today, as you can see in our culture, Jesus is not the rock upon which they build. He is a rock of offense and a stone of stumbling. Many of you know that in the congress of the United States and at least half of the states, there is a chaplain or someone who will say a prayer before the session starts. You know that has been going on since the beginning of our country? In November of 2005 a federal judge in Indiana has ordered that any prayers offered in the House of Representatives in Indiana cannot mention the name of Jesus either by Christ or Savior or any other reference by title. But the judge, in his ruling of many pages, said that the Muslims could refer to Allah. That was OK, but the "chaplain" can't refer to Jesus Christ in any way, shape or form in his prayers. His buzz word was, "We have to have a nonsectarian prayer. Let me ask you this. If you said to me, "Pray for me." And I would say, Okay," would you like my prayer to be addressed to somebody, or does it matter to whom I am addressing the prayer? Most of us, whatever religion you are, think that if you are offering a prayer it is directed at something or someone. Otherwise, why would you be praying? Would you just be praying to some fuzzy nonentity up there some where?

Many of us here went to see Mel Gibson's The Passion of Christ. That was a great movie to see but I don't know if it is something you would see twice. It was not something you would say was enjoyable, The Entertainment Weekly Magazine says that Mel Gibson is in a heck of a jam and that that movie is going to kill

his movie career. One Hollywood exec said he will try very hard never to work with Mr. Gibson again. Why is that? Is it just because he produced the movie on his own? No. It is because it was actually depicting Jesus Christ as God. That's what it is coming down to. The rock of offense - that's what Jesus is to those people. And if you think it is just there, I am only touching a few of the things that are going on. The US Navy recently has ordered all of its Chaplains not to use the name of Jesus when they pray, and they have had people filing complaints with the President and others because Chaplains who are in there think, "Let me get this straight. I am supposed to be a minister here and give spiritual help to the men but I can't mention the name of the God that they worship or that I worship?"

It is a question for each of us as we think about where we are in terms of this rock. It is the same question that was asked at Meribah. Remember where that is? That is the name of the place where Moses struck the rock and water gushed out. The question is, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Do you know who asked that question? All of the whining, sniveling slaves who were complaining about not having anything to drink. That's when Moses struck the rock, and out of the rock came the water. (If you look on the internet, you can find John Wyatt who is an archaeologist who claims he found that rock and has pictures of it.) Did that solve the problem when he gave them the water?. If you read that account you will find out they kept complaining, and that's part of the reason they all died matching around in the wilderness. Even though they had the water that came from Jesus Christ, it didn't solve the problem that was in their hearts - their hearts were not changed.

How many of you remember the hymn, "Rock of Ages"? I don't know whether you have thought about that - "Rock of Ages cleft for me." That's a very clear symbol of what happened at Meribah when that rock was struck. "Let me hide myself in thee." David uses the concept of hiding in the shadow of a rock or the cleft of a rock and using that as an illustration of God. "Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed." The symbolism is that Christ was struck when He was crucified and just like the rock, the water came out from His side to save His people.

In First Nephi 5 beginning a verse 111, it talks about that very thing. "Yea, and ye also know that Moses, by his word, according to the power of God which was in him, smote the rock, and there came forth water, that the children of Israel might quench their thirst; And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts, and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God. And it came to pass that according to his word, he did destroy them;"

And so, if the house is built on the sand, then it is going to be destroyed, It may not be today. It may not be tomorrow, but it is going to be sometime. that's what the lesson is.

Water That Gives Life

I would like to go back to talk about this water again. This is from John again, John 4:15-16. If you remember, this occurs when Jesus was in Samaria and there is this woman at the well. They had a discussion about water, and this is what Jesus said to her, "Whosoever shall drink of this well, shall thirst again; But whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And the woman said, "I don't want that! I'd rather have a Pepsi!" (There was a ripple of laughter.)

No, she said, "Give me of this water. I want it!" She may be in Samaria. She may have had five husbands, but she wasn't dumb enough to pass up the water that sprung up in her, everlasting life. She said, "I want that!" It is really quite a story because it is in that story that Jesus Himself said to her, "I am the Christ! I am the One who has come that she had been told about, and He didn't reveal that to very many people.

Let me read another scripture from Second Nephi 6:90. This says,

"Come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation." That's an invitation that we all need to listen to every single day. It isn't something we did back years ago when we had a warm feeling in our heart. We need to be coming unto Jesus every day. I like Francis Harper. He said every morning he prays that he would be able to walk in God's path that day and asks Him to direct his feet in that path. And so we don't discriminate against any of the scriptures that we have, this is section 32, the last verse, verse 3. "Behold, verily, verily I say unto you, This is my gospel, and remember that they shall have faith in me, or they can in nowise be saved; and upon this Rock I will build my church; " (Does that sound familiar to those of you who remember the discussion with Peter?) "Yea, upon this Rock ye are built, and if ye continue, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; and ye shall remember the church articles and covenants to keep them; and whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them. And the Book of Mormon, and the Holy Scriptures, are given of me for your instruction; and the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things; wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom; for, behold, verily, verily I say unto you, that I come quickly; even so. Amen."

May God add His blessing to these scriptures this day!

Songs of Everlasting Joy

Elder H. Alan Smith introduced the January 29 music service with the call to worship from Doctrine and Covenants 98:4f-4g: "Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion, for all flesh is in mine hands: be still, and know that I am God. Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered, they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their inheritances; they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy; to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things, that the prophets might be fulfilled."

The congregation had already sung, "Great and Marvelous Are Thy Works" O Lord of Hosts, Almighty One. Earth and firmament sing thy praise. Thy name is written in the sun!" Following the scripture we sang again, "My Life Flows on with Endless Song" above life's lamentations. ... Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?" Priest Jim Barber offered a prayer of praise for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our gathering and of dedication of the talents to be shared.

Kathy Akers at the piano accompanied the receiving of the offering with the hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

Alan spoke: "We are going to share in our service of worship and music this morning. Because of illness and other things, we don't have a lot of special numbers that we are going to share with

you, but we are going to have an opportunity to sing some hymns together as well. We will share the special numbers and then share some other music together and talk about how music is important to us.

“The scripture I read this morning says that when we gather back to Zion, we are going to be singing songs of everlasting joy. We hope that as we share and listen to the music, maybe some of those songs of everlasting joy, at least that spirit of everlasting joy, will be a part of what we do here this morning.”

George Knotts brought his inscribed baritone ukulele to the front and explained the part it plays in his daily worship. George expressed his thankfulness at being able to be here to share his testimony saying, “I am not the musician, you know, so I have improvised this at home. This is what I have come up with. I called Jack Ergo because I didn’t know how to explain what I was doing today. Jack said to call it, “Music as the Word!” Each note represents a word to me. Here is the first one.” He touched each of the strings on the instrument in sequence and explained, “it says, ‘Thank You Jesus.’ This instrument is sitting in a chair and each day as I go by, I just play that sequence and it ministers to me and reminds me, we should always remember Jesus. You know the Communion prayer. And one way I can do that is thank Him. He touched the strings again as he spoke.

“The other two - this one is dedicated to Heidi (Winkler), and the name of this one is, “Trust and be glad”. (George again touched each string in sequence). You notice the tune is quite a bit similar to the other one. Do you identify with this, Heidi, trust and be glad? “And the last one - I have this last one just in case there was an encore, I have this one I used to play. It was in the bathroom, and when I would go by, I would play this - ‘I praise You, Lord.’ Each time, I only have one in mind. I don’t have the whole repertoire. I just do one thing at a time. The one I am using now is, ‘Thank You, Jesus!’”

George played the broken cord again, then explained, “If you want to look at this instrument, on the back it has a silent testimony, and it doesn’t compromise. It says. ‘The Lord Jesus’ on that side and on the front it says, ‘Jesus is my Creator, Redeemer and Friend’.”

Yvonne Galusha sang “Admonition” the beloved counsel given to the church by the Holy Spirit through Apostle Joseph Luff near the turn of the twentieth century: “Oh My People, Saith the Spirit, hear the Word of God today! Be not slothful but obedient. ‘Tis the world’s momentous day! Unto honor I have called you - honor great as angels know. Heed you, then, a Father’s counsel and by deeds your purpose show.”

The congregation sang President Frederick M. Smith’s plea for the Zion he loved so deeply: “Zion the Beautiful Beckons Us On.” Onward to Zion, faithful and strong; onward and upward, battle along. Onward to Zion. March on with a song! Service the watchword, we fight against wrong. We have the promise that Jesus will come. Let us be faithful. His will be done. Jesus the Savior, meeting the throng. Oh, may His coming be not delayed long! To God be the glory. To Him the song. Zion the beautiful beckons us on.”

Ronald and Di Smith sang a medley beginning and ending with a song based on Deuteronomy 4:29: “And you shall seek me, and ye shall find me, when ye shall seek me with all your heart.” Between the assurances of the Lord’s availability they sang the beloved, “My God, How Wonderful Thou Art”, to the tune composed by Douglas and Judi Smith.

Sue Beck sang the reassuring hymn of all Christendom, based on the 84th Psalm which affirms God’s care for even the sparrows.

“I sing because I am happy. I sing because I am free. For his eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me.” Her song was made even more moving by the picture in the worship setting of a tiny bird sitting on the knob of a door that was waiting to be opened. The caption referred to the Psalm and to Christ’s declaration of the care the Father gives to the birds of the field, (Matthew 6:29 and Luke 12:26). We were also aware that Sue is just recovering from surgery of a serious nature.

Brother Smith spoke of an experience with music just the day before at Merle and Jan Jordison’s home. They were sitting around Merle’s bedside listening to him struggling to breathe when they pulled out the hymnals and began to sing. And it is interesting, he said, how music and the words of hymns can speak to you differently, or you hear different things depending on what the needs are or what is going on at the moment. “For instance, we sang, ‘How Gentle God’s Command.’ I would just like to read the words to you this morning.

‘How gentle God’s commands, how kind His precepts are.

Come, cast your burdens on the Lord and trust His constant care.

Why should this anxious load press down you weary mind.

Oh, seek your Heavenly Father’s throne and peace and comfort find.

His bounty will provide. His Saints securely dwell.

That hand which bears creation up will guard His people well.

His goodness stands approved, unchanged from day to day.

I’ll drop my burden at His feet and bear a song away.’

“We sang, ‘Jesus is Calling, O hear Him today. Calling for you. Calling for you.’

“We sang, “My Shepherd Will Supply My Need.” I would like us to turn to number 125 and just sing it now.” We sang that familiar and inspiring setting of the Twenty Third Psalm.

The congregation was then given an opportunity to share testimonies about how a hymn or a song had spoken to each of us at a time of need, and what blessing music had brought.

Di Smith was the first to respond. She told of her desire as a youth to serve the Lord mainly because of the hymn that states, “I gave My Life for you. What have you given for Me? I gave long years for you. Have you given one for me?” And there was a campfire song that affected her desire to serve. So, she decided that when she graduated she wanted to give a year to the Lord and was given that opportunity through the Church’s Older Youth Service Corps. That year in the service corps, she said, was one of the biggest blessings that has ever happened in her life. Her testimony was that we can never out give the Lord, and that song was an inspiration to her that brought the blessing.

Beth Knotts said she often awakens with a song on her mind that remains with her often for days. One song was the one Sue sang this morning. Beth says she doesn’t know where she learned it, Maybe her mother sang it to her when she was little. “Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows fall? Why should I oft feel lonely? For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me!” The song comes to mind when it is needed as the Lord speaks to our need through music.

Cheryl Phipps spoke of the 15 to 20 years when they did not attend church yet the hymns remained in their memory and ministered to them through the years.

Patty Bolingbroke told of her father, who was never a member of the church but had a kind of death bed repentance just before he died. “Beneath the Cross of Jesus” was sung at his funeral and has

remained a memorable one to her through the years. The second one of which she spoke was "Rejoice Ye Saints of Latter Days.

Patty's grandfather was a first generation church member in her family, and he lived with them the last few years of his life. He died when he was ninety eight, almost ninety nine. He had a cane. Patty remembers him sitting in a particular place in the dining room, tapping his cane to the rhythm of "Rejoice Ye Saints of Latter Days" as he sang it out. At times it was a little bit irritating to her father because her grandfather always liked to preach the gospel and wanted to make sure that everyone heard it, so he would sing that song. That's the one thing that Patty remembers about him, and every time we sing that song at church, she says, she can see him sitting there pounding his cane and singing, "Rejoice Ye Saints of Latter Days."

Yvonne Galusha said she is not very good at remembering words to the song the tune of which runs through her mind. She explained that the tune first and then the words to "Admonition" came to her Sunday morning and she felt the Lord's prompting when she sang it for this service.

Francis Parker told of a time when her mother, who had been a pianist in her younger days, was in a nursing home and completely unresponsive to anybody. Her daughter and granddaughter came to visit and sang, "The Old Old Path". As they sang Fran's mother's fingers began to move as though she was playing the music. Fran says she had never forgotten that and still thinks it a most wonderful testimony.

Another time Francis had a friend who lived in a trailer park who was dying. She went to visit him and his wife and a neighbor called to her one day saying, Francis, I have a song for you." When Fran asked what it was she said, "Pass Me Not, Oh Gentle Savior."

Mildred Smith repeated a testimony she had shared before of a time while the family was assigned to Hawaii. One family was having an especially difficult time. The father was hospitalized in the tuberculosis sanitarium and could not support the family. The mother was doing her best but needed help. So Kayleen, who was an excellent pianist, was hired to play for the Methodist's services. They wanted her services full time on Sundays but she insisted that she could come only for the 11:00 O'clock hour because she had to play for her own church first. To accommodate her, and to have her music, worship services at Wai Kea Kai began early so she could play for both congregations.

As soon as Kayleen's part of the Wai Kea Kai service was finished either Clara Camara or Mildred would quickly drive her to the Methodist service. When the Methodists asked her how much she was being paid, hoping they could outbid her church, Kayleen surprised them by informing them she was not being paid!

One Sunday, Mildred was returning from taking Kayleen to the Methodist church with a heavy heart for that family and for the many in the congregation who were in need. "As I approached the church" Mildred testified, "the congregation was singing A cappella, "Why should this anxious load press down you weary mind? Oh, seek your Heavenly Father's throne and peace and comfort find." I was flooded by the Spirit, and when I heard those words this morning, they pierced my soul!"

Alan Smith then sang the reassuring hymn, "Be not dismayed what're betide. God will take care of you through every day, o'er all the way. Lean, weary one, upon His breast. Beneath His wings of love abide. God will take care of you."

Brother Smith closed the service with a statement of thanks for the sharing and the announcement of the final hymn, "God of Grace and God of Glory, on thy people pour thy power. Crown Thine ancient church's story. Bring her bud to glorious flower. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage lest we miss thy kingdom's goal."

News and Notes

Merle Jordison Dies

Brother Merle Jordison died Saturday, January 28 after a long battle with cancer. Visitation was held at the Slade-O'Donnell funeral home at Leon and the funeral held at the Community of Christ church in Lamoni Saturday, February 4 with burial at Independence, Missouri, Saturday afternoon. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Jordison family.

Morning Service Climax To Fasting Weekend

The quarterly fasting weekend concluded with the morning service, January 8, followed by a soup dinner. We met at the church the previous Friday evening at supper time to pray together for the souls that know not God. Saturday morning and evening we met at the home of Norman and Cathy Nelson in Lamoni to continue those prayers. Sunday's service, directed by Michael Jordison with Norman Nelson speaking and Rob Rolfe singing, reminded us again of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus".

Quarterly Planning Session Sets Dates

The quarterly planning session, expedited by the skill of Michael Jordison and Alan Smith using the congregation's laptop and projector, was held following the soup dinner that broke our fast. Among those dates set were:

1. January 29, the business session at which the budget and the resolutions adopted by the recent Conference of Branches were considered.
2. February 12, Valentine celebration.
3. Feb. 25, A women's meeting scheduled for this day had to be rescheduled because our women's leader will be in Hawaii at the time.
4. March 12 -- Youth Activity
5. March 24-26, next fasting and prayer weekend.

6. March 29, next service day.

7. April 16 - Easter Cantata

8. May or June - after school is out - Youth activity. Suggestions include Omaha Zoo, Living History Farms with participation by those who have lived that life assisting the youth to understand, Harrison County Beaches.

Suggestions for speakers to be brought in included Doug Patterson, Brad Carr with Tim to play, Mel Doubleday, Micah Bates and Randy Vick.

Business Session Sets Budget

January 29, the Sunday morning schedule was adjusted to give time for the annual business meeting at which the budget is prepared. Classes convened at 9:30 a.m., the music worship service was held from 10:15 until 11:15 a.m., and the business session legislated from 11:15 a.m. until noon.

The budget was set. Resolutions passed by the Conference of Branches, in which we were participants, were reviewed and accepted with a suggestion for future consideration of by a later conference of determining what edition of the Doctrine and Covenants to accept.

A proposal for additional fasting and prayer services to be held on behalf of the unity of the Restoration congregations was considered and accepted, subject to the direction of the Holy Spirit to the pastorate.

A contingency fund for use by the pastorate in answering requests that are not related to missionary or oblation assistance was established. There are already allocations for missionary and oblation requests.

A motion to change the starting time for Sunday services was tabled to await a time when the church school director could be present.