

Rebound!

Priest Gordon Winkler began his morning message Sunday, April 1, by reading chapter 1 of I John. This chapter is John sharing his testimony of the gospel.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." 1 John 1:3-4. Gordon continued to read from 1 John and asked the branch to pay particular attention to verses 8-10. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us."

At the conclusion of the reading, Gordon followed with the recent experience he and his family had while attending the NAIA Women's National Basketball Tournament in Sioux City, IA. His daughter, Heidi, is a member of the William Jewell College women's basketball team and qualified for the tournament as the Heart of America conference champions. Gordon described the size and impressiveness of the Tyson Events Center, the pageantry of team colors and uniforms, the support of fans and families and the excitement of the areas as the Sioux City High School pep band played. (As a side note, his daughter's team won their opening round game, but lost to last year's national champions in the second round). During the game it was common to hear cheering for the players by their fans and supporters. Some of the cheers heard were: "Defense," "Dig In," "Be tough," "Good Shot," "Let's Go" just to recite a few.

Gordon held up an olive colored cone shaped object with a wooden handle and asked the question, "Does anyone know what this is?" Aquila Galusha acknowledged he knew and identified it as a megaphone. Our speaker responded that it was a special megaphone made by George Knotts and could only be used for positive, affirming cheers like "looking good." One other cheer frequently heard during the basketball games was "Rebound."

What does it mean to "rebound"? When a player shoots for the basket and misses the goal, but get the ball back to try again it is a rebound. The word rebound is also used sometimes in personal relationships. When a relationship between two people fails and one of them soon meets a new person and begins to try again, that's often described as "rebounding."

Spiritually, the word rebound has the same meaning. When we fail spiritually in our relationship with God, that is, we miss the goal, God gives us the opportunity to try again. Spiritually missing the goal is defined as sin. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Romans 6:12. Although the word "rebound" itself is not found in the scriptures, the principle is taught under different synonyms.

- a. Confess (I John 1:19) Opening scripture.
- b. Repent (Alma 7:13) "He commandeth you to repent, and except ye repent, ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God."
- c. Yield (Romans 6:13) "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves to God. . ."
- d. Lay aside every weight (Hebrews 12:9) ". . . Let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily beset us."
- e. Be in subjection to the Father (Hebrews 12:9).
- f. Lift up the hands which hand down and strengthen the feeble knees (Hebrews 12:12).
- g. Make straight paths (Hebrews 12:13) "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame but turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."
- h. Awake, arise (Ephesians 5:14) "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."
- i. Acknowledge thine iniquities (Jeremiah 3:13) "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God . . . , and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Also (Psalms 38:18) "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

The nine references above are synonyms or substitute phrases for "rebound." They all tell us to acknowledge to God that we have missed the goal and are going to try again. In doing this we return to our right relationship with God. God wants us to continue to develop our relationship with Him. When we sin, God wants us to rebound from it and to grow closer to Him again.

A good example of rebound in the Old Testament is the account of King David. II Samuel 11-12 described David's sin with Bathsheba, his murder of their husband, his attempts to cover up his sin, and his eventual admission or confession. Psalms 51:3-4 records David's confession of his sin. "For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so that you all proved right when you speak and justified when you judge."

Another example of rebound, perhaps the most commonly referred, is found in Luke 15, the parable to two sons or the prodigal son. Gordon took time to read Luke 15:11-32 and invited the congregation to follow along. He then shared several comments and observations made by Frank Gallagher from his essay "Abiding in the Word."

Mr. Gallagher first established that the Father in this parable represents God, our Heavenly Father. "And he said, a certain man had two sons." Luke 15:11.

The father provides the same opportunities and privileges for both sons for the present time: the same house, same food, clothes and other day-to-day blessings. Eventually, both sons will have the same opportunity to share in an inheritance from their Father. (God's inheritance for us is the promise of eternal life.) The Father provides for his sons by grace simply because of the father-son relationship, giving to them blessings which they have neither

earned nor deserved.

He continues, the younger Prodigal Son represents a believer who leaves the fellowship of God for the things of the world. The prodigal son does not represent a believer losing his salvation. The prodigal son is always a son. His relationship with his father is permanent and does not cease because the son leaves. His status as part of the family does not change because he walks away to fellowship with the world. When we sin, we lose the filling of the Holy spirit, which is required for us to have fellowship with God. We cut ourselves off from God, but He is always there.

The prodigal son, by choosing to live in the world rather than to live in fellowship with his father, lost the daily blessings and future inheritance which he could have had otherwise. Living in the world rather than living with the Father, eventually leads a prodigal son to poverty. The parable portrays physical poverty. The parallel is spiritual poverty. A lesson taught here is that sin never makes you a better person or improves your situation in any way. Sin eventually leads to its own negative outcomes.

Eventually a prodigal son living in sin is forced to confront his situation and make a free will decision (agency) to return to his father, or to continue looking for a solution to his problems in the world. Even when he decides to return to his father, a prodigal son still often feels the need to suffer or hold on to his guilt in some way to demonstrate his sorrow, rather than to just rest on his father's willingness and ability to care for him. Recall verse 19 "And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." This is why so many reject this Bible teaching about rebound. We can't believe that God will simply forgive us and continue to be our father. Many feel that if they return they must be regarded in a lesser relationship to the father. The father is always there waiting and hoping for his prodigal son's return, and will himself travel most of the way to meet and welcome a returning child. The father not only wants to forgive you and welcome you back, but does everything He can to make it as easy as possible for you to do so. The father is ready to quickly restore a prodigal son who returns. This restoration takes place based on the father's relationship with his son and the father's love for him. It is not based on anything the son does, other than willingly return and admit his mistake to his father.

It is interesting to note that nearly half of this parable addresses the reaction and response of the elder son that stayed with the father. In Mr. Gallagher's analysis of the parable, he makes several observations.

In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother who remains with the father represents the attitude which many Christians have toward God's forgiveness and love, that these things are not free gifts of God's grace. Much of the discouragement we many receive in trying to rebound will be from others and from the self-righteousness they may have learned. In verse 26, the elder son called one of the servants and asked what was going on, instead of asking his father. Like many, when we had a problem with someone, he did not go to the person directly to find out what was happening, but involved another person in "gossip" which he was then ready to believe and act upon. The older brother adds to his sin of gossip with other mental attitude sins (envy, anger, bitterness) and now the older son is unwilling to fellowship with his father. The father now comes a second time in an attempt to restore fellowship with the older son, just as he was willing to do for the younger son who just returned.

The father treats both sons the same, but the older son does not understand or appreciate this kind of unmerited love. I think it is important for us to understand the relationship of the father to the older son as we consider the fragmented state of the restoration gospel and the scattered sons and daughter of God found throughout the restoration branches, Community of Christ, Remnant

church, and LDS not to mention the many nations around the world. The father is willing and wanting to forgive all that will rebound and return to him. Let us make sure we don't stand in the way and judge as the older brother. Any sin breaks our fellowship with God the Father and we lose the filling of the Holy spirit. The way to return to the fellowship with God, to regain the filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is to confess of our sin to the Father.

This time of the year we remember the events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. We remember his entry on a donkey to the city, Judas' betrayal, the Lord's Supper, Peter's denial, the darkness at his death on the cross and the forgiveness of the thief next to him. We believe that Jesus' death on the cross took away the sins of the world and provided a way for us to return into the presence of God. Jesus is our Saviour. He fulfilled God's plan of salvation.

Last Wednesday night, Rob Rolfe asked the question: "Why pray?" This morning in light of the fact that we acknowledge Jesus died for the sins of the world I ask the question "Why repent?" and "What is the need to rebound?" The relationship between Jesus, salvation, repenting and rebounding is summarized very plainly in Genesis 5:1-2. "And the Lord God called upon men, by the Holy Ghost, everywhere, and commanded them that they should repent; and as many as believed in the son and repented of their sins should be saved, and as many as believed not, and repented not, should be damned. And the words went forth out of the mouth of God, in a firm decree, wherefore they must be fulfilled.

The gift of salvation is freely given unto all that believe in Jesus Christ. Our acceptance of this most precious and wonderful gift is found in our response of repentance. It is found in our willingness to rebound. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8.

Gordon then again picked up the megaphone and looking out over the congregation cheered them on by chanting "Rebound, Rebound, Rebound!"

Ye Are Living Stones - Crafted in the Hands of Christ

Presiding over our Easter Service, Brother Norman Nelson read the scripture from III Nephi 4: 44-46 "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified His name. I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled."

Elder, Michael Jordison chose hymn 428 for an opening scripture; "Beneath the cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand; the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land..."

Sister Sue Beck ministered to the gathered congregation with a beautiful song, a capella .

Brother Jordison then rose to give the Easter message. "I don't know why you came this morning. Possibly you came because it's Easter Sunday and you're supposed to be in church on Easter. But I do know why I'm here this morning; and it's not because it's Easter and it's not just because my name was printed in the schedule to speak this morning. As a member of God's holy priesthood, I have a responsibility to share with you His word and my testimony of His work in my life, and the potential for a testimony of His work to be in your life as well. In the Book of Covenants (D.C. 17:8) it says that an apostle is an elder. What is an apostle but one who has a special testimony of the risen Savior Jesus Christ, and is chosen

to exhort and to bear record of that testimony? I stand up here this morning to testify as one who has seen and has conversed with the risen Lord and Savior. I am called to minister as an Elder, and with that responsibility comes the apostolic testimony. My testimony is not perhaps as that of the apostles that walked with Jesus; they who felt the nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side and knew of a surety that He had indeed risen from the dead. But I have received revelation and a testimony from Him and therefore, I too can say that 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'. I hope that each of you can ably say that as well (or soon will be able to), that you have met your Savior, and know of a surety that He lives.

Life is a Treasure Hunt – A Hunt for Jesus Christ

What does Easter mean to you? This morning we had a treasure hunt in our home. Our children were directed, through written clues, to various locations throughout the house to find their Easter treasure. They couldn't go to the end until they had followed all the clues in the order in which they were given. This morning I want you to consider the idea that your life is a treasure hunt, and the treasure waiting to be found is your Savior. He is the one that made you and formed you even before you were born. He knew you intimately as he crafted you – every bump and depression in your body, every tear duct and every hair. He knew the trials that you would go through and the decisions you would ultimately make which would impact your final decision to choose or reject Him. And yet, even knowing all of this He still lovingly crafted your body and your soul and gave you a great gift: the opportunity to have life and in that life to know joy.

The words that I, or any other might speak cannot mean anything to you unless they are accompanied by the Spirit of God. You have to allow the spirit to work in you, give it place in your heart, to understand the things that God would like to reveal to you. I would have you to know that everything in this world that has been created, was created by the love and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. At the very heart of that sacrifice is the death of your Lord.

It has been said that Christ presided over His own execution, knowing what was to happen every step of the way. No one else can say that. What perfect love God has for His children, to create them and then give them the power to choose or reject Him. You see God, like a wise parent, always seems to know what's best for us. Though we sometimes fail to understand, forgetting through our own humanity, is that what is best for us is to freely choose the love of God – which brings with it an unfathomable level of joy. With the right to choose for ourselves, means we also are able to reject that love, though it is freely offered. And though the gift of God's love is given to us without our paying for it, it does indeed have a price. It has been purchased through the sacrifice of the One Eternal Lamb; 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life'. Everlasting life is to know and understand the love of God, and a realization and reception of the joy that accompanies fellowship with Him.

What I find amazing about the cross of Christ is that the power we have to choose for ourselves comes because of the sacrifice that Jesus made on it. Consider that if there had been no cross, no sacrifice by the Lamb of God, we would not have the power to choose or reject Him. That's a lovely and yet a terrible thing to consider. The joy and peace that we can know and enjoy, ultimately comes from His death. On Easter we don't typically reflect much on His death. We love to talk more about His resurrection and coming forth out of the tomb. That is all the secular writings focus on -- He is risen. That is good news. But risen from what? Risen from His death and His sacrifice for His creation. Consider this: Christ's power to overcome death came because of His resolution to die for His creation. Because He had chosen to die, to sacrifice Himself on behalf of others, He gained all power – it was the

culmination and the climax of His earthly ministry. A parallel principle to this He taught us, that those who sought to lose their life, would find it; but those who sought to save their life would lose it.

The Kingdom is Offered to Everyone

Jesus Christ preached the Kingdom. Having Seventies, Ron and Delbert Smith in this congregation we've talked about the Kingdom a lot. So I ask you this morning, what is the Kingdom of God? A member of the congregation responded, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Yes and it is specifically found in Romans 14:17.

Jesus preached the Kingdom. So that means He was preaching righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Now you recall that in the beginning Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden where there was no death, no sorrow or suffering because there was no sin. You could say that Adam and Eve were righteous – they were right with God. They did everything He wanted them to – so far. And I think you could say that they had peace. They had no contention. Everything just kind of went their way. So they had righteousness and peace, two-thirds on their way to the kingdom so far. Now I'm not so sure we can say they had joy though. It might seem that they would be joyful not having to work for anything and not dealing with the effects of sin. Now we should know that when Adam and Eve partook of that fruit from the tree of Knowledge of good and evil they died spiritually. They became separated from God. It was this spiritual death that cast them out of the garden. Do you think that they were righteous when they left that garden? No, they had gone against the will of God and were no longer right with Him anymore. They had become unrighteousness. And do you think they had peace after they'd been kicked out of the garden? No. God said they were going to have to toil and sweat for their food, that they were going to have to do manual labor. It wasn't long before their children began to create unrest for them. They were no longer at peace now.

"Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." (From II Nephi 1: 115) Now if the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, then they needed to come back in fellowship with God and receive the Kingdom to maintain righteousness, peace and joy. So God sent an angel to declare to them the Gospel. And when Adam and Eve accepted the conditions of repentance, it's recorded: "And in that day Adam blessed God, and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth; saying, Blessed be the name of God, for, because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again, in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying, Were it not for our transgression, we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient." (Genesis 4:10-11)

It was required that Adam and Eve, and all of mankind, undergo a spiritual death in order to bring about the "joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."

Again, Christ preached the Kingdom of God. From Luke 10: 1-11, "After these things the Lord appointed other Seventy also, and sent them two by two before His face, into every city and place where He himself would come." So Jesus sent the Seventy before Him. "And He said unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. Go your ways; behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes; nor salute any man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again. And into whatsoever house they receive you, remain,

eating and drinking such things as they give; for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you; And heal the sick that are therein, and say, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you; notwithstanding, be sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

At this time, Michael took some candy and offered it to only a few select people scattered throughout the congregation. He continued by saying that when Jesus sent His Seventy out, He didn't tell them to go only to the people He liked. He sent his Seventy out into every city that the Lord would come himself. And they were to preach that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto them. They were preparing the way for Jesus Christ to come, preach, and offer the Kingdom to everyone in those cities.

Michael then took two offering plates and filled them with candy and gave them to two young gentlemen from the congregation stating, “This morning these two servants are my Seventy and I have sent them out two by two. (The two young men offered candy to everyone.) The Kingdom of God is offered to everyone and it doesn't matter if you were or weren't born in the United States, or if you're from a rich or a poor family, or if you are from Taiwan, China, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, or anywhere. The Kingdom of God is available to everyone.

I'm still not sure we have a full grasp on the Kingdom of God. I know we said it's righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, but what does that really mean to you?

Michael asked, ‘Aaron (Ballantyne), when you received the gift of the Holy Ghost, did you receive righteousness, peace, and joy?’ The response was yes. ‘Are you always righteous, peaceful, and joyful?’ The answer was no. ‘How about you Alan (Smith)? Are you always righteous, peaceful, and joyful?’ Alan replied that he was not always so. ‘So the question is, if the gift is ours why is it that we don't always have these attributes with us?’

The Holy Ghost – The First-fruits of the Kingdom

There's a story in the scriptures about a prodigal son. We use the analogy of this story a lot to talk about what repentance. I think that it tells us something more. I'm going to paraphrase the parable in a way that perhaps the kids will understand. It's like a young child who received an allowance from his father. The young child began to think about all the things he wanted -- a new model boat, a new bike, a scooter, a new video game, and the ability to buy donuts on Saturday whenever he wanted them. Well, he figured out how much this was going to cost and then realized that he might never get this stuff if he had to save for it. So he went to his father and said, “Father, can I have an advance on my allowance? Just give me everything up to my eighteenth birthday and then I'll never ask for anything more.” So his father thought about it and decided that he could get rid of this hassle of having to dole out money every week. The father counseled him and told him that it may not be a really good idea, that he may be sorry, but the young boy said that he wanted it now. So the father gave him the advance of all his allowance. The young boy went out and bought the boat and the game and everything else that he wanted, and went to the store on Saturdays and bought donuts until he was sick. One day he went to his piggy bank and all the money was gone. He'd spent all his allowance. He thought, “This is not good. Here I made a deal with my father to give me my allowance up front, and he did, and now I'm not going to get anything for the next ten years.” He was in despair. Finally he decided to go back to his dad and tell him he was right. He up to him and said, “Dad, do you remember when you told me it was not a good idea to have all my allowance up front but if I wanted it I could have it? I'm really sorry. I know I'm not going

to get anything, but hopefully you'll still love me and accept me as your son and not be unkind to me.” The father said, “Son, I always loved you. I knew that someday you would realize that you had made a mistake and you would come back and ask for forgiveness. Because you have learned your lesson, I'm going to restore your allowance, but in a different way.”

The point of that story is more than one of repentance. It's a story of the Kingdom of God. The son had received his allowance--his inheritance. What is your inheritance? What is my inheritance? Do you know? What is the inheritance we are to receive? The Kingdom of God or the Holy Ghost. “Even so ye must be born again, into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye may be sanctified from all sin; and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come; even immortal glory. For, by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified; and by the blood ye are sanctified. Therefore it is given to abide in you, the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment.” (Genesis 6:62-64) The comforter is the gift of the Holy Ghost which makes you righteous when you have been obedient and said, “I'm going to keep the commandment, Lord, which was to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Because I've kept your commandment, I've received the spirit which justifies me before you Lord. And because I'm justified, I am covered by your blood, which cleans and sanctifies me.”

The scriptures teach us that the earnest of our inheritance is the Holy Ghost. What is the earnest? Earnest is the first fruits. The first fruits are the best or the first of your offering. The Lord has given us a gift. He has given us our inheritance--the best of what he has to give, as the Holy Ghost. It is there to guide, teach, and nurture us in the way of truth and understanding. And the Holy Ghost is the principle part in the building of the kingdom of Zion. The reason that aren't fully engaged in the building of Zion is because we are not always given over to utilizing the gift of the Holy Ghost, which every member has been given. We have been given what we need from our inheritance to build the kingdom, much like the prodigal received his inheritance, but like him, we often squander it and trample it under our feet, finding it's usefulness covered in the mire of hogs. We don't fully have a grasp on its power or potential. But if our repentance will attain the proper level of humility we can yet receive a greater measure of the power of the Holy Ghost, an endowment. This will bring to fruition the Kingdom of Christ on a greater level than we have thus far enjoyed.

“You” Are a Building Block of the Kingdom

The Lord gave me something a few days ago. “The revealed word of God, solidified in your heart and soul by the testimony of His truth, qualifies you as a saint, and enables you to be a building block in the Kingdom.” Brother Arthur Oakman gave the testimony one time that he was there at Cesaria Philipi, in the spirit, when Jesus turned to His disciples and said, “Whom do men say that I am?” (Matt. 16:14-20) And some said, “Some say you're Elias and some say John the Baptist or perhaps Elijah come back.” Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Whom do you say that I am?” Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.”

Jesus answered, “Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed that to you but my Father which is in heaven.” It is the revealed word of God, burned into his heart by the testimony of truth that allowed Peter to testify with boldness and assuredness that Jesus was the Messiah. It was that revelation and its application in Peter's life, once fully realized, that allowed him later to be a part of the building of the Kingdom. It's that same

revelation that God requires in each of His children – to confess that Jesus is indeed the Lord and the Christ, the master and the Savior. That is what makes you a saint. When we're baptized it's a witness that we've made a covenant with Jesus Christ, that we have died to ourselves. When we come up out of that water, it is symbolic that we are born of the spirit and that we have a living testimony of Jesus Christ, and we can speak with assuredness and boldness and say, "I know that my redeemer liveth." No other testimony can shake that foundation.

Jesus is the foundation. The scriptures say that He is the stone which the builders rejected. The builders being the Jews, His own people. When they went to build their church, they did not build it on a solid foundation through the revelation of God. They built it on sandy soil, the revelation of men and all their cunningness. Jesus is the head of the corner. He is the standard by which the squareness or the perfectness of the corner of the building, and therefore the entire structure, can be formed. As saints we need to have that revelation and make it alive in us. It's given to us by the Spirit of Truth. I can't say that you've ever had that experience in your life, only you know if you have. Hopefully you have.

The revealed word of God, solidified in your heart and soul by the testimony of His truth, qualifies you as a saint, and enables you to be a building block in the Kingdom. What does it mean to be qualified as a saint? It means, that you are prepared, that you have taken the necessary steps. You have what you need to be a saint.

If Jesus is the stone which the builders rejected, or He is the foundation, of His church, then His saints must comprise the building. His Saints are to be measured by Him. Somehow we get the idea that Priesthood, quorums, the ordinances and sometimes a building make up the church. None of those comprise the church, because the church is the Saints of God. It's you and me. These other items that we so often hold up as identifying evidences of the church are merely instruments in the hands of the Master used to craft the building blocks, which are the souls of men and women. Priesthood and ordinances help to smooth the rough edges of each building block so that they can fit together, to make up His church. The mortar that they are sealed with is the Love of God. We can see that if we are truly going to be a church that is united in love, we have to make sure that all the blocks fit together and all the rough edges are hewn off.

Consider that when God gave Moses the ten commandments, He went up the mountain two times. The first time, the Lord wrote out the ten commandments upon two tables of stone and sent them back down with Moses to show to the congregation. When Moses came to the camp, he found the congregation involved in idolatry. He broke the tablets, went back up the mountain, and the Lord said, "I'm going to take the priesthood out of the midst of the people. I shall not go before their face. Moses, I want you to take two rocks, fashion them after the first ones I gave you and I will write on them." What I want to point out is that the first set of tablets were hewn by the Lord himself. And when the Israelites rejected Him by turning to an idol, Moses was instructed to craft the second set of stones himself. The first stones were hewn by God and contained the Holy priesthood and the power of the Kingdom with the spiritual laws. The second were hewn by a man and were accompanied by a set of carnal commandments, a law of outward ordinances.

Under the Mosaic Law, the Israelites finally received a temple when Solomon became King. It was a physical temple, hewn by men. That temple was destroyed and another one reared in its place under the decree of Herod. This temple too, built for the Mosaic Law, was hewn by men. Yet in both cases when they were building, the Lord said not to cut the stones on the actual building sites. They were to cut it beforehand and then bring it to the site and fit it together. That is a representation of what the Lord has to do. In His house, He is the crafter. His tools are his priesthood and his

ordinances. His Saints are the stones. He must shape them prior to their being brought and placed within the building. The temple of the Old Covenant was a building for a carnal sacrifice, but the temple of the new covenant, of the latter days, is God's Zion. It is God's kingdom.

The Temple of the New Covenant Is His Saints

From Genesis 7: 22, 23 "And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish. And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them." The temple of the new covenant is, the people of God. It's you and me, crafted by the hand of the Master using the tools that He has. Using His priesthood, His ordinances, His offerings, his buildings. We've got to remember that it's the worth of the soul that the Lord cares about. He's not so concerned about our buildings or committees like we are sometimes. He's concerned about us as His children and fitting them into his house.

Paul says in Ephesians that the Holy Ghost is our inheritance. Jesus' inheritance is His people. Do you feel like somebody worthy to be called Jesus' inheritance? We might look at our lives right now and find it easy to say, "I'm not worthy to be anyone's inheritance." Why would you want me, let alone Jesus? But we need to live as if we are a prize for Jesus. We need to build up His church, which means to shore up each other, to love each other, to put down our contentions, to lay aside our differences, and reason one with another when we have disagreements.

The Kingdom of God is your inheritance and my inheritance. The first fruits of it is given as a gift when you make a covenant with your Lord. Just like any gift you receive, you have to choose to use it. You have to unwrap it and use it. You can just set it up on the shelf and never touch it. It's one of those gifts you can put up there and later take it down and then put it up again, and so on like a seesaw. But that's not the way God intended His gift to be used.

What does Easter mean to you? How does it apply to your life right now and what you're going through. When we utilize the Kingdom within ourselves, we have the power of the resurrection, to come out of those pits of despair, those times of darkness, of gloominess. There is a ray of light that reaches out to us and it is God's love.

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ, the spirit that enters into the heart and soul of man that allows us to know Him. We can know all about Him, all about His scriptures, everything that's happened in the past, but until we meet Jesus Christ, it doesn't really mean anything. Adam and Eve walked and talked with Him, but it wasn't until they had been separated from Him that they really got to know Him – to know what He had done for them from the foundation of the world. I know Norman (Nelson) has testified of this and I testify of it too. When you have a relationship with Jesus, and a true conversion experience, every other experience you've already had or ever will have will be measured by that experience with Him. He's within you.

The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. The communion with your Lord and Savior is not the bread and wine. It's your interaction with God. When we have a communion service, the bread and wine are symbols. Catholicism teaches that in communion the bread turns into Christ's flesh and the wine turns into His blood. This is not so and is a perversion of what Christ teaches. The communion that the Lord wants to have with us is a relationship, not a meal. He wants to give us His Kingdom. It's our inheritance and He wants us to use it. That's the relationship that I hope all of us will aspire to; one of interaction instead of receiving or petitioning only.

What's the point of all of this. This morning I've said a lot of things and I don't know what, if anything you can use, but I do want you to know that your Lord loves you and He calls all of us to a

higher purpose of service in His Kingdom. The Kingdom outside and the Kingdom within. When He tells us to build up His Kingdom or to build up His church, He's telling us to build up each other and to encourage each other. I hope you take that with you this morning. God bless you.

A Sure Way to Stronger Faith

Seventy George Knotts chose Psalm 111:10 for his opening scripture for the April 15 service. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth forever." Jim Barber sang the hymn of praise, "For the Beauty of the Earth. Lord of all, to Thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise." Brother Knotts then asked to see the hands of all those who attended at least one meeting of the Joint Conference of Branches. He asked Seventy Ron Smith to share his testimony of the most significant things in that conference.

Ron spoke, "I was only able to be there on the last weekend. The thing that was most significant to me was, Brother Vern Darling had been asked to offer a blessing for the forty Elders who have asked to be traveling Elders - men who have made that commitment and want to travel and share the gospel. For some reason, and I don't know what the reason was, Brother Darling was not in the room at the time that they got around to this activity. It was a little bit late in the proceedings. I just felt like the Lord - actually, I had thought earlier that I had probably ought to ask for that blessing for those men. So, when Brother Darling wasn't there, I just stood up and came down the aisle, so they called on me. So I knelt down, and the whole congregation knelt with me. I felt like the Lord really blessed that prayer and the congregation. So of all the things that I think was most significant there, I believe that the Lord is going to bless those men as they step out in faith and we begin to try and share the gospel in that way. For me, that was the most significant thing in the time when I was there. I really felt like the Lord was working with us."

(Brother George added, "Ron doesn't remember this, but I had a hand in his being called upon. I said, 'There's Ron, and he's a good prayer!' I volunteer Ron every chance I get.")

Brother Knotts then volunteered Ron again saying, "Some of the people want you to come to the three o'clock meeting at the home of Norman Nelson and tell them about the law of the church concerning the Seventies. See, I like to prefer my brother."

Addressing the Students

Now it was time to begin the sermon. Brother Knotts spoke: I have never witnessed as many college students visiting as I do today. And I always want to share something very important with the college students. In fact, one time I put it in the Tower. I paid \$21 to have this put in the Tower, and they didn't put it in there right. How many of the college students here today would like to be more powerful? Good. I have a copyrighted program that is guaranteed that you can become more powerful. I want to ask you a question this way. How many of you would like to have your prayers answered? (The congregation responded.) So! Is that power or not? Who are we looking at for power around here? If you can, go directly to God!

It's very interesting when you talk to young people about this - younger than you - I heard an illustration one time when a man says, "Son, can you lift that rock?" So the boy got hold of the rock and he grunted and he pushed. He couldn't move the rock. So the father says, "Use all the resources you have available to you." Again the boy pushed and pushed and didn't move the rock. Then the

father reached down and just took one hand and moved the rock easily. He said, "Son, I was standing here all of the time. I am a resource you had available to you." God is a resource available to us. He is willing for us to ask Him questions and get answers. He is willing that we can ask for things, and He will respond.

I was reading a book last night. It's called The Fourth Dimension. It's about faith, the fourth dimension being faith. Any of you would like a companion? Any of you out there praying about a companion, I suggest you read the first thirty pages of that book. I got that book a long time ago and it really has blessed me a lot. I recommend everybody here read it. When I got finished reading that book, faith was building up so much as I read it! About the next several people I prayed for got healed right then. Is that a good book or not? If it stimulates your faith that strong, you would like to look at that book.

What I didn't realize that I had gotten out of that book was that a lady was wanting the author to pray for her for a companion. He said, "How long have you been praying about it?" She said, "For years!" He said, "Would you like for me to pray for you and that companion?" She said, "Yes!" He said, "Take this paper and write down the answer to these questions. Do you want him to be white, Chinese, black?" Oh, she says, "I want him to be Caucasian, yes." Do you want him to be tall or short or fat?" She said, "I would like him to be tall." As they went down the list, there were about ten things that she gave as definite things she wanted in this companion. He said, "Now I would like you to take this list, put it by your bedside and read it out loud when you go to bed at night and when you get up in the morning.

Actually, I have given this counsel dozens of times, and I forgot where it came from. Two times, two different ladies have used the list about this quality of companion they want. In about two weeks they forgot to pray the prayer. In a month, they came across their companion - two times the same way. Well, that's pretty dramatic. It happened for this lady in the book also that way. She wanted her companion to be interested in music. A man came to the congregation where he was to direct the choir All the young girls were trying to get his eye, but he didn't give them his eye. He came over to this lady who was just a little older, chose her, and they were married. That's pretty dramatic, isn't it? And here I had forgotten where the idea came from. I am embarrassed about that. I have only gotten into it about 30 pages but I recommend anybody to read those first thirty pages. They are worth while. Then keep on reading because it produced good fruit in my life, and I am embarrassed that I haven't gotten it out and read it again before now.

A Testimony

I promised you that your faith could be strong. In this one short time I am talking to you, you can get the basic so your faith will be strong and when you pray for something, you will get results. (Brother George then shared his testimony of the efficacy of his program to increased faith.)

I presented this to the head coaches at Oklahoma State University. We were down at the Oklahoma State University, and I was in charge of the Liahona group. We really didn't have time to meet, so we met for breakfast. We met and went over some things at breakfast time. I introduced this plan for them, and they started applying it. In the next meeting or two, we didn't have time to eat breakfast. So we said "We'll not do this any more. Let's meet over in the new library. There is a room over there that is available to us, so we will call it unbreakfast." So we just didn't eat breakfast that very day, and each week we wouldn't eat breakfast on that day. We would meet in a circle and would pray about any concerns we had. We would ask if someone was interested in praying about a certain subject that was brought up. When they said, "Yes", we would join hands, and when they would end their praying, we would say "Amen" together. It was kind of likened to me like a tepee. We were

all focused on our prayers and would join hands and were united in that prayer. We had to pay attention so we would say "Amen!" together. And I like that. Down South, when they are finished praying, they all say "Amen" together. I like that because it shows more unity.

I was the graphic designer for OSU, and I was over in the coach's office doing some art work for him. I spotted a little book about this big and I said, "Is that your book?" It looked like a New Testament to me. I asked, "Do you recommend it?" He said, "I sure do." Before we left his office that day, I prayed with him - just he and I. He is one of the few men who says, "George, I love you." He was a Christian, so I thought everything was all right.

The coach talked to the Rotary Club where I was a member and he said, "I've only got one player on my team who has a "want-to". And a "want-to" is when you hit them, and you get up and you maybe help them up. Graceland used to do that. Anyway, he had one player with the "want-to". He said, "Before the season starts, I hope I have at least eleven people on my team that have a "want-to". That means they are in good condition. They are ready to go. They have their heads screwed on right, and they are about the game. So I took it back to the Liahona. Coach Smith had several things he wanted to pray about. He wanted to quit smoking himself. And he had a player who was a key player, about whose eligibility there was some question. And also, one other thing, the first game of the season they played Colorado. Colorado was the number two team in the nation, and if you ever knew about OSU's reputation - the sky writers would come by and visit OSU, and it was at the bottom of the league they were in. So he had a problem there.

So our group joined hands and prayed for them, said "Amen" at the end of the prayer, and on the way to the game, I heard him being interviewed. Of course, it was a prerecorded interview. Coach Smith was saying, "I do not have a player that is worthy to ride on the bus with those men. Colorado's players were like professional football players. So, I said, "Lord, please help David Smith and his players." The coach was wanting to bear testimony among his players, and he wanted it to carry weight. That was why I was hoping for help for him doing that, praying the same thing. And so, I asked a prayer for coach Smith and his team.

On the way out of the stadium, the score was 31 to 6 in favor of OSU! That coach had done some sneaky plays, run some Hail Marys clear to the other end of the field. He had done a whole bunch of things. He had been a coach up in Canada for a professional team before coming to OSU. I called him up about seven o'clock that night and I said, "Congratulations." He said, "George, we got word of what you were doing over in the library, and we want you to come in next Thursday morning and lead the worship with the coaches. I had just gotten back from a youth camp that summer where about half the meals were fasted. We didn't plan it. We didn't start out that way. We just asked the youth, "Would you like to have this to be a good camp or a great camp". They said, "We want it to be a great camp!" Well, I said, this is how you can have a great camp. A good camp is where you have fellowship with each other. A great camp is where you have fellowship with each other and fellowship with God.

So we divided the camp up into two classes, and when the bell rang, we would switch the groups so everybody would have exposure to the same testimonies. And we bore testimonies during the first part of the week about what happens when you fast and pray like I am sharing with you about the coach Smith thing. When that happened, the coaches responded positively. I had the program on a piece of paper, and you can see it in the front of Barbara Wilkerson's, "Exercises in Spiritual Growth". It was four steps to stronger faith. The head offensive coach took that piece of paper and taped it on his mahogany wall in front of the door when you walked into his office. Now, he wasn't ashamed of it. The assistant

head coach went out that day and didn't eat lunch.

Now some good things were starting to happen here. Those men were sincere. It was the first year that OSU had a winning season. I mean, if you win over half the games, with OSU that would be a winning season. They had a good season. And it was also the first time a coach had been sought from OSU to go to somewhere like SMU. So Coach Smith left there and went to SMU, and the fellow that went out that day and didn't eat lunch, he was now the head coach. I know Dr. Knutson thought, "We'll never have a good season again." He was so mad at the coach for leaving and going down to SMU, but Coach Stanley had the same faith operation as coach Smith. They were on the same frequency that way, and he carried on. And he had a great team because he was oriented into seeking God for his strength. He wasn't ashamed to talk about it either.

So good things happen. That Liahona spent three thousand hours traveling and witnessing in witnessing week ends with T. Ed Barlow getting ready for the "Campaign with Christ". They held witnessing weekends throughout the area. So that group was really exercising their spiritual muscles trying out this operation, and they would introduce this to people on the weekend.

This Is How It Works

The program? Well, the first thing you do is to fast two meals a week. Now, American people over flood their carburetors, don't they? They eat more than they need. That's pretty well accepted across the board. That's a given. If you would gain more strength, be willing to fast two meals a week. Some say, "I go without breakfast anyway now." If you go without a meal with the right attitude, you can get your card punched for fasting. That's just a little light way of saying, it's like fasting if you have the right attitude.

If you do that, fast two meals a week, Sunday morning is a good time and Wednesday night before prayer meeting. (But they feed you right after prayer meeting. If you college kids haven't been there, you need to come to prayer meeting because you get the best desserts in town and other good things, too. If you come to my house, you get something like a banana split. It's consistent. We never change. It's easier for me to figure out that way.)

If you fasted two meals a week, then you study the scriptures looking for what God wants you to do. I like to recommend the use of the Book of Mormon where Jesus is here. He comes down, ministers for forty five pages. Then He goes back up. Those forty five pages are a very condensed ministry of Jesus. The most intense ministry anywhere in world literature is right in those forty five pages of the Book of Mormon.

I have a Muslim friend of mine that I gave a Book of Mormon. He promised to read these forty five pages. He said he would read them open minded. If he reads those forty five pages open minded, he will not be a Muslim because Muslims believe that Jesus went up into heaven, but they don't believe he was crucified. And when you get into those forty five pages, Jesus comes down over here, and the people come up and feel the nail prints in his hands. And besides that, He is on this continent. He ascended and came down. This young man will not be a Muslim if he reads those forty five pages and is sincere! I recommend those for you to read them. Maybe a couple of pages a day would get you going.

The next thing to do, if you have fasted and you have studied, the third step is the hardest. Be willing to apply what you find. . If He says, love, love. If He says forgive, forgive. Whatever he tells you to do, if you are willing to do it when you find it, you are on the same frequency with the Lord.

And the last step is the easiest. It's to pray with faith. The first three steps have strengthened your faith - by your fasting, studying and obeying.

Now I know I am kind of boring some of you because you have

heard this more than once from me - probably from here. But I want to take advantage of the college students who showed up around here. I wanted to dump the whole load on them, and I appreciate you listening patiently and cooperating with me a little bit.

The commandments of Jesus are very critical. He has given us no clue of building the Kingdom outside of obeying the commandments. One time Brother Draper was talking to a whole group of appointees, or maybe it was the Seventy at that time, and he said, "We shouldn't be looking for rules and commandments. We should be looking for principles." So the Lord prompted me to ask him, "Which one of the commandments is not a principle?" He couldn't think of one and neither could his wife. She suggested something that was obviously a basic principle of Jesus. And so I would like to remind you of the scripture I read. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth forever."

The Value of Praise

One other thing I would like to share with the college students before I leave them, and this is free for the rest of you. Praise is very valuable. I put two copies of *Prison to Praise* in my brief case. If anybody has not read that book, I will give you a copy, and you can share it with anybody you want to. It taught me the difference between thanking God and praising Him. All right, (Our speaker called upon Gerry Bolingbroke to stand with him.) I want to thank you for giving me a ride over here this morning. It was safe. No deer or anything like that bothered us. I want to thank you for that. I want to praise you for being an outstanding man, being a good companion to your wife and being a good father to your children." That's different, isn't it? Praise is different from a thank you.

You see, the Lord has made us in His image. We like to have recognition and response, and the Lord likes that, too. So if we can praise the Lord, He appreciates it. That's one of our challenges in life - just keep on praising the Lord. All you have to do to keep remembering Him is to think as you go through the day the good things you have to praise God about. One thing we do in Lamoni, is when we greet people we say, "It's a beautiful day in Lamoni!" They say, "Sure is!" We meet people on the campus and we'll say, "It's a beautiful day in Lamoni!" They will look around and say, "It is, isn't it?" They weren't conscious of it before. It's a positive thing you can introduce to people.

Another thing that has been working pretty good is, people will say, "How are you?" The past president of Graceland, John Menzies, used to pull this on me on purpose in a group. He would say, "George, how are you?" I would say, "I'm blessed. Are you blessed?" And he would see it coming and would pull it on me just to see it happen. And when they say, "Yes. I'm blessed", I say, "It's good to hear your testimony." I grin and they grin. It's a fine little exercise we did. So, "How are you". (The congregation responds), "We're blessed". George finishes his presentation with, "It's good to hear your testimony!"

Great and Marvelous are Thy Works

The RCM (Restoration Campus Ministries) groups from the University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, MO and Graceland University, Lamoni, IA provided the ministry for April 22, 2007. A brief explanation about the morning's service was presented by Andy Danicki who then turned the service over to Paul Marsh.

The worship service proceeded with the singing of "Great and Marvelous" by the congregation and an invocation by Paul Marsh. Paul then proceeded to share some background about the RCM group from the University of Central Missouri. Then he introduced Andrew Dunning who shared information about the RCM group

of Graceland University.

A piano solo was preformed by Cede Smith, and then a season of testimonies was opened by Paul Marsh.

An Opportunity to Embrace the Lord or Stray

Like I said I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for my Lord. You know we come to college, and we have this opportunity to either embrace the Lord or to stray, it's as simple as that. Brother Beck this morning in his poem (shared during Family Worship), was talking about the paths which we can take. It was at the very end of his poem. I really appreciated that poem because it kind of defines what going to college is all about, at least in the spiritual sense, because you can choose to accept, or you can choose to kind of dwindle. This group has really taught me to accept the power that the Lord has in this church, and also to embrace one another.

I would like to tell a testimony that is kind of hard for me to tell. A couple of years ago I was a sophomore, and I was going through some hard times. I was working at Stalls. It was an aluminum factory and I drove back and forth at night. I was on B shift to I would get off about 12 midnight, and then I would drive back to Warrensburg. It was about a half an hour drive. During that particular night, it was snowing, more particularly it was sleeting. There was already ice on the ground and sometimes there were patches of ice and sometimes there were not. If anybody has ever driven on ice, you know that as long as you have one set of tires on the pavement, you are fine. If all tires are on the ice, it is no good. I was feeling pretty down about myself. I didn't know what the Lord wanted for me. I wouldn't say that I was suicidal or anything, but I just didn't care. I was going really fast, about 70 mph on this ice and trying to stay on the pavement. I thought it was fun, I didn't care at all. I came up over this hill, and once I cleared the hill, I saw that it was just a sheet of ice, no more bare pavement. It was just all ice. At that point I realized, "Lord I don't really want this any more. I was wrong to test you." I let my hands go off the wheel, and said, "Lord, help me please." It was really neat because the road kind of goes in a T with a slant to it, and my car started veering, started sliding a little bit to the left. That's where I actually needed to turn. I just hoped that I didn't hit a ditch on the way, but I stopped right on that T, right where I needed to be. The Lord really preserved me, and I thank the Lord to this day that he did. I know that God is looking out for me, and I am really grateful to be with this group, and I am never going to think those thoughts again.

Preserve and Pray and Fast and the Lord Will Get You Through

Hi, everyone, my name is Nathan Reed, and I am originally from Ft. Scott, KS. It's down in the southeastern corner of Kansas. I have been at CMSU, UCM—they've changed the name on us, and we get confused. I have been there this is my second and last year. I did a couple years of junior college back home before I came up to good old UCM, and I will be graduating here in two weeks. I am really excited. My major is social work. When I was trying to decide what major I was going to have, I went to the Lord and it's something I felt that He led me to. I had had an experience, and I knew this is what the Lord wanted me to do. As part of the social work program, my last semester is what is known as a practicum, a big fancy name for an internship. I have been doing my internship this semester at the Johnson County Children's Division. That is Missouri's child abuse and neglect agency. I knew it was going to be tough, and I was going to be running into a lot of hard things, but I didn't know how hard it was going to be. As the semester wore on, many of the guys here could tell you, it was really starting to bring me down. I was kind of turning into a bit of a nasty, bitter, suspicious person, and that's not usually how I am. I am usually pretty upbeat and jovial and kind of silly. I didn't like what it was doing to me, but I was just seeing so many things every day that were tearing me apart, so many hard and difficult

things. I kept going to the Lord saying, "Lord, I need your help. I can't get through this on my own." It just didn't seem like I was getting any answer, and I started to doubt what I was suppose to be doing, doubting the experience I had that this was the major I was suppose to go for. I was at the point a couple of weeks ago, with a month left of school, thinking I was just going to drop out. I was going to be done with the major I was in, and that's a crazy thought, to think a month left to graduate, and I was ready to quit. That's how tore up I was.

Last weekend I went to the Knob Noster Restoration Branch. One of the guys from RCM, Aaron Jensen, was preaching there, so I and a few other people went to listen to him preach. We were sitting there in the class, but I don't even remember exactly what the class was about. At some point the wife of the man who was leading the class started talking about how one of the things we needed to do to help society was to teach children and give people a foundation for their morals at a young age. She turns to me, because I had talked to her about some of the things I was dealing with the previous Wednesday at church, and says, "Nathan knows. He can tell the whole class. Go ahead Nathan. Tell them all about what you do."

I really didn't want to do that because I didn't want to talk about it because it was really dragging me down. I went ahead and started to talk (and here's kind of a brief summary of what I said). "You know when they talk about taking the gospel to a dying world, I am seeing on a daily basis how true that is. There are people out there who are struggling who have no moral base. They've never been taught anything. They are in our back yard. It's not like we have to go a really long distance to find them, they are right there, and they are all around us. When they make decisions there is no higher power that they feel they are accountable to. They have never been taught anything, and a lot of them are looking for something, but they don't know where to look." As I was explaining this, the man who was leading the class, whom I had also talked to the previous Wednesday, says, "Well, Nathan, how do you feel about that?" I looked at him and his wife says, "John, that's not fair, don't ask him that." I kind of looked at him to see if he was going to leave me alone after she said that, but he didn't. He said, "I already know the answer, Nathan, but I want you to say it to the whole class. How do you feel about that." So I looked at him and said, "I am not sure I can do this." He said, "But isn't it a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel? Isn't it an amazing opportunity to witness; don't you have a great opportunity?" I looked at him and said, "Yes, I do." I really felt chastised for not having the faith in my Lord that he would get me through what I was dealing with. I was so busy looking at how I felt that I was not reaching out with the hope that I knew that I had.

As the class ended, there was a lady there, it was actually Aaron Jensen's Mom, and she had come down and was there to hear him preach. She called me over after the class. I had not told her anything about what I was going through, but she called me over and said, "Nathan, when you were talking there about what you were going to do, the Lord impressed upon me very deeply, so much so that I really wanted to stand up and shout it, but I decided to wait until afterwards." Then she said, "The Lord says what you need to do is preserve and pray and fast, and He will get you through this. He has a great work that He wants you to do, and you just have to preserve right now, and you will get to the point where you can do that work." I knew she was right, and I knew it was of the Lord. It was so great for me because I really had felt like the Lord had abandoned me. I was praying and I was struggling and I just wasn't getting an answer, but just when I was starting to get at my wit's end, when I was thinking about quitting, and just giving up on all of it, He showed up in a great and marvelous way and showed me that He was still working in my life just like He works in all of our lives. He still loves me just like He loves all of us. That would

be my testimony to you that He is always there, and He really does love us.

Enduring to the End

Well, my name is Jeremy Stevenson, and it's kind of hard to say where I come from because where I live is right on the dividing line between Harrisonville, MO and Freeman, MO so I guess you could say I am from Freesonville, MO. It's beautiful weather we are having, isn't it; you know the rain and the thunderstorm. I love the thunderstorm. It's the awesome display of the power of our creator, and I love the springtime. It is beautiful. It seems like winter gets longer every year. I haven't been around for too many winters, but growing up it always seemed that winter got longer. It's kind of depressing. You get into the middle of January, and there doesn't seem to be any end. You know winter just keeps on going and it seems to get worse sometimes; just the bitter cold and the disease and sicknesses that come when winter is about. I was sitting at an Older Youth Retreat a few weeks back, and I was thinking about that spring was coming and it was revealed to my mind.

I guess you could call it a revelation that was personal to me. I started thinking about the winter and how spring is wonderful and beautiful. You get to see the new life around you; the grass starts to turn green, the trees start to get their leaves on them and the flowers start to bloom. It's just beautiful. The Lord impressed upon my mind how our lives are like that. How our lives are like the seasons and we are in winter right now. We are in the hard times; the disease of sin that's among us. You know Satan is among us and alive and well in our lives, unfortunately, and you know it's winter time and it's just bitter. It's bitter to be among all the heart-breaks that are in the world, the teenagers that are taking their own lives because they are losing hope and everything. It's miserable but as even in the middle of January when you get that little glimpse, you know that little glimpse of warm weather, you get to see the spring that's coming, just a little glimpse. Even like it is in our lives, you know you have a retreat or a camp or something and we have a wonderful experience, even a Zion experience at times. That's a glimpse of things to come. It's a glimpse of things to come in the beautiful time that we are going to have when our Lord returns to dwell with us again. Spring is coming, brothers and sisters, and it's beautiful. It's going to be wonderful when we can dwell with our Lord, when we can sit with him and walk with him and talk with him. It's going to be beautiful. When I received this I never thought, I never fully understood what enduring to the end meant. When we go through winter, like I said, we seem to see no hope, no hope of the spring to come. Winter is so long, but if we can just get through winter, we get to see the spring, the beautiful spring that's coming; just like it is in our lives, if we can get through those hard times. If we can get through the times when we lose a loved one and fall into temptations; you know those times when we don't see any hope. If we can get through those and see the hope that we have in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, it's going to be wonderful. It's a beautiful day that's coming.

Remember What the Lord Has Done

Lauren Smith shared a verse from Alma 15, "Ye this is my glory that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God and bring some soul to repentance and this is my joy. Behold when I see many of my brethren penitent and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy. Then do I remember what the Lord has done for me. Ye even that he hath heard my prayer. Ye then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended toward me." There have been a lot of times when I didn't really see a lot of joy. I kind of felt down and felt that there was nothing I could do to ever be the kind of person that God wanted me to be. No matter how hard I tried, I would always fail so what was the point of even trying. There was a time when I was in Kenya that I was really feeling discouraged because we had had so many baptisms and so

many things and all of a sudden, it just seemed to stop. I got caught up into school and everything else, and it just wasn't the same. You know the Spirit wasn't flooding me like it had been. One time, it was a week when I was praying a lot and fasting, and just asking the Lord, "What do I need to be doing, why did the work stop? It didn't stop, but why is it slowing down for me? Do I need to be doing something else; do I need to be doing something different at school to be able to share? What do I need to do?"

That night Eric Odida got a call, and I was just sitting on the couch. I wasn't smiling or laughing like usual, and he said, "Lauren, the Lord is amazing." He began to tell me that they had a bunch of baptisms in another place. Just hearing that people had come to the knowledge of the Lord and that they were truly penitent filled my soul with joy, and I realized that we need to be doing things like sharing to be able to have that joy. This last week at school I was again feeling down saying, "Lord, what do I need to do?" Then last Tuesday at our house meeting one of the girls stood up and said, "You guys, I am going to be baptized on Sunday." She began to share how she's been feeling like she needed to make that covenant because her family's never gone to church, and so she's getting baptized today at 11. It was just really exciting for me to know that another soul has come to repentance, and that she realizes that it's important to make that covenant with the Lord. I have talked to her a lot about doing that. So just whenever your starting to feel down or whenever things don't seem quite as positive, not only can you change that by praying and studying the scriptures, but also the Lord can kind of bring to your remembrance that there are souls that are coming to the Lord still and your joy can be full in that.

The Lord Has a Plan For Us

Well, my name is Zach Wilson, and I attend Graceland University. This last year at school has been kind of difficult for me. I am not going to lie. I haven't done everything I probably should have done this semester and I have made some mistakes. But the Lord has been real gracious and has always blessed me. Probably my biggest blessing was first semester. I had just gotten done playing a soccer game and so I was very tired and at this point in my life, I am searching for a purpose. I don't know my major yet, and I am really discouraged about that. I just felt like maybe I didn't have a purpose in life. I am just wondering this in my head. I have gone through a few difficult things lately, and so I am a little bit depressed and just wanting to find a purpose in my life. I am driving back to Graceland and kind of listening to some music and the Lord was kind of the last thing on my mind at this time. As I am driving back, right before Bethany, there's a lot of road construction. The freeway turns into, it's like divided, and it comes over so it's east and west bound in the same lane. As I am driving back I reach a point and I just hit the construction. I remember seeing all of the construction there and like the speed limit is probably 60. Of course, I am doing a little bit faster than that, but there's a lot of traffic. Then all I remember is I fall asleep and there is traffic coming in the other lane. At the point I fell asleep there were these cones sit up right in the middle along the yellow strips. If I would have fallen asleep 5 seconds earlier, because I swerved in the other lane, but I was so blessed that I hit those cones, and they woke me up immediately and I swerved back into my lane. If I would have fallen asleep about 10 seconds before that or maybe 10 seconds afterwards, those cones wouldn't have been there. I was looking and there were a lot of semis coming. At that speed in my little Honda, it could have been very devastating. Right after that I was kind of just like. "Wow, what just happened." I am still driving and I am just wide awake now. All of a sudden it hit me that the Lord really blessed me. It kind of showed me that even though I don't know my purpose in life and even though I don't know what I am doing right now, the Lord does have a plan for me and He will use me if I am willing.

The Planting of a Seed

Hi, I am Mike Stevens. I actually go to school here at Graceland. As everyone was sharing their testimonies, I could definitely feel the Spirit come upon me to share mine. I am not sure how it's all going to turn out, because there is a lot that I could say, and it has all changed my life. It is very emotional for me and it's kind of difficult to tell as well.

I guess my testimony all starts with the planting of a seed. I was raised in a family that didn't necessarily attend church very often, I'd say minimal times. Probably I could count on my fingers and toes how many times we attended with my grandparents throughout my life. Fortunately when I was in junior high, I had an older brother who had met a gal and they started attending church regularly. Through my brother I was able to see the light of Jesus Christ in him. I only got to attend church with him one time before we moved and went to a different city, but that one time had a huge effect on my life. I guess even as a little child I always knew that there was a God but I didn't know I was going to give my self up to Him. I didn't know when I was going to finally decide, "God, I am giving my life to you."

I struggled with it throughout my life even when I came to Graceland for my first round, I remember doing things that I shouldn't have been doing. I remember sharing with Mr. Smith the first time I had him in class, and I came back and told him some of the things I had been doing and how things just weren't working out. I asked if I could get an incomplete in his class, and he suggested that I should just retake it completely. It ended up being the best bet for me. I went home after some incidents had happened here at Graceland and was working at a cheese factory and just looking around. I decided I didn't want to do manual labor for the rest of my life and kind of came back here. But before I came back here, I started picking up the Bible and started reading it. I started reading the Gospels on a regular basis. There was one night in particular where I just felt like I called God. "God, I am ready to give up what I've been doing. I am ready to give this up. It's having an effect on me. It's having an effect on my family. It's having an effect on my younger brother who I want to be that seed for him that my older brother was for me."

There has been a huge turnaround in what's gone on. I remember reflecting as I started last year picking up the Bible and reading it every day whether it's a chapter or five chapters, whatever it was. I made it a clear point that I needed to learn God's word because God's word definitely dwells within you. You know His law. You know what He expects of you and not learning and knowing what God expects of you, it's hard to live your life that way. Kind of reflecting on what Nathan had said earlier. I was one of those kids in the backyard who needed your help, who needed that direction and it's been huge. I remember one night in particular when I was out just appreciating Graceland and the trees, the stars, everything around it. I feel like God spoke to me. It was one of the times when I felt low. I was improving and my grades were great. I was doing things but my past was just there with me. I felt God calling me saying, "Mike, you were a liar and you were a cheat, and you need to confess." At that point I tried to go and talk to my parents, my friends, my coaches and every teacher I had ever known and everybody that I had ever been around and had hurt. Obviously, I can't tell everybody.

Still today I fall short, but I try to live my life completely different and God, Christ has come into my life and I am so thankful. It all started with the planting of a seed through my brother. Now I have met a lovely young lady who is a part of this wonderful church. Reflecting on my situation and from what I have learned about your church and your foundation, I would put myself very similar to a situation where Joseph Smith was. I am trying to figure out what is the right church, and I am calling God to speak to my heart. I know He will and I pray that He will and I need to do some more prayer

and fasting and things of that nature. I am so thankful for where I am at and for you people. I am very thankful for God.

Take No Thought for the Morrow

Andrew Dunning opened his testimony with a scripture, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow for the morrow shall take thought for the thing of itself." This scripture has been a big part of my life because I have always been one to question and ask and wanting to know how things work and what my purpose is in life and kind of wanting to know the game plan ahead of time so that I don't have to worry about it. A real good example of this "for the morrow will take thought for itself" is this spring when we took our trip. We arrived in Nauvoo and we had a place that we were going to be staying. We had a campground that we were going to stay at. We were just going to have one of the cabins for two days. Well, all that week Lauren and myself had been trying to get a hold of the proprietor, trying to make sure that he knew we were coming and that we had everything set up. We arrived there Sunday evening and sure enough there was nobody at the campgrounds. None of the buildings were unlocked and so we were kind of contemplating. Well, it's a nice night outside, maybe we could sleep outside. We were just trying to figure out what we were to do. We kind of put it before the Lord and we said, "Lord, just help us out." I know I was praying in the car, "I know you will help us out as long as we have faith in you." We proceeded to drive around Nauvoo. It was probably around 8 or 9 pm. That town shuts down kind of early, like Lamoni, and so we were driving around and no place was open whatsoever. We stopped at several different hotels and they were all shut down for the night. Nobody was there it seemed, and we were getting a little discouraged. We ended up at the largest hotel that they have there, and it was open thankfully. Anna and I went inside and talked with the lady at the front desk. We asked her how much it would be for a room and she said they had a 7-person room that was \$100 a night. Well, that's not bad by any means for most hotels, but we were kind of on a budget. We were just thinking that it was kind of steep for two nights but didn't know what we could do about it. Well, anyway we talked with her and she talked with her manager over the phone. She ended up getting us a 4-person room for \$43.00 each night. The rooms were really great anyway and really big. Cullen, Zach and I just slept on the floor and let the girls have the beds. It worked out really nice for us, but also a fellow and his wife had walked through while Anna and I were talking with the lady at the front desk. He came back out later and reached across the counter and said here this is for them. He had handed her \$20 so we only ended up paying \$23 for the room for the night.

Another part of the blessing was that the next night we had talked with Michelle Ludy who owns a store there in the town, and she said we could stay at her place, no problem. She told us to meet her at the store around 9 in the morning. She said to just meet her there and bring all of our bags, and we could get all of our stuff situated and go out and see the sights for the day. You know that was just perfect for us. So we met her there and she proceeded to take us through the store. We thought we were going out back to where she lived, but she ended up taking us upstairs to this old refurbished hotel that they owned and put us in these rooms that were amazing. They were huge rooms, lots of space. We ended up having six beds, so we each got our own bed. She let us stay there for free. It was such a generous act, an act of God's will that we were able to find someplace to stay. On our own we never would have been able to find anywhere half as nice as we stayed both of those nights. The Lord blessed us and provided for us even though we had no idea what we were going to do. He took care of everything. We didn't have to take a thought for the morrow because He had everything planned out, and He provided for us. That was just another testimony to me reaffirming that I don't need to worry about tomorrow because the Lord will provide for me as long as I have

faith and trust in Him.

The Importance of Fasting and Prayer

Hi, I'm Brandy. Yes, this is my home branch. I am just really thankful to be here. I am so excited. I had a huge project to do, and I didn't think there was any way that I could possibly finish it. It was a semester-long project; a 76,000 sq. foot office building that I had to design. Towards the end I am starting to get really stressed. Andy had come up to me and said "Yeh, we're going to your house and going to go to your branch." I was like, "Oh that will be fun," and he was like, "Oh, we're going this weekend." So I told them to have fun and I was going to stay here in Warrensburg. As I was working on my project, I am praying about it and just trying to get it done. On Thursday night I stayed up till 5:30 am, and on Friday night I stayed up till 3:30 am trying to get this project done, and I would get up early in the morning. I got done and so I am here and I am really excited about that.

Also, I know you guys had been praying about me looking for an internship. I don't have one yet but I have gone for an interview. I had been really nervous about it, and Greg told me, "Why don't you fast about it." I thought that was a good idea; why didn't I think of that? The day before I fasted. I usually get really nervous at interviews. Everything seems like it zooms out and I lose focus, and I don't know what I am doing or what to say. I ended up going to this interview, and it went really well. I didn't get nervous at all. Every question that they asked me, I had an answer for which was very surprising. Afterwards I felt good about it. Then one of my teachers came up to me. She had set up this interview for me and she said, "Well, she really liked you but she's kind of nervous about you fitting into the environment because you're so sweet." It's an architectural firm and it's not exactly a 'sweet' kind of place. So my teacher was kind of concerned about that saying, "She liked you, but ..." I thought why does that have to happen and then the following day, I got a call from them, and they want me to go to the city and have another interview. So, we'll see.

God is So Good

Hi, I am Katie Ellis. Well, just going into this year, I knew it was going to be a tough year because I was going to apply for the nursing program. I was really nervous about that. I prayed a lot about it and I had my family pray about it. Everything I had to do like take the test, I would be really nervous about. But when I took the test I did really well on it. Prayer has just helped me so much throughout my life. The other day we were just talking about all our scrapes and wipeouts and everything. I was just thinking they could have been so much worse if the Lord hadn't been with me or I hadn't prayed earlier that day. The Lord has blessed me so much in my life with understanding things and getting through difficult times.

I have always been taught to stick with my beliefs and last year I was really questioning what I should know so I did a lot of praying and studying. It has really helped me to know that I am in the right church, and I have a stronger belief of God and why I am here. It really helped also with the trip we took to Palmyra because I never really could put places with things. So just going on the trip helped me a lot.

A God of Second and Third Chances

Hi, my name's Allison Angel. I was kind of thinking, Nathan said he was graduating in two weeks, and I really don't have an outstanding testimony of this year, but I am graduating too and what an awesome opportunity just to get up and confess and thank RCM so much and Andrew for everything he has done. He has only had one or two people, and he has just stayed with it and been faithful. RCM has been such an awesome opportunity for me to get together with like believers. Thank you all so much for believing in me and trusting in Jesus Christ and just being those awesome witnesses for me. I also just wanted to get up because it says to confess in the scriptures. There have been times at Graceland where

I have been on top of the mountain, and God has just been answering all of my prayers and it's like, "Wow this is just so awesome and amazing." Then there have been times when I am just at the lowest of lows, and I am out partying on the weekends and gossiping with my friends and things that obviously God doesn't want you to do.

There is a verse in Deuteronomy that said that God is faithful to those that love and keep His commandments to a thousand generations. I was just thinking that my parents have been so faithful to God and this church and have really grown since me and my sister have gone to college. They go to the Geneseo Branch in Illinois and their lives have just completely and utterly changed. They're serving God and go to Wednesday night church and pray for me, and other people pray for me. Even though I don't attend Wednesday night church, their prayers have truly been with me and changed me, even at times when my life has been completely rooted in sin.

I know that when I went down into the waters of baptism, I was only eight years old, but when I came up, I came up a changed woman of Christ and God, and Christ has never left me. They have just called me back time and time again to serve Him and just to accept that freedom, that awesome freedom that we have in Christ. I know that this has been kind of like a here and there testimony, probably all over the place. You're sitting thinking, what can I share, and you have it all planned out and it comes out totally different. I want to thank you all just for being believers, and I praise God that He is a God of second chances and in my case third chances and just being so faithful to my parents' prayers and the prayers of everyone at RCM.

Cleansing Rain

Hi, my name is Dana Bailey. I am not sure where I am from any more. I have lived so many places. I started out in Washington State halfway between Seattle and Portland, and about second grade, we moved to Missouri. My mom's from Independence originally so we moved to Missouri. It wasn't exactly a cold turkey move. We knew people in the Center Place. I wasn't really sure what I was going to share. The rain this morning has led me to think back to all the youth camps that I have been to. It seems like every camp that I have been to over the years the spiritual high has come after a cleansing rain the night before.

The second year I went to Mammoth Camp at Graceland, driving there was an interesting experience all in itself because I had the blessing of getting to drive through the rain that week. It wasn't just your standard rain, it was definitely a thunderstorm. I was on I 35 about Bethany, I think, and I look over to my left to the West and I see this big black wall of cloud. There is already a thin layer of white clouds, but this was substantially darker. You could see it hanging down below the rest of the clouds. That wasn't good. About that time I started praying vigorously for God's help because I knew I was going to be in trouble if I didn't get to Graceland before the rain started coming down. It came closer and closer and soon it was overhead and started coming down. It came down harder and harder. I drive a 95 Oldsmobile Cutlass Ciera. It's not much to look at any more; it wasn't much to begin with. The windshield wipers were going full speed at one point, and I was still having trouble seeing in front of me. I was already late starting from home to get there. I didn't really want to stop by the side of the road to wait for the rain to go over because from the looks of the clouds, I wasn't sure how long it was going to last. I think I ended up slowing down about 45 at some point and just going along as best I could through the rain. The Lord led me through it. I finally got to Graceland and the rain was mostly over by that point, at least the hard part of it.

I finally got a testimony from God of the Book of Mormon at that camp that year. On a Thursday night during a campfire there

where you might remember there were a lot of testimonies of the Holy Spirit that week from that night. My personal testimony was that when the campfire director led us in prayer, and we were holding hands, I was standing on the end of the front row. I was led by the Holy Spirit to hold out my hand and through the direction of the Holy Spirit, I found out I was holding hands with one of the three Nephites. That's become my testimony that the Book of Mormon is true and that it is what we say it is.

God Will Take Care of You

Hello again my name is Andy Danicki. You'll have to bear with me. I have been trying to shake a cold here for awhile so I am a little raspy at times. I was trying to think about what I wanted to share with you this morning. I have had probably a million testimonies over the past few years, and I could probably share with you for hours. One testimony that comes to mind is that last year I needed a summer job and I didn't know what I was going to do. I actually started out early this time. It wasn't the last week before school got out. It was a couple of months before school got out so I thought I was ahead of the game. Being in Warrensburg there is not a whole lot of job selection, and I didn't really want to drive somewhere just for the summer. I already had my plans set for the fall and for the spring, and I just needed work for the summer. Sometimes that's hard to come about. I don't usually like to pray for myself. I would rather pray for others and their needs. At our prayer group, it was really hard for me to express my concern for myself with others. I just finally said, "Okay, God, we're suppose to do this," and so I mentioned that I needed to find a job. I was really busy during the week so looking for a job was kind of tough because the only time I had was on the weekend. Most employers, the important people, aren't there on the weekends. They are usually there during the week during the daytime. I had made an effort to go look for a job and nothing was showing up. I just kept praying about it. We had a lot of RCM activities that came up, and a lot of other things I decided that I would do to serve God and serve others. I just knew that God would take care of me, but I really had no idea how. I had that faith that He would come through but it's really hard because even though you know He is going to come through, until you know what's going to happen, you are really nervous, at least I am. I have found myself in that position a lot in life.

Any way it was right around Easter time or just after Easter, and our RCM group in Warrensburg has gotten to do a spring concert at the Colbern Road Restoration Branch. We put on about an hour long concert performance where we sing some special songs that we have actually taken the time to practice. As we were walking into the congregation, there was a bench that had some flyers for a job. I thought that was interesting. It was advertising for the Odessa Hills Campground who needed some summer help. I first read it, and it sounded like they were going to need a lot of help and it wouldn't be a problem. I thought well that will be the backup plan if I don't find another job. So I didn't really think much of it but the school year was coming to an end, and I really started thinking about it and praying about it. I really felt led that I should at least apply for it. I knew the caretaker and I actually knew the person in charge of the hiring. I had worked with him one day in the past doing some concrete work. I called him and found out about it. They didn't even have an application form because they hadn't done it before. Anyway I ended up getting the job.

The real testimony out of it is that I got to work outside like mowing lawn, doing all that fun stuff. I had never really done a lot of that. It's probably the most amazing summer I have had. I got to participate in a lot of the camps and reunions that they had there and for seven weeks I got to eat a lot of food. The blessing is that even though I didn't know what I was going to do, I knew I needed a job and put my faith in God. He knew better than I did what

would be pleasing to me. There was no way I could have ever picked that job because it was exactly what I was looking for; something that I would enjoy doing, something that would be flexible, and something that would provide a little bit of income for the summer. There was no way that I could have dreamed up that job. God literally placed it right in my hands because I really didn't have to do a whole lot except put my faith in him. I just walked into the church and the job walked right into my hands.

All We Have to Do is Read the Manual

Good afternoon, my name is Greg Bendorf and I attend Lexington Restoration Branch. I will be graduating in December. I have two testimonies that I would like to share, and I will try to be brief which is a little difficult for me at times. They both have to do with prayer group with meets Sunday through Tuesday at 9 pm and then Thursday at 6:30 pm before RCM. The first testimony is: all of us can probably breath a sigh of relief that tax season is over. All of that stuff is out of our hair, the government has their money and they will leave us alone. I ended up having about three jobs this last year which meant I had three W-2 forms to keep track of. With the way school was bearing down on me, I had two W-2s come in and I misplaced them. I brought it to prayer group and said, "You know I need to find these W-2s because it's two weeks before the deadline, and I haven't done anything with it." I just kind of threw it out there and they prayed about it, but I really didn't do anything to pursue it. I just kept focusing on everything else I had to do and kept moving along with life. It kept getting closer and closer. The next week came along, and I brought it up to prayer group again that I hadn't found them.

Sometime during that week I was cleaning my apartment which needed it desperately, and I ran across one of my W-2s. However, I couldn't find my other W-2 from UPS when I worked for them during the Christmas season. It came down to Monday and I had cleaned my apartment and couldn't find it. I went to my parent's place and started working through the other W-2s and got them entered. I said, "Mom, what do I need to do." She said, "Give UPS a call and see what they can do." So I called up UPS and they gave me a number to call, and I called HR. They told me to get on UPS.com and I could figure it out from there. That's all that they gave me. I went on line and was able to find an old check stub from last year that had the information that I needed on it to actually log in. Out of the three W-2s, that was the only one that I could have lost, and it would have worked out just right. I was able to log on, go to another website that they had a link too, enter all my account information again and able to print off a W-2 right there. I was able to get it done and sent in. I felt really blessed that I was able to get that done because I wasn't looking forward to having to file an extension for that particular situation.

Another testimony has to deal with a project that I have been working on all semester. Being a Business Management major, we have a simulation that we have to do. It's called CAPSIM. We're basically given a business and we sell widgets. That's what I am going to call them. We have to run the marketing, the production, etc. I was with a group of four other young ladies who were all accountants. We kind of went into this not really knowing what was going on. I had been bringing it up at prayer group because it had really been stressing me out. We got to the last round that we were going to do this past Wednesday. I took it to prayer group one more time and said we really need to do well on this because half of our grade rides on this simulation. They prayed about it, and I fasted that day while I was working. I was thinking about the simulation and feeling like I should read the small manual that was given to us. However, I could never seem to make the time to do it. I came up with some time that day and was over at RCM just going through the manual. I knew if I could get away from every place that was comfortable and easy to get distracted, I could really focus

in on what I needed to do. Andy walks in and says, "You got some free time?" I am sitting there thinking not really, but "Yeh, sure I got free time, what's up?" He needed his headlight bulbs changed. He had ended up blowing out both of his low beams. So we went over and got that fixed much faster than he had done the previous time. That was a blessing that we got it done, and so I said, "OK I am going to go back to RCM and get ready for the rest of my class." I went over to RCM and was reading through what I had already read. I thought this is ridiculous so I just started flipping through the pages. I had said a prayer before I had started again and got to a section that started talking about the actual simulation itself; inside of it and what needs to go on. I came across a graph that talks about where the sweet spot for each different category would be in each different round. We had been trying to guess that throughout the entire simulation. I was going down through all of this and everything started clicking. I went to the lab and started going through some stuff and "Yeh, OK that's right and yeh, OK that's right. I started trying to come up with some kind of plan. I walked into class and the girls were ready to just blow the company to pieces. I said, "No, I'm really excited. I think we're actually going to head some kind of a direction today." I sat down at the computer and tried to log in and the computer wouldn't work. I had somebody else try to log in under their user name, and the computer wouldn't work. We ended up moving over to the next computer and got logged on and started going at it. We got down to the financial page and we are looking at our cash balance for what they predicted given that everything is ideal according to what we forecasted, what we were selling and everything else. It showed that we were going to have about a \$20,000,000 surplus in cash. I was like, "OK, let's pay off \$15,000,000 in this long-term debt. It will raise our stock price and it will put us where we need to be." They didn't agree. It was four other girls, and I realized, all right we'll just leave this one be. We'll pay off \$7,000,000 in the long-term debt, and then we'll just leave it be. Maybe a 50 cent dividend I think is all that we paid. We submitted everything and came up with the results after all of the other teams had submitted all of their stuff and processed it. We came up with \$15,000,000 left in cash. We had a complete sell out on our entire inventory and every sector had sold the units that were in demand.

The thing that struck me most, as I was sitting here contemplating what I actually wanted to share today is how often in my life I have had the manual in front of me, and all of the answers are there. We know what the end of the story is, and it's so easy to find out what can be done today. I have had many questions, and I have just never gone to the manual. I have never gone in there and said, what is actually here. Then I learn the hard way, and I go back to reading because I have finally gotten out of the rut that I am in, and I'm like, "There it was. All I had to do was to take the time to sit down, get on line with God and read what he had. It's been around forever." Recently I was reading through the Book of Mormon and I came to Ether 5. Right next to where it says Chapter 5, I have written "faith chapter". The verse I'd like to read, and it's a goal for myself is verse 4. "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God, might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God." Might this be the hope of us all, and may I never forget that the answers are always in the manual. All that I have to be willing to do is to make the time to get in there and find out what it actually has to say.

The worship service closed with the singing of "Onward to Zion" and prayer by Paul Marsh.

Music Brings Praise and Commitment

This quarter's music service began with the hymn of praise, "With Happy Voices Ringing" and closed with the joyous song of commitment "Send Me Forth, O Blessed Master". Unfortunately, the service did not get recorded so is not available for distribution. Elder Michael Jordison was in charge of the service. Lauren Smith was the pianist. Following the singing of the opening hymn and the invocation pronounced by Valle Smith, Michael read the doxology as the call to worship - "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above ye heav'nly hosts; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen"

Printed in our bulletin was a song first introduced to us by its author, Elder George Allen, titled, "Standing on the Promises". We were asked to join Michael as he accompanied us on his guitar, since that was the way Brother Allen had introduced the song to us. The song chronicles the 40 years of wandering the Israelites endured because they did not heed the promises of God that would have led them into the promised land. It then tells of the Restoration of those promises in these latter days and affirms the hope that, "We'll all be standing on the promises, those everlasting promises. Standing on the promises of God. Then Christ will be the only way. The kingdom will be here to stay. This is the Book of Mormon's day. Standing on the promises of God."

After the offering was received by Ben and Matthew Anderson, Valle Smith presented slides of a beautiful series of landscapes from the trip she and Alan took last summer to Germany and surrounding territories and Sherm and Cheryl Phipps took to Maine. Son Nathan and his wife, Julie were accompanying each picture with appropriate music, Nathan on the piano and Julie on the violin. Each scene was captioned from the scripture found in Jacob 3:9-12:

"Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord.
How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him;
and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways.
And no man knoweth of his ways, save it be revealed unto him;
wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God.
For behold, by the power of his word, man came upon the face
of the earth; which earth was created by the power of his
word."

Our presider read 1 Nephi 5:1-5: "And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of speaking to my brethren, behold, they said unto me, Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear.

"And it came to pass that I said unto them, that I knew that I had spoken hard things against the wicked, according to the truth; and the righteous have I justified, and testified that they should be lifted up at the last day; wherefore, the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center. And now, my brethren, if ye were righteous, and were willing to hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say, Thou speakest hard things against us. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did exhort my brethren, with all diligence, to keep the commandments of the Lord. And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord; insomuch that I had joy and great hopes of them, that they would walk in the paths of righteousness."

The congregation responded singing the beloved hymn, "There's an Old Old Path made strangely sweet by the touch divine of his blessed feet." Cede Smith followed with her piano solo, and Yvonne Galusha sang, to the accompaniment of her own guitar, "You are my strength when I am weak. You are my all in all! Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your Name."

Psalm 28:6-7 was read, confirming the message of Yvonne's song, "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

And the song chosen for the congregation to sing next further emphasized the desire we have for fellowship with our Lord and Savior. We sang the musical setting of Psalm 42:1: "As the deer panteth after water, so my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship Thee. You alone are my strength, my shield. To you alone shall my spirit yield. You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship Thee."

Rob Rolfe, known for his powerful interpretations of scriptural ballads, sang the story of Job in his own inimitable way. The contrast between the voice of Satan and the voice of God was unmistakable as they confronted each other concerning the man of whom God said, "Whatever is righteous he's anxious to be", but who Satan declared would turn and curse God if only he had to suffer enough. God had the last word!

Alan Smith followed immediately singing, "There's no love to me like the love of Jesus, ever, always just the same; Even though of this world you may be most lowly, Jesus still loves you. Bless His name.

"There never was one like Jesus. Ever, always true is He. There never was one like Jesus. There's no love like His love to me."

When Alan finished the three stanzas of praise, Brother Jordison quoted the ancient scripture, "And the people said, "Amen!"

Luke 9:18-24 was read: "And it came to pass, as he went alone with his disciples to pray, he asked them, saying, Who say the people that I am? They answering said, Some say, John the Baptist; but others say, Elias; and others, That one of the old prophets is risen again.

"He said unto them, but who say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ, the Son of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man of him, Saying, the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes; and be slain, and be raised the third day.

"And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, must be willing to lose it for my sake; and whosoever will be willing to lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

The congregation sang the beautiful dialogue between the complaining servant and the Sacrificing Christ in the hymn, "I Traveled Down a Lonely Road". (Incidentally, both the songs, "As the Deer Panteth After Water" and "I traveled Down a Lonely Road" are in the new revised Hymns of the Restoration just off the press from the Restoration Hymn Society, Inc.)

Michael picked up his guitar and sang:

"In this world I walk alone, With no place to call my home
But there's one who holds my hand.
The rugged road through barren lands
The way is dark, the road is steep,
But He's become my eyes to see
The strength to climb, my griefs to bear.
The Savior lives inside me there

Refrain: In Your love I find release, A haven from my unbelief
Take my life and let me be A living prayer, my God to Thee
Take my life and let me be A living prayer, my God to Thee.

Another voice inside my mind In these trials of life I find
He comforts me and bids me live Inside the love the Father
gives."

Sue Beck sang, "I'm bound for the promised land. Who will

come and go with me?"

Nancy and Brian Short, who had flown their plane from Rock Island, Illinois just to be in the service, sang, "Sweet Hour of Prayer".

Yuriko Akikusa, a Japanese student at Graceland University, sang a song in Japanese.

The pressing need for workers dedicated to bringing to pass all of the Lord's desires for human kind is expressed in Matthew 9:41-44: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 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." The congregation responded singing, with understanding and commitment, "Send Me Forth, Oh Blessed Master . . . And with joy I will obey the call, and in Thy blessed name, I will take the blessed light, joy, hope of the gospel there.

"Call me forth to active service and my prompt response will be, "Here am I. Send me!" I am ready to report for orders, Master summon me; And I'll go on .any errand of love for Thee."

Sherman Phipps pronounced the benediction.

News and Notes

Conferences Share Week

The Conference of Restoration Elders met from Sunday, April 1 until Wednesday noon, April 4. The Conference of Restoration Branches followed from Noon, April 4 through Sunday, April 8. Both convened in the Waldo Restoration Branch and Center Place Restoration School facilities just off River Street in Independence, Missouri. the theme of both conferences was "One Fold, One Shepherd".

Two nights prior to the opening of the Conferences, the Center Place Restoration School offered the play, "The Quiet Miracle". The play was written by the Senior English class of the school from the book by the same title written by Jo Montgomery. This was the third year that the seniors of the school have adapted a Restoration book to perform as a play. The other two books are "The Call at Evening" and "Missing Pieces".

Conference Elects New President

The Conference of Restoration Branches chose High Priest Robert Rolfe president of the Conference for the coming year. Brother Rolfe succeeds High Priest Marlin Guin who has filled the position with distinction since the Conference's inception. Elder Gary Whiting was chosen Vice President. Elder Rudy Leutzinger continues as Secretary - Clerk and Elder Tony Durant is Treasurer. The report of the proceedings of the conference is available on the internet by asking your server for the Conference by title.

The Conference of Restoration Elders selected Richard Neill its new chairman. Theirs is a corporate structure with High Priest Paul Gage their corporate President. Brother Gage had served as their Chairman as well during the past year.

Only the Conference of Restoration Branches is a delegate conference. Mount Ayr sent four delegates, Yvonne Galusha, Gordon Winkler and Alan and Mildred Smith. Also attending part or full time were High Priest Robert Rolfe and wife Lynda, High Priest Sherman Phipps and wife Cheryl, Seventies George Knotts and Ron Smith, Elder Gerry Bolingbroke and wife Patty, the entire George Galusha family, with Cessaries serving as pianist for some of the

services, and Diane Anderson.

All persons properly registered at the conference have the privilege of voice and vote. Delegates from United States branches represent 25 members with each of their votes and international delegates receive multiple votes according to the number of Saints in the jurisdiction they represent. Currently there were 31 countries represented in the flag ceremony with which the conference opened and closed.

Kenya Minister Visits

Following the recent Conferences, Elder Sam Agwanda and his wife Judith from Kisumu, Kenya ministered in the Mount Ayr congregation. They brought a table cloth and a flag from Kenya which they presented to the branch as well.

Both of them participated in the Wednesday evening prayer meeting and in ministry at the Lamoni Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, and Brother Sam shared his testimony of the rise of the Church of Jesus Christ in Kenya with the women of the Thursday morning class. In addition to his ministry to us, he had also in his audience two women from Germany who had been in the country for the Conference of the Community of Christ.

Norman and Cathy Nelson of Lamoni hosted the Agwandas.

New Hymnal Available

The Restoration Hymn Society received its first shipment of the new Hymn of the Restoration during the Conferences. The piano version of the book will be delivered later.

The new hymnal has 552 hymns and responses. Many of the old favorites are restored in it and there are a number of new hymns included which carry strong testimony of divine inspiration.

South Iowa Group Meets in Mount Ayr

Saturday, April 23 members of Restoration Branches met in the Moutn Ayr sanctuary for their monthly meeting of prayer, study and planning. Representatives of the various Restoration Branches in the area meet regularly in sanctuaries in Des Moines, Ottumwa, Decatur City and, for the first time, in Mt. Ayr. Regular attenders are from near Waverly, Ottumwa, Boone, Des Moines, Mount Ayr, Lamoni, Nauvoo and Geneseo, Illinois and Bloomfield, Missouri. Each meeting begins with a prayer service at 9:30 in the morning followed by a class, then lunch together. The afternoon gathering is dedicated to further study and planning for future events, including the areas' fall retreat. Everyone is invited to attend.

The decision was made at this meeting to hold the retreat at The Oaks Christian Camp and Conference Center north of Bonaparte, Iowa September 14-16. The selected theme is, "Thy Will Be Done". The next meeting of the group is scheduled at Northeast Des Moines on May 19.

Branch to View Dead Sea Scrolls

Tickets have been purchased for members of the congregation to view the Dead Sea Scrolls in Kansas City, Missouri, May 5. Details of the trip are available from Cheryl Phipps.

Prior to the trip, the congregation has invited Gaylord and Faye Shaw to share their presentation on the subject at the Ron and Di Smith home Wednesday evening, May 3 beginning at 6:30.

The Shaw presentation uses in excess of 200 slides to show the discovery, translation, etc. of the scrolls. Among the topics addressed will be twelve ways the scrolls support the Book of Mormon and at least two ways they support the Inspired Version of the Bible.

Branch Members featured in Area Papers

Heidi Winkler's picture appeared in the Mt. Ayr Record News along with a story of the recognition she received at the William Jewell College women's basketball spring banquet where she received her second varsity letter. She was recognized as a William Jewell College Cardinal Scholar, Heart of America Athletic Confer-

**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison St.
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News and Notes

ence Scholars Athlete, NAIA All-Region V Scholar Athlete, and as an NAIA Academic All-American.

Linda Barber and Gable Galuaha were featured, with their pictures, in the Lamoni Chronicle. Linda is retiring after thirty years as a Spanish, French and English teacher in North Missouri and Lamoni schools. Gable placed first in both the double mini and the trampoline Novice divisions of the State Tumbling meet held recently at Marshalltown. He now qualifies to compete in the national meet later this summer.

Graduating Student Gives Recital

Cessaries Galusha gave her Senior piano Recital at Grant Recital Hall on the University of Missouri, Kansas City, campus

April 29. Cessaries has chosen to continue her music education working toward a Master's degree at the University of Oregon, Eugene.

Family Missionary Reunion Approaches

Registration for the Seventy's Reunion at Graceland University June 17- 23 has already passed the 350 mark. The Theme for this year is, "Onward to Zion"!

Much of the staff has been recruited and preparation for the week, both physical and spiritual, is in progress. Please add your prayers to theirs for a spiritual feast that will make it possible for God to bring again Zion.

Wednesday service has report on conference, prayers for Rolfe

The Wednesday evening prayer and testimony service at Ron and Di Smith's home began with the singing of "God is so good" and "Give me oil in my lamp" followed by an invocation by Gordon Winkler.

Brother Winkler opened with a few thoughts from the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches held April 4-8. He was one of the Mount Ayr branch delegates to the conference.

He stated that several weeks earlier Brother Sherman Phipps preached as part of his sermon that we need to be listening when the Lord asks us to "move from here to there." Brother Phipps shared a motorcycle trip experience he had to demonstrate his point. That sermon stuck with Gordon and even though he was not in attendance when delegates were selected by the branch, he felt it was a time to respond, a time to "move from here to there."

Gordon reported that attending the conference was a very good experience. Those in attendance were genuinely concerned with being about the Lord's work and committed to His gospel and the building of God's kingdom on earth. However, it became apparent that as Saints in the Restoration gospel, we are polarized in our understanding right now. Several quotes and comments were shared with the group to demonstrate what Gordon observed. It seemed the conference was separated into those who had come with a desire and understanding that the conference should take formal action to organize and move forward (form a Quorum of Seventy, reclaim the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints name and develop an identity) and those that expressed a need for prayer and fasting and a desire to wait on the Lord and not get ahead of him.

"We ask when will the Lord come? Maybe we should ask what has He to come to?" was on one side while "I am willing to call a time out and let everyone catch up. Some look and see a congregation of Saints, I look and see us as collateral damage the RLDS church was willing to accept as a loss."

The separation of understanding creates a situation that does not lend itself to a negotiation or compromise. We can't agree to organize only half a Quorum of Seventy instead of a whole quorum. Nor can we agree to walk only one half step ahead of the Lord. Obviously not one would promote either of these positions.

High Priest Marlin Guinn, president of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches, offered this advise and counsel "We need to give up our right to be offended. We need to have a burning passion in our hearts for the Saints as 'the body of Christ.' The magnitude of challenges requires one body and one priesthood."

Gordon shared that he was very much impressed by the selection and singing of hymn number 244 in the Hymns of the Restoration -- "Open My Eyes That I May See." The hymn was sung several times during the week and Gordon felt it really expressed the desires of the conference. Patty Bolingbroke also felt ministry through this hymn.

Gordon had selected scriptures from Mosiah 1: 28, 34-39, and III Nephi 5:3-9). Both of these scriptures describe times when the people were asked to open their ears, lift up their eyes and open their hearts that the mysteries of God might be unfolded for their view.

Hymn 244 was sung and prayers for High Priest Rob Rolfe were offered in support of his acceptance to be the next president of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches. Prayer for health, strength, wisdom and insight were offered by several. A wonderful spirit of prayer and testimony continued and the service concluded with singing "Tenderly, Tenderly Lead Thou Me On."

