



# Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

# NEWSLETTER

2320 State Highway 2 Mount Ayr, IA 50854 [www.angel-message.org](http://www.angel-message.org)  
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*"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*

*So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her anymore.*

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord..."* Joel 3:16-18

## News & Notes

### Anderson~Schoff Wedding

Brandy Anderson and Joshua Schoff were united in marriage August 4th at the Maysville Restoration Branch. Sherman Phipps officiated over a beautiful and spiritual ceremony. The couple will make their home in Cameron, Mo for the time being. Congratulations you two!!

### 1 + 1 = 3

Heidi and Stephen Bader will soon welcome a new addition to their family. A baby shower will be held at 2 PM Saturday August 11th at grandparents,

Gordon and Linda Winkler's home in Mount Ayr.

### Priesthood Meeting

Priesthood meeting Sunday evening, 5 PM August 19th at Rob Rolfe's home.

### Business Meeting

Mark your calendars for a Branch business meeting Sunday August 26th. Along with the election of officers we will be sharing about the recent Priesthood call of Christopher Cunningham.

## Contents

FEATURE:	PAGE:
Sermons	
Elder Steven Smith	2
H.P. Michael Beem	4
Elder Eric Odida	8
Priest Rod Bastow	13
Seventy George Knotts	16
Elder Gordon Winkler	18
.....	
News & Notes	1
Calendar	21



## ENDOWED BY GOD'S SPIRIT



Elder Steven Smith  
*Lamoni, Iowa*  
June 3, 2012

Good Morning. I am thrilled to come this morning and share with you. I have been considering the endowment, and there is a lot that has been written about it. I do not want to take away from the many authors who have expounded on it in writing, but I felt that I was inspired.

I told Gordon that would put pressure on him, because I was claiming that I was inspired of the Spirit, and he would refute it, if I was not teaching under the Spirit. I do believe that the Spirit guided me, so I am I am excited about sharing that with you today.

*"Behold I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church, and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now, but behold they have not learned to be obedient to the things I require at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil....And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself, and my people must needs be chastened, until they learn obedience, if it must needs be by the things they suffer... For behold, I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be*

*poured out upon them insomuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me."*

### Step 1 –Learn

God wants us to be endowed with his Spirit. The first step is that we must learn. We must learn to be obedient.

When I teach my dog to be obedient, I have a set of commands that I give to the dog, and when she does what I ask, I will reward her. If she doesn't do what I ask then I will punish her. Depending on the importance and necessity of her keeping the command, the punishment may be simple such as barking the command "no", or ignoring her, but the punishment can be more severe if, for example, I want her to stay out of the road and I need her to learn something a little bit faster.

The Lord made us. The Lord knows how we work. The Lord wants us to be happy. He made laws by which we function. Early Clerics and the educated helped us form the disciplines of physics, chemistry, and biology as we know them today. All the scientific laws we discover were made by God. God made us function by those laws. God has told us how to function by His laws so that we work well. He gave us a manufacturer's manual (the scriptures) to help us refer to it and find out how we best work.

To make a long story short, we work best when we have his Spirit with us. God wants us to have his Spirit. We want to have his Spirit. We look for the endowment. The problem is that we sometimes have not learned how to use his Spirit.

When we have the Spirit, we are told that there is a fruit that comes from that. That fruit has been described in Galatians 5:22-23, as love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Ephesians also described it as all goodness, all righteousness, and all truth. These are all descriptives of one fruit. If we have the Spirit, we have love. We do not have the Spirit if we have all the rest, but no love. If we don't have truth, we don't have the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a very identifiable entity. As a group, if we have the Spirit, we will have gifts. The fruit is an attribute of our thoughts and mind. The gifts involve the words that we say, the tongues, and interpretation of tongues, the words of knowledge, and a number of things we say

and sometimes do. We also have the gifts including the power of the Spirit. So we read of individuals having the power to move mountains. All of these things, the fruit, the gifts, and the power, come from having the same spirit. One individual may not have all the gifts at one time, but we are promised that we will have those gifts so we can use them.

We are told that if we don't have charity, which is a part of the grouping of thoughts that are the fruit of the Spirit, the other gifts and power is not going to help us a lot. We need to have the fruit in the beginning. And God wants us to have it. We are not zombies. God is not going to make us do what we do not want to do. So how do we get this endowment of the Spirit, to have it always as prophesied in Section 102?

We have sometimes waited on God for the endowment. If we sit on our bottoms and do nothing but wait, we may sit for a long time. If we wait as a waiter or waitress waits on a customer, if we wait on the Lord by serving the Lord, that is part of the key.

So today, we made a covenant with God (in the Lord's Supper), a covenant that we have made many times before. A covenant that reiterates the covenant we made at baptism. In the prayer on the wine, its says that (and this is a covenant that God proposed, not one we have made for God) **If** you will remember him **always**, then you will have his Spirit to be with you. Simple isn't it. If you will remember him always, you will have his Spirit to be with you always. We do not have to wait for the endowment. He has told us that we can have his Spirit to be with us always, if we will simply remember him.

If we remember him, we will love him.

If we remember him, we will do what he says....we'll keep his commandments.

When bad things or unfair things happen to us, we will know how to respond.

When good things happen, we'll know how to respond.

When we sin, we'll know how to respond.

When we see others sinning around us, we'll know how to respond.

When we sit down to eat, we'll know how to respond.

When we go to bed, we'll know how





to respond.

When we love God, and our neighbor, we will respond accordingly.

This act of partaking of the Lord's Supper is an act of remembering him also.

If we remember Him, we can have his Spirit to be with us.

The prayer on the bread goes 2 steps farther. We must take his name upon us, which is done through baptism. This adopts us into his family, as we carry the family name. We have family rules that we must take seriously. But the main purpose for baptism is for the remission of our sins. That means that God purchased our sins, with Jesus' life, and we don't have to have them any more. If God purchases our sins, because of his sacrifice which we have remembered here in our covenant today, they are gone, if we truly turn them over to Him. We don't have to worry about those sins.

Now Christ told about the situation where if you have a house and cleaned the house, and kicked the devil out, there are seven more ready to come in.

So the other part that we have promised today, is that if we give up our sins, and let Christ own them, (its now his problem), we will also fill that empty room, and remember Christ by keeping his commandments. The promise is before us, that if we find something in our life that we do not like, or discover a consequence which is causing us to suffer, we remember that we have the sin remitted as soon as we are willing to give it up, and search for a better way.

It's just like my dog. If we find that we are dealing with consequences that we don't like, then it is time to recognize our sin and give it up, but find a promise to fill our lives with the associated blessing, and remember. In fact, the belief that God has a promise that can replace the consequences we are suffering from is called Faith. And we can find these promises in the scriptures and even if we do not have a codified list of commandments before us, we can know his will and build great faith with fasting and prayer. We can take the testimony told to us by our Fathers or Mothers and remember the blessings and say "I want that." If we then change our life, so we follow the commandments, which we remember is what the Lord wants us to do, we change our thoughts, words, and

actions to call that act Repentance. We have now used our faith to repent. When we start to do this we will have his Spirit to be with us always. If we don't keep our covenant today, He says that the consequence is that sometimes we are going to suffer. Sometimes you have got to learn from the suffering. We are then chastened so we learn to repent.

I have not always taken this instruction seriously, and I have not always kept the promises, and sometimes I have suffered.

I remember a brother, I won't use his name, but he was a powerful minister for the Lord. He was very influential with my in-laws, and he was invited to a Thanksgiving dinner. He knew of the teachings of my mother and was offended by her teaching that caffeine was a strong drink and not to be used by the Saints, as a teaching for their temporal salvation. In his family for many generations his forefathers had drunk coffee. At this particular Thanksgiving dinner, he called me to task. He stated that he had always enjoyed his coffee and it had not hurt him or the generations before him.

<b>Endowment</b>	
4 - Wisdom & Understanding	
3 - Knowledge	
2 - Faith	Endowment
1 - Learn / Blessing	Level
/ Consequence	

I was floored, because I revered this individual, and after a rant and one-sided debate, which was not part of my family's Thanksgiving tradition, I simply said, "So where does your father live now? He said, "He's dead." I smiled and ignored him and after about ten to fifteen minutes, he ended his very embarrassing rant. He included things like "If I was perfect, I would be translated, so I will keep my coffee. I need one imperfection." He used several flippant justifications for doing what he knew he shouldn't.

I did not say anything when about 3 months later he had a heart attack and it was reported that the doctor said he was not to use any more alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine. Alcohol and tobacco were not a

problem for him, but he did say that if he wouldn't give up his caffeine for Jesus, he sure wouldn't give it up for some young doctor. He died in 6 months, because he chose not to obey a temporal law (this was not a spiritual law). He suffered and his family suffered as the consequence of his choice.

Step 2 Faith

God wants us to learn. God has told us how to learn. Faith is the next step up. We must have faith to remember him, Faith to be baptized, Faith to know that our sins have been remitted, paid for, gone, He owns them. Then if we have faith to fill our lives with the blessings of the promises, we will have his Spirit to be with us always.

When we go from the learning phase to the faith phase, where we consciously choose to do what the Lord asks and turn our backs on the things He has not asked us to do, then we will have the **Endowment**. His spirit will be with us always. We will be Endowed.

**Isaiah 28:9&10** *Whom shall he teach knowledge: and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts (We are like babies that must be weaned) For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line: here a little, and there a little.*

"Precept" is translated from the Hebrew word "tsav" which also means an indictment or a commandment. You take one commandment at a time, adding one commandment to the next...adding one promise to the next. That is how we use faith. You do not have to do it all at one time, it's precept upon precept, and line upon line. We can try our faith one promise at a time, but we have to do our part. We can fight a lot of battles, but...

(I made an analogy last week in a song I sang)...If you have a flashlight, and you want light, you can think all sorts of ideas, you can say whatever you want to say, you can do all manner of actions, throw the flashlight on the ground or bang it against a tree, but if you want to have light you have to flip the switch to get light. That is like a promise. If you flip the switch as promised in the directions, you will get light. Doing anything else will not work. We need to have faith, to do what God has asked, and not try all those other things, so



we can walk in the light.

3 Knowledge

Alma 16:151-173, Faith is like having a seed, that is planted and nourished, and soon you stop having faith, you do not have faith anymore when you have knowledge.

When you have knowledge, something happens, so you go beyond the simple use of faith. In the flashlight analogy, when you are at the level of knowledge, you can flip the switch but sometimes the light does not come on. When you have knowledge of how it works you know to change the battery, or sometimes the bulb, or sometimes you

*“When you have knowledge, something happens, so you go beyond the simple use of faith.”*

have to use sandpaper to freshen the contacts on the battery, so when you flip the switch the light comes on. With knowledge, you know how the flashlight works so you can adjust how you interact with that light. With knowledge, you can make the flashlight work more often.

One of my first experiences as an elder came at a reunion in Excelsior Springs. There was a wall beside the road there. An older lady fell off of the wall and hurt her knee. Her knee was bad enough that she couldn't walk and they carried her back to her tent. I went over to talk to her, and as we were talking, she explained what had happened to her knee, and I looked at it. I felt around on her knee, which she allowed me to do, and I discovered what we call a drawer sign, at least a grade 3 out of 4. She had torn her anterior cruciate ligament or ACL. I said, “You need to go to the doctor and have this taken care of.” She said, “I cannot afford to go to the doctor. You're an elder. Why don't you pray for me and have God heal me.”

I had oil. I was able to get another elder. About an hour later, we prayed for her. Her faith was much greater than mine. She asked that we ask for a healing. We asked the Lord to do the impossible and heal her, and she got up and walked. She walked without pain. She walked without her knee buckling. She was so thrilled at the blessing of the Lord that she chose to lead another lady around the campgrounds who was blind so she would not fall off of the wall. I thought, wow, this is great. I

had flipped on the flashlight. Unfortunately, I have administered to other people with much greater faith that I had with “the cruciate ligament tear” incident and the healing has not happened.

Sometimes when using faith, I do not have the knowledge I need, and it doesn't work. As I approach knowledge, I am able to pray for more things, and more tailored blessings can occur. I have still to reach the level of knowledge where I understand the Lord's plan, but when I reach that level I can be a greater part of the blessing to others. I will be better able to use the tool of his Spirit.

4- Wisdom and understanding

The final level that I would like to talk about is beyond knowledge. Some people could break this into two steps, a philosopher could probably find ten or more steps. Wisdom is knowing how to use the knowledge that we have, and understanding becomes even greater.

When I was in sixth grade, I looked for a science project. I read about an experiment from individuals who had greater understanding than I had. I took a Tupperware container, and I took food particles of garbage and filled the container. I then placed a copper electrode and a silver electrode through the lid to create an acid battery. The more the bacteria degraded the garbage, it created short chain fatty acids, and gas. The acid reacted with the different metals to create a current that when attached to a light bulb would light it up.

At first the light was really dim, but by day six the light was really bright. I proudly took it to my classroom with an intricate description on the backboard. My teacher however, was a little concerned because the gas and organic acids made the room stink like rotting garbage. So after class on that Friday, she saturated my experiment with Lysol, until it did not stink any more. Finally on the next Monday when they judged my project, there was no light left.

Now to our flashlight analogy, when you have understanding, you can create your own battery and electrical circuit, and perhaps build your own LED, and not even need the flashlight or the switch. Now you have many ways to generate the electricity, you can use salt water, or citrus, or even a tomato. You might use a hand pumped generator and not use a battery. When you are at this level you understand, as though

you are one with God, understanding what he comprehends, then you know how to use his Spirit as a tool.

God has promised his Spirit to be with us always. We call that the endowment. He has already promised us exactly how to do it. We have to remember him. As we remember him, we need to make sure that we are baptized and we think in terms of a people whose sin is redeemed. Then we have to fill that void with the commandments or promises, one commandment or promise at a time. Then we will grow through knowledge to understanding, and we will have the tool called the Spirit.

And when we believe...we must do it.



## THE DESIRE TO BE HIS



H.P. Michael Beem  
*Independence, Missouri*  
June 10, 2012

Good morning. I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior. It is nice to come and be with you, and to share the gospel with you. I am pleased to see such a large group. When I was younger, I was part of a group called The Caravan from Atherton and Missionary Branch. We had one large youth group of about 35. We would practice music, and we would go and sing and share testimonies and put on a worship service for branches in the outlying areas. There was many a time when the group would be 10 people.



Seldom did we ever find a group that was as large as this. And it was always a joy to see a large group of Saints in the outlying areas that were holding fast to the word of God.

For a scripture reading this morning, I would like to read DC 10:1a-2b.

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

I am privileged to attend church with my father. There was a time that I didn't. Growing up in a congregation in Independence may be different than growing up here. Growing up in Independence, the elders always got together and they talked, and the Aaronic priesthood was always kind of left out. And the young men who grew up in the branch weren't looked at as being grown up quite yet. So at the age of 22, feeling as if I was being treated like a child by some in the congregation I attended, I grew a little restless. A friend of mine introduced me to a man who was looking for a carpenter, which was my trade. I was looking to get into a better situation. So I met with this man, and he happened to be a pastor of a congregation. And he said to me, Michael, I could really use someone of your quality, and I would like to have you come and minister in our branch. So, I switched congregations. I took my wife and our newborn son (I was about 23 and he was about 1 at the time) and we switched congregations. And the Lord began to work with me in a way that He would not have been able to work with me if we had remained in our other congregation. I began to teach the adult Sunday school class, and taught that for two years. And then I started teaching the older kids' class, and enjoyed that immensely. But the Lord, in all of His guidance and direction, the way that He has worked with me in my life, He has

brought me to a point that I now understand that the gospel has to be moved from here [pointing to his head]—from our understanding, intellect, being able to comprehend and being able to know what the word says—we have to move it to our heart. It has to become the sole passion of why we exist, of why we are here. It has to become the purpose that drives us. It can't be going about taking care of our family. It can't be going about and defending the word in arguments and discussions. We have to begin to live the gospel with purpose and with meaning from our hearts. If we don't begin to do this, we are going to be left on the outside looking in because the Lord wants a broken and a contrite people. He wants us to lay down our own desires and our own wants and take up His. And we can't do that unless we are willing to put the word into our hearts.

I am privileged to attend church with my father. I respect him a great deal. Here is a little side testimony. My father and I had gone to Geneseo. It was our first trip about five years back. We did not know what to expect. It was a priesthood retreat so we went. At that priesthood retreat we had many long discussions with some of the brethren. And on the way home, as we were traveling, my father turned and looked at me, and said, Michael, we are both going to be called to the office of high priest someday, together. I thought, that is a little absurd, Dad. Look at how young I am. So last year before conference occurred, the quorum president came to me. He told me, I want to tell you about a call in your branch. He said, your father has been called to the office of high priest, and so have you. It fulfilled the words that my father told me, that we would be called at the same time.

So, my father and I have long conversations about the gospel. We read scripture together, and he agrees, the number one thing the Saints lack isn't understanding. It isn't a desire to be unified. It isn't a desire to come and be one. What we lack is a conviction in our hearts that causes the gospel to burn within us.

I was astonished at conference at some of the things that were said and done. I hope you will bear with me for a few moments. This is not meant to be political in any way, and it is not meant to hurt anyone. But I desire to read a few things to you. DC 68:4a-c

*And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance; faith in Christ the Son of the living God; and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands when eight years old, the sin be upon the head of the parents; for this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized; and their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands: and they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.*

At conference, we heard some challenging that, saying that children should wait till they are 18 or 20. I could go and read some others of the ordinances. But I would like to read to you some portions of words of counsel, published by Joseph Luff in the pamphlet "Concerning our whereabouts."

*Your zeal for my cause is pleasing unto me and your present travail for my Church shall bring forth according to my pleasure, for wheresoever my law is in honor and my ordinances are held as a sacred thing, even as they were delivered unto you from the beginning. Behold there is my church; and he that imagineth change in them hath not known me, for I CHANGE NOT, and my ordinances are my witness.*

*Whoso laboreth to maintain the integrity of these among my people confesseth me as his Lord; but he that varieth therefrom, seeketh not to build up my kingdom, but his own.*

*I called forth a people from the world in these last days and entrusted them with treasures from heaven, that they might be agents unto me, that through them I might achieve in my own way and that the glory of my purpose might appear; but I have not been trusted, nor have my provisions been accounted sufficient, and my people have returned to the world for their equipment and to make effective their instruments of accomplishment.*

*They have mingled my sacred things with their carnal selections. They have made of my house a resort for pleasure.*





*They have employed the revenues of my church to promote pursuits that are secular and interests for which no provision is made in my law. They have sought to embellish my provisions and the creations of my will with the inventions of their own imagination until I am nowhere to be found amid the spectacles of their performance in the separateness of my own attire, and I have no longer a peculiar people on the earth who are content with me as I am and as I have revealed myself. My covenant with many has been counted insufficient, and for purposes outside of my Gospel's intent, they have adopted the vows of other shrines and pledged themselves in secret places where I cannot be found.*

There are many more things in this, but I will not read it all. We have to uphold the gospel with all the fervency of our hearts. If we let the gospel slack in any way, we are falling short of what God has called us to. God is a zealous God. He has decreed certain things to be certain ways. He wants us to be those who are zealous of His law and His ordinances. This was given April 5, 1925, and yet how true is it to us today! God is an unchangeable God. He doesn't change. His word doesn't change.

In III Nephi 12:25-35, the Lord gives to us His gospel. For the sake of time, I am not going to read it all, but I shall list the principles given there.

*Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you, that I came into the world to do the will of my Father; because my Father sent me*

1. God was incarnated.

*...And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross.*

2. Jesus was crucified.

*...Even so should [all] men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me.*

3. The resurrection.

*To stand before me, to be judged of their works.*

4. Number 4 is Judgment.

[Skip down to verse 29] *And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father, at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.*

5. Mercy.

*And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and*

*cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father: and this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men.*

6. Number six is justice—the opposite of mercy.

*...And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; Therefore nothing entereth into his rest, save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.*

7. Sanctification is number 7.

*Now this is the commandment [or the law], Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.*

8. The law. It is the law of faith, repentance, and baptism.

*...This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do.*

9. Discipleship—that we would follow that walk daily.

Now I was reading section 76 and I had the opportunity to share this with another congregation a couple of weeks back. While preparing for that sermon I noticed this—it jumped out at me, as I had never noticed it before. DC 76:4g-i.

*And this is the gospel, the glad tidings which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us, that he came into the world, even Jesus to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved, whom the Father had put into his power; and made by him; who glorifies the Father; and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition, who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him; wherefore he saves all except them.*

It is not as well defined, but how beautiful the gospel sits right there. God doesn't change—not from the beginning, nor the middle, nor the end. He is the same. And His word and His ordinances are the same from the beginning to the end. And He wants us to uphold His word and His statutes with all the fervency of heart. But he wants us to live the word. We can't

just defend it. We need to live it.

I would like to read a poem to you. It is called "Loves warning and entreaty" [from *Concerning our Whereabouts*].

LOVE'S WARNING AND ENTREATY

To all who hope within Christ's fold  
To find a sheltering place  
And safety, when long-threatened ills  
Shall flood the earth apace.  
To all who on His altars lay  
The homage of their lip,  
But elsewhere pay the tributes that  
Reveal discipleship.

Who cry aloud: "Lord, Lord," to  
In forms of song and prayer;  
But in his life and counsel see  
Few garments fit to wear  
Whose words extol the "narrow way,"  
And praise the "bread from heaven"  
While yet they tread the world's wide path  
And feast upon its leaven.

To all who count it righteousness  
Earth's pleasures to assign  
A place in courts designed of God  
For heaven alone to shine.  
Who cry: "Thy kingdom come-thy will  
On earth be done, O Lord,"  
While Adam holds dominion by  
Their carnal will's accord.

Heedless that God's true sovereignty  
Is where His ways obtain  
And heaven is the consequence  
Of His exclusive reign  
They wist not that in answering  
Their prayer He must demand  
The space they fill or in their lives  
Have absolute command.

To all who see not Omega  
In Alpha and whose fear  
Gives Hagar place and thus with flesh  
Invades the Spirit's sphere.  
Who find not in God's covenant  
Sufficient, and who swear  
Allegiance at the shrines to gods  
Or idols found elsewhere.

To all who Mammon's gauge employ,  
Heaven's attitude to rate,  
And look for "Houses made with hands,"  
God's smile to indicate.  
Who in huge structures and in lands-  
In increase of earth's ware



And alien fellowship behold  
His church's wealth-beware!

To all who think that heaven chords  
Their choruses of mirth  
And lauds their schemes to dramatize  
The scenes of holy birth;  
Who in God's altars see a stage  
For spectacted display  
And think their images thereon  
Reveal a better way.

"A better way!" O fools! Hath God  
Of wisdom been bereft?  
And unto your superior sense  
Has fashioning been left?  
How oft must He repeat:  
"My ways are not your ways," but mine  
Alone can serve the purposes  
Of Infinite design?

Wedded in Gospel covenant  
To Christ, professedly;  
But with the world consorting still,  
In soul adultery:  
Thinking His grace will sanctify  
The union and its brood,  
If lodged within the house He built  
Their presence to exclude.

Once more the Spirit cries, Beware-  
The closing century-  
Freighted with warnings waits the proof  
Of their divinity.  
God's vindicating hand must reach  
The length of your distrust  
And smite the feet that trample His  
Long-suffering in the dust.

The elements his signal wait,  
To move avengingly,  
And time is ripe for harvesting  
The field of destiny.  
The sickle whetted by God's hand  
For this, in ancient years,  
Has ended its long rest and on  
Its blade no rust appears.

The field sown with terrestrial seed  
By self-indulgent hand,  
In hope that a celestial yield  
Therefrom would bless the land,  
Is travailing and from its womb  
An offspring will emerge  
Whose advent means disaster-  
Whose song will be a dirge.

Oh, ye who trumpet Zion, list.  
The arm on which you lean  
Will fail of your expectancy

And leave you bare and lean.  
The idols of your hope before  
The coming blast will quail  
And leave your misplaced confidence  
Its folly to bewail.

But from the fields of sacrifice,  
By self-denial sown  
With ancient seed, prepared of God-  
Supplied from heaven alone-  
Shall come a call for garnerers vast,  
From reapers who were not  
Ashamed of Christ and by His plan  
Contentedly have wrought.

These are they whose eyes beheld  
In "living sacrifice,"  
Love's offering -not in pelf alone,  
But gems of higher price:  
Their wills, affections, and their ways  
Were on the altar piled,  
And -choosing God's- their lives to him  
Became thus reconciled.

These are Christ's -they choose to walk  
Where He had shed the light,  
These are Christ's -in pleasing Him  
They found, their chief delight.  
These are Christ's -by sacrifice  
They gave His methods place  
To execute in them the plan  
And purposes of Grace.

These in the day portrayed shall find  
Deliverance and rest:  
Their wisdom then by tongues that scorned  
Shall freely be confessed.  
As Joseph's shining anciently  
Shall their uprising be,  
To honored place, as saviors, clothed  
With holy dignity.

Let all who herein shall discern  
Their Shepherd's fond appeal,  
Give heed and at the single shrine  
Of His appointment kneel,  
And fill the lingering interval  
Of moments that remain  
With evidence that clearly proves  
They have not heard in vain.

Brothers and sisters, this is His church. Have we filled our days with evidence that proves we have not heard in vain? Have we laid our own wills and wants on the altar and said, Christ, yours is a better way? And thus be reconciled? We have far too long walked the same path that has been walked for a hundred years. Will we choose to walk the path that Christ

walked—that in loving sacrifice and in loving our neighbors, that God will purge us and that we will stand when the judgment comes and know that God will be our protector, that God will be our guide? Will we be prepared to hear that still small voice speaking to us and guiding us?

Now I want you brothers and sisters to go away from this sermon with a desire that you would be His, because the blessing that God gives His people is life eternal. He offers it for us to grab hold of. If we grab that rod of iron, if will walk that path that Christ first walked, then we will be counted His in the days to come. But it is a choice that we have to make. We have to choose if we will love God more than we love ourselves. We can choose if we want to be part of that marvelous work, because that marvelous work and a wonder is yet to come to us in our day. We have seen what God did in the past, and how thousands came. I am reminded of Gideon and his army. How few did God bring him down to out of how many he had. And yet God said, look I don't want all of them. I

*"Have we laid our own wills and wants on the altar and said, Christ, yours is a better way?"*

just want this group. What happened at the time of Pentecost? One hundred and twenty some odd people in the upper room, and yet thousands were added to the church daily. And it says for the time following. God doesn't need that many people. He just needs a sanctified people: people who are not ashamed of His gospel and His word. That they would be just as zealous as He is of His own people. Look at the reorganization—four congregations. I think about the same total—about 120 people if I remember right--it may have been less. Four congregations started the reorganization according to the will and testimony of God. Look at how many thousands came to the church after this. What I am trying to tell you, brothers and sisters, don't be discouraged with the fact that branches keep splitting. Congregations go here and there. This group is trying to get more people; this group is trying to get these people. If you hold fast to the word of God, if you are willing to live that gospel in your heart, you will be His. You will be part of that work that is to come.



DC 10:12 *Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world. I am the same who came unto my own, and my own received me not; but verily, verily I say unto you, that as many as receive me, them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen.*

Will you choose to be a son of God or a daughter of God? Will you choose to be joint heirs with Christ? Paul tells us we will become joint heirs with Christ in all of eternity. Do we believe it? Do we trust that what he said is true? If that is the case, what manner of life are we to live to receive such a crown?

Brothers of the priesthood, you most especially need to take these words to your heart. You are the shepherds of this flock. I speak to you as a pastor, encouraging all of you that you would begin to live the gospel with fervency that the people might see. Because when we choose to do that, then the power and gifts of the spirit will be manifest amongst us. May God bless you.



## AWAKE AND ARISE



**Elder Eric Odida**  
*Nairobi, Kenya*  
June 17, 2012

*Awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful*

*garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes, and enlarge thy borders for ever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.* (Moroni 10:28-31)

I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My name is Eric Odida for those of you who have not met me. It has been a while since I was here with my wife, Pam. It is a privilege to have come on this trip and to share in the season of reunions going on right now. We came shortly after the passing of my father-in-law, elder Sam Agwanda. It has taken a toll on us in terms of energy, but we really feel privileged that we had the opportunity to come.

First of all, I want to express the gratitude of my mother-in-law, sister Judith Agwanda, for the blessing of your congregation, who extended a hand of support, not only in prayers, but also materially, so we had the finances that enabled us to host the many people who gathered at her home for the funeral. Dad had been a senior man in the government when he worked, and Mom expected a number of his friends wanted to come and attend his funeral. She knew that she did not have the finances to assist with that, so she asked me to ask for help from your congregation, as well as Lexington and Saints' Haven. What a great blessing came! We as priesthood in Kenya decided that we were not going to just focus on the death of brother Sam, but would put the time into some kind of retreat or reunion, because we knew what Elder Sam stood for in the church in Kenya and in his life. So we organized for a retreat that started on Thursday the week before he was

buried on Saturday. We had teachers and deacons minister on Thursday, we had priests minister to the saints and their relatives and neighbors who gathered to his home on Friday, and then we had the Elders minister on Saturday, the day he was buried, and on Sunday, the day that we all left his home. On Friday and Saturday there were about a thousand people at his home. It was so very big! The Lord had known ahead of time and blessed us. We would have been totally overwhelmed, but what a blessing it was that we were prepared and ready. There wasn't an organized congregation in Nyabondo where my in-laws live, so we didn't have enough chairs for everyone, but we were able to rent these. The schools loaned us some benches, and we were able to have the people sit and eat and be ministered to. It turned out to be a reunion for us of the church. Many of the saints, some of whom have not been attending church meetings for various reasons, came. Some who were working in distant places where we don't have branches came. Some who had grown lukewarm over the years came. And through the ministry of that weekend, they rededicated themselves and invited us to assist them to have congregations where they are. It was far beyond what we had expected. And the Lord did it!

Elder Paul Makawiti ministered and brought the word on the day of Elder Sam's burial. He was truly blessed by the Lord with freedom as he spoke, and we could see that the Lord was with us. That Saturday, a number of us—three elders and two priests—sat in a small gazebo where the body had been laid to rest before it was buried. The Lord gave us a message while we were there. Two months earlier, elder William Mwiri, who was in charge of the work in Uganda, died. Then in May, elder Sam was taken away. We were asking ourselves whether there was a meaning to this, or whether that was just the way things worked out. We were asking if the Lord wants us to open a new chapter—a new page. Could it be that the brethren who assisted us in laying the foundation had served their time, and now we needed to move on to another level—possibly to a higher plane? We had asked the saints and the priesthood in particular to pray that the Lord would bless us and open a new chapter in the life of the church in East Africa. We encouraged each other to pray and fast that the Lord might let us know how we need to respond. And so, not really





particularly waiting for a message that night, about midnight we received what we believed was His direction.

First, we were made aware that we needed to pray for the next presiding elder in Kenya, and not just elect according to whom we thought was most suitable. So we asked for prayers toward that end, that we might be able to patiently seek and wait for the Lord to reveal to us who was to be the presiding elder in the church in Kenya. We were also blessed when the Lord provided direction on what we needed to do next. This is what I want to share with you today.

One thing that occurred to me was the issue of time. Back in the countryside of Kenya where I was born and raised, they practice free range grazing. Goats and cattle and sheep go out in the morning, and they are allowed to graze in anybody's acreage of land, as long as they don't destroy crops and things like that. In the morning, when you open your kitchen door and the chickens walk out, they feed about the compound, eating grass and insects and such things as chickens eat. In the evening, the chickens come back home. They know it is time, and they come back home. In the evening, the shepherds bring the sheep back home. The cattle return home. Even during the dry season, when goats are allowed to wander about and look for leaves and twigs and green things to eat on their own, when evening comes, without a shepherd, the goats come back home. One thing you realize is, when seasons change, animals migrate. Birds migrate from one part of the world to another. That is because the time has come. When the time comes, things change—one shelter is shut, and another is opened. This is because it is time.

Our lives were not meant to be one whole long day, from when you are born to the time that you are 100 or 90 or 70 or whatever. God has subdivided our lives into seasons, into years, into months, into weeks, down to seconds. When you look at a clock, you may not notice the minute hand moving, but the second hand runs pretty fast. We can see that it is hurrying somewhere because time is running out. Time does not wait. That is just like our lives. When our young children go to school they are taught about time and change. Bells must ring, and students must run from one class to another class. One activity must begin and another one must end. They are taught those two things: time

and change—something must begin and something must end, and something controls them. Time does not wait. Whether you are done or not, time moves on.

Unfortunately, when we stay in one place for a little too long, we forget the necessity for change. We end up being comfortable where we are. Even in a church like this you may have a favorite spot where you want to sit. Just that place is the one where you always want to go. We are just used to being in that one place. Possibly at home you have just your spot—perhaps your chair where you sit, and though your guests may come and sit there, you may not mind that very much, but that is your spot. That is not supposed to be theirs. Even when we go to bed, we always start sleeping on one particular side, because we get used to doing things the same way. There is a very good aspect to that. When a man and wife live together and get used to one another, they do not want to move on easily. Yet there is also a danger. Sometimes that corner that we make for ourselves can be so comfortable for us that even when we need to move on, we still feel like it is just OK.

According to history, people like Martin Luther and the Protestants who moved away from the Catholic Church never intended for Protestantism to be the end. That was not supposed to be the end; rather, it was a stopgap, something in the mean time as they awaited the Lord restoring the church. Yet as we know it today, that is not the case. They waited a little too long, and it became comfortable, and that became home. So today we have Protestantism and Evangelical evangelists who are not aware that what they were waiting for has already arrived. The church that was called the Catholic Church, that succeeded the Apostolic church, stayed without the power of the church that they succeeded, and remained there in form alone. The people who started seeing these things going away and deteriorating probably expected that at any time something was going to change for the better. But as things went on, it settled in a body that did not have power, and they started looking for a reason why things like prophecy and healing should not be there anymore. They became comfortable because they took a little longer there than they should have. The Jews waited for their Messiah, and they desperately needed him. But after staying a little longer

without having him, they settled to life without him, and therefore they started imagining the kind of Messiah that would fit within their comfort zone. If he were to come, he had to come to that comfort zone where they had imagined him, and so they missed him.

As a Restoration group, when the project that was given to us of building Zion and bringing forth the Kingdom of God upon the face of the earth appeared to take long, we just became comfortable talking about the project: speaking about it, preaching about it, but doing nothing about it. Even though we may think that we are doing it, and believe that somehow we are trying to do it, yet it seems that we are not willing to just go the extra step. We are not willing to do just a little more to have this Zion that we talk about so much—that we know was purposed and designed for the entire humanity, but entrusted to us as a people.

When I was in boarding school, I knew that going back home meant going to poverty, into a home where a mother was sickly, waiting for someone to assist her in going to the hospital. She had been sick from this illness ever since I was young. I knew that there was no way out unless I worked hard in school. I remember when night would come and prep time would be over at ten, the lights would be out. I knew that I couldn't go to sleep at that time. I had to look for a place where I could use a lantern lamp. So when everybody else was gone to bed, I would do two more hours because I needed it so badly. That was the only time when those who had textbooks had gone to bed, so I could borrow one. I needed it, and time was running out. Soon enough school time would be over, and I had to go back home. So I had to make a choice as to whether I would move on to the next level or, at the end of that year, go back home to the same life. The Lord blessed me with an overwhelming desire to move on. Early in the morning, before they woke up at five, I would squeeze in some time, so that when they woke up, the textbooks would be available. I recognized that time was not waiting for me. So I did just a little more, because I needed it desperately.

Sometimes I look and wonder, how much do we desire this city of God? Have we settled for a life without it, and all that we can give to it is lip service and say how much we want it? Or can we try to do just a little more? Moroni chapter 10, tells us



to "Awake and arise!" because that corner, that place where we have been for a little too long is a place where we are asleep. Over and over in the scriptures, when one is settled and comfortable, God says, "Arise! awake." This morning he is telling us, arise, awake, and do just a little more each day. People must make a choice. If they feel that the current state of affairs is dangerous for them, or where they are is not where they ought to be, they have to make a conscious and deliberate choice to move on. Where we are may be comfortable, but this is not the place. I have been in this land for three weeks now. Your homes are very comfortable. But this is not the place for us. We can only enjoy it for a season, but we have got to get going, because this is not our place. However much we may feel that this life and the way that we live it is fairly comfortable, this is not the place.

Men before us have made choices, which is why the human species has survived. Politically, when men have seen that one system of governance is not serving them well, they have chosen do things better for themselves and those who are coming after. Nations like the US, France, and other free nations of the world, have evolved systems of government that they think can be better for them. Man has always risen against Nature, against the seas, the mountains, and the air, against diseases, illiteracy, and poverty. Man has risen because we know that it can be better. It can look good and feel good now, but it can be better. Until the Kingdom of God comes in her glory, it can always be better. So there is no need for us to settle and be comfortable. We are called upon to awake and arise. We must come unto Christ and be perfected in him. A lot of work is still required to be done. We must deny ourselves all ungodliness. That word "deny" I believe requires a costly step, a sacrificial step. It is a step that you must take, but you would rather not. We must deny ourselves of all ungodliness and be perfected in Christ. But there is going to be opposition. Apostle Paul talks about the spirit and the mind fighting, one being opposite to the other. Opposition is going to be there against change. In any people, in any group, there is going to be opposition.

When Moses was leaving Egypt with the children of Israel, there was an opposition. From the time they left Egypt, there were people who would rather have

stayed. Some just did not see the need for moving to the wilderness, when nobody knew where they were going.

There are various reasons why we would resist change, even when it is to our benefit. Some people just fear change. Sometimes it is because of the adjustments that change brings. Sometimes it is because of the unknown. Sometimes it is just because it is comfortable where we are. So even at a personal level, at a family level, at a congregational level, at a group level, there will always be opposition. There will always be those reasons that you would rather postpone something and do it tomorrow and do it later, or just not do it at all. There will be all those things that you have to keep weighing whenever you want to make a decision whether to move on or not. So in our midst, there will always be those who would rather that we don't move, that we don't change, that we stay in that corner where we have been for a long time.

Normally, what makes the difference in human organizations is whether the people who have the vision to change have such a strong vision that it can carry the rest of us along, or whether the opposition is weak, but the opposition is going to be there. There is also inactivity, inertia, that non-desire to move that always creates heroes amongst men. Those who rise up at such times, through them the people will realize that change they require. People like Rosa Parks in Montgomery, mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, rose up to be heroes in the eyes of men and women just because they tried to do something different, because they realized that things can be better. In their own sphere, in their different areas, they decided this had to be done a different way. No, we are not going to accept this; we must do something else with it. That brought about the change.

Saints, to redeem Zion, we must do battle. Israel had to fight to become a nation. But our battle must be fought at a personal level. We must get the temple of God to be what it should be. The temple of God is you and I. The war that is facing us right now is different from the war that Americans fought in other parts of the world. You have gone to deserts, you have gone to jungles, and you have gone to many parts of the world to fight for justice and liberty for the people you don't even know. That seems to be the nature of America. I am not surprised that you are called to assist the world to get Zion. This

land and her God just have something for the people. The resources that this country has sent out into the world, money, education, and doing so much for the world, is to me just a small testimony of that which the Lord expects America to assist the world in achieving in this latter day, Zion. The selflessness, the love that you have for the nations and the peoples of the world--I don't know if there are others who have such love for people they don't even know. I think there is something special in America, because of this land, and her God. Your fathers came here years ago, came here so that you may be here today for this last battle which is going to be fought in a different sphere altogether. This battle is going to be fought in your heart, in your mind, in your temporalities, in the way that you use time, in your families. America is supposed to lead the world. When I talk about America, I am talking about the covenant America—the church. To undertake such a project as is before us, to face the enemy that has never been faced, to fight a war that has never been fought, you must be willing to go just one more step; arise from where you are; awake from the slumber that has overtaken you. You have already done a lot, but there is just a little something more that you need to do. My country is a testimony to what the church in America is doing. We would not have heard the gospel had you not responded when the Lord said, arise. At that time, you arose. You sent missionaries, and the work is going on right now. But today they are like a people standing on the shore of the ocean, waiting to cross. They are looking at what the church in America is doing. They are waiting for America one more time to provide this leadership.

In my country, we have an election year coming in March next year. As the various candidates stand up to be presidential candidates, people are asking, "Is America supporting them?" That is the question, because if America supports somebody, that candidate will be chosen. So we await for America and her God, the God of the universe, to work together one more time for the benefit of mankind. There are so many people spread throughout the globe—in many lands—whose hearts are right. But they were born Hindus, Moslems, whatever they are, and they only believe what they have known for all their lives. If only Zion could be there so that they could see the true one,



the real one, the genuine one. For us as we sat there in that gazebo, the Lord made it known to us that we needed as a people in that part of the vineyard to repent. Repentance is the thing that was prescribed for us.

In Leviticus 16:21 we read: *And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness;* Notice that the step that prescribed for repentance at this time was confession.

We read from DC 58:9d: *By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins. Behold, he will confess them and forsake them.* Let me tell you how I have gotten used to doing this. I bow down my head and say, "Lord, I repent of my sins. Thank you for this day, thank you for that, and Father, forgive me my sins. I repent of them." But the prescription is to confess our sins and forsake them. But that one step—that little step of confessing our sins, somehow gets lost.

DC 58: 14b says: *Let that which has been bestowed upon Ziba Peterson be taken from him, and let him stand as a member in the church, and labor with his own hands, with the brethren, until he is sufficiently chastened for all his sins, for he confesseth them not, and he thinketh to hide them.* From whom will he hide them—from man or from God?

Psalms 32:5 says: *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. I will confess my transgressions. I will not hide them.*

DC 61:1b: *Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, O ye elders of my church, who are assembled upon this spot, whose sins are now forgiven you, for I the Lord forgiveth sins, and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts;* Confession is a necessary part of our repentance. But most of the time, we have done something to our confession. Somehow we have taken our confession and clothed it, and painted it, so that it looks a little more beautiful than it was. Then the person to whom it is given can look at it and say, "Well it doesn't look so bad after all—just one of the things that I like about him, he confessed to me." We have made it to be sweeter, nicer, to smell

better. But sin stinks! Sin is bitter! Sin is ugly! In its nakedness, it is bad! We need to present sin as it is: naked, ugly, stinking, and bitter. You must present yourself to be seen as it was when you sinned: a bad man, a bad husband, a bad brother. That's what you were when you sinned. Don't clothe it.

Luke 18:10-14: *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other; for every one who exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he who humbleth himself, shall be exalted.* Confession humbles us. Confession makes us look ugly. We are not the beautiful, we are not the good people that we want others to see. In heaven where our Father and Jesus are, they say, "If you abase yourself, you will be exalted." Sometimes when we pray we say, "We humbly come before you." I am not saying that prayer is bad. We need to say that to our Father. But true humility comes when we take that extra step—just that one little small thing that we need to do. Present yourself as you are, as I am: a sinful person.

DC 43:23e: *And if anyone offend openly, he or she shall be rebuked openly, that he or she may be ashamed.* Do you think God wants us to be ashamed for the sake of being ashamed? I think he is talking about humility—that you may be seen as you are. The pain must be shared by the person who is receiving the confession. They must see just what this thing has done to you. Teachers and parents need to teach our children to appreciate confession. We must learn not to walk out and say "Hey, hey! Did you just hear what I heard in there? Do you know what she did?" No, of course not! The purpose of confession is so that we can learn the pain that results when sin comes, and be warned. The purpose is to suffer with them in that bitterness. Confession is not something to glory in or to repeat. It is not meant for other ears.

Last year, we had a widow's retreat for five days in our home in Kenya. We had a number of priesthood who met with the

women. Most of the widows were young. In our culture, when a woman marries a husband, she also marries the family. When her husband dies, she is supposed to be inherited by one of the younger brothers of the husband, to raise up a family for the deceased husband. But in the church, with the everlasting covenant, this can't take place, because this results in polygamy. Young women who are in the church can't be subjected to that, but then they have other difficulties. Specifically, there is no man to assist them in providing for the children. Typically, the clan now wants to teach her a lesson by shunning her, so that she will suffer until she comes back to accept a polygamous relationship. These young widows were sharing the difficulties and the pain they were going through. It wasn't a place for any priesthood to be. It was a place for the Lord himself. And I was there, and I felt the pain of it, more so as some of the younger wives confessed some things that they have been tempted to do. I wanted to run away because it was not meant for me. But the air in that room—the freedom—the blessing and outpouring of the Holy Spirit—that made even timid ones share their experiences, and the sins they had committed, because of widowhood—it was beautiful.

One time an elder in Kenya and his wife had a difficulty. She had traveled home to see her parents. And while she was there she had gotten into sin. When she came back, she confessed to her husband what she had done. The following Sunday was supposed to be a communion Sunday. She knew that she could not come before the Lord and partake of his table with that sin, so she confessed to her husband. Her husband was hurting because of what she had done, and he was not forgiving her. That day Tom Okeyo and I started sharing with that beautiful group, but something was just not right. It was so dry, and that was not like them. Normally, when you went to minister there, you were lifted up, but that morning something was just not right. Finally there came to me what I was led to believe was intelligence from the Lord. I told Tom, let's take a piece of paper, cut it into small pieces, and write all the names of the members who are here. We quickly wrote all the names of the members. Then we folded the papers into small bits, and put them into the collection bag, and passed it around for everyone to pick a paper. I was the first one to pick. Tom passed it around, and he picked the





last one. When I opened mine, I had picked my own name! We were supposed to pray for the person whose name was on the paper, and I didn't know what to do, so I asked Tom to pray. As he prayed, it became apparent that he had picked his own name as well! But through him, the Lord led me to know what I should do. Tom first prayed for himself, and then he prayed for the people. I did the same, asking for forgiveness on their behalf. The prayers continued like that, until finally, it got around to the elder. He started to cry as he prayed for his wife. He had picked his wife's name! When it got to be her turn, she was also crying, as she had picked his name. Out of that whole congregation, these two had picked each other's name. And as they prayed for each other, it was like the air was just changed. Beauty and joy returned as we prayed. Later on, they invited us into their home. We went and shared with them in a new, beautiful environment.

Confession is going to be costly. Brother B.J. Shultz shared with us at reunion last week about the extra mile. He said that we are willing to go one mile, but in Matthew 5, we are commanded to go the extra mile. If one slaps you on one cheek, turn the other cheek, and if one compels you to carry a load for one mile, go another mile. It is easy to go the first mile, but it is a sacrifice to go the next mile. The first mile is comfortable: it is where you are a good man and you are feeling happy—I did a good deed and everybody knows that I did it, and that is good. You can afford the first mile—it is within your reach. It is within your ability. But the second mile requires something more. It is going to cost. It will be painful. It will hurt. That is the point at which we will meet with the Son of God—the extra mile—because he already took more than that on our behalf.

In most of the countryside of Kenya, when you have a boil, you sometimes get some ointment, and you rub around it, and it feels nice. Sometimes you can squeeze it just a little, but not very much. But you are not going to move with a lot of freedom as long as that boil is there. In Kenya, they have nothing to kill the pain before they squeeze it out. They just hold you, and squeeze it out, and it hurts. But that is the only way that it will come out. If you keep on nursing it, and feeling that it is nice there, it will keep you from moving. Sin is just like that, brothers and sisters. It doesn't just go away by itself. Real, naked sin is

going to hurt when you confess it. But that is the only way to come to the point where you meet with the Son of God. That is the extra step that is prescribed for us.

DC 105:2a: *Verily I say unto thee, There have been some few things in thine heart and with thee, with which I, the Lord, was not well pleased; nevertheless, inasmuch as thou hast abased thyself thou shalt be exalted;*

Proverbs 28:13 says, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* If you cover your sins, you are hindering yourself from going where you need to go. Move away from that corner—that comfortable place—rise up. If we do not confess our sins in repentance, then we are not going to prosper. We will be hindered from moving forward.

In Kenya we have been coloring, coating, dressing our confession so that it ends up being something other than the real thing. But now we are being told to tell it like it is so that we can prosper and move forward as a people.

1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Where is there a better promise?

In Church History, Volume 2, page 2 and 3, Joseph Smith, Jr. recalls how they made their humble confession to each other and asked forgiveness of each other. They then administered to George N. Smith, "who was immediately healed of a severe rheumatic affection all over the body, which caused excruciating pain." The great blessing is associated with the step they all took when they went to an inner room and confessed their sins to one another. Great freedom came with that, a sweet spirit was poured out upon them, peace and joy came over them, and there was an immediate healing of one who had been under a burden for some time. Do you think that they could be wrong?

James 5:13 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.* We are denying ourselves blessings that are associated closely with confession. Just one more step, if you will take it. This one little step, I believe, is keeping you from rising up. Leave that corner, that comfortable seat that you always occupy—that place within the pews—and get to where you need to be. Take the next step onto higher ground.

DC 18:2k *wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you by my*

*almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments.* Now he is giving the negative side. If you do not take this step, you will suffer.

We in Kenya need your prayers. This is the prescription given to us. But at the reunion, one sermon after another touched on this. I said, Lord, are you just telling me to go back and tell my people that this is indeed what they need to work on? Or could it be that this is also for these my brethren in America, who are working so hard, yet somehow are still in a scattered condition, and are still suffering as a people, and are still lacking that power which ought to be there with us as a church? I believe this is the little step that we need to take. So I ask you that you consider the dark corner, that place where we have been for a while that is looking a little too comfortable. We need to move on, to arise and awake. *By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins. Behold, he will confess them and forsake them.*



## GETTING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE



Priest Rodney Bastow  
Mount Ayr, Iowa  
July 1, 2012

I have chosen as my scripture this morning from the Book of Mormon 1 Nephi 1:65 *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do*



*the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.*

I am thankful for this opportunity to speak to you this morning. I have to admit after sitting through that Sunday school class I am somewhat overwhelmed. There are so many of you who know so much, and I feel like I know so little. I know the only way this morning can be of any purpose it is by the power of God's holy spirit. I thank you for your prayers. Please don't quit until I sit down. Always remember to give all the praise and the glory to our heavenly father.

I want to share with you this morning a story I heard years ago. When I was in fifth and sixth grade my Sunday school teacher was Florence Irving. Sitting here looking at this audience there may not be any of you who remember Florence. (Di Smith remarked that she remembers her). Florence was a very unique lady. She came to this country from Carroll, Iowa by way of Germany. She would tell me she was a full-blooded German. She was very proud of that fact. She married my grandpa's first cousin, John, who was a little guy. Florence came here as a drama teacher. She was very good. When we had church plays and programs she directed them. She coached us on how to speak, etc. In Sunday school class she taught us the Book of Mormon. She used these five books by Thelona Stevens. They were wonderful. She didn't actually read them—she told them. It was like she was living them. She would get so excited. I loved that class, mostly because of Florence. She was like a grandmother. You could tell that she loved you. She loved you when she was teaching you God's way.

The story I would like to share with you is from the very beginning of the Book of Mormon. I imagine we teach this about the same age. Jan Jordison probably had that same enthusiasm that Florence did. This story begins during the reign of Zedekiah, who was the King of Judah. During this time there lived in Jerusalem a man by the name of Lehi. Lehi was a man of God. He heard the prophets tell of the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophets kept warning the people, saying they needed to repent and change their ways or Judah would be destroyed. This bothered Lehi and one day as he was praying about

this he was shown a vision. He saw the people of Jerusalem being destroyed or being taken away to Babylon. After this vision Lehi started preaching to the people, telling them they needed to repent and to do what God wanted them to do or they would be destroyed. How did the people take to this? Josh, did they like hearing that from him? No, they didn't like it at all. They got really angry. They wanted to kill Lehi, didn't they? They didn't like hearing they were wicked. One night Lehi had a dream, and in this dream God warned him to leave Jerusalem. So Lehi packed up his family and took a few essentials and headed off into the wilderness. Could you do that? Could you leave all your things and head off into the wilderness. Tanner could probably do that. He likes that sort of thing. But to go out into the unknown and to leave all your valuable possessions behind would be difficult. Lehi's wife was Sariah, and they had four sons. Isabelle, do you remember their names? She started naming them--- Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. Which one was the youngest? Sam was suggested, but Nephi appeared to be the youngest. He was very big for his age. What were Laman and Lemuel like? Di gave a thumbs down symbol. What does that mean, Tanner? Not good! They were wicked like the people of Jerusalem and they weren't happy about being off in the wilderness. You've probably been on trips with your parents when you felt the same way. I've had that experience. Do you think they let their folks know it? You bet. They grumbled and murmured and probably telling their father they didn't believe in him. They didn't believe God had spoken to him or the visions he had seen. Lehi was a very patient father, but finally he had enough. This is what he said. 1:44-45 *And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the Spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore they did as he commanded them.* When I read that the first person I thought of was my mother. She must have spoken to me with the spirit several times in her lifetime. She could speak and your body would shake. You would not say or do anything to go against her. There's a story my Aunt Alice used to say that when I was about four years old she and mom were out in the garden and mom told me to stay on the

sidewalk. I stayed on the sidewalk until they were done and did not move.

Nephi was different from his brothers. He wanted to learn more about God. He didn't just listen to his father. He wanted his own testimony. He prayed and the Lord spoke to him. This convinced him that his father was doing what God wanted him to do. Nephi talked to Sam about this. Sam said he believed it and would go along. But when he tried to talk to Laman and Lemuel did they believe him, Teegan? No. Their hearts would not soften. What does that mean? It's not good, is it? You don't have much love in your heart and aren't very agreeable to the Lord or anyone else. I like this about Nephi because it bothered him. It bothered him that his brothers would not listen to the Lord or to their father. So he prayed for them. When he did that, the Lord gave him this message. 1:53-54 *And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying, Blessed art thou Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart. And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper; and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.* A land which is choice above all other lands. Where was that? Josh answered here. We live in that land that is choice above all other lands. When Florence was teaching that class she was constantly reminding us that we are living in the choice land. Nephi was also told that someday he would rule over his brothers. Because of their iniquities they would be cursed and their children would not believe either. Not too long after this Lehi had another vision. God commanded him to get the plates of brass that contained the records of the Jews. Kyle, why did he want him to get the plates? Very good, so the people of America could have a record of the Jews. First of all it had their language. It also had their genealogy in it. What did Lehi's family do with them once they got them? They became our Book of Mormon. If they hadn't gone back to get these, would we have the Book of Mormon? When Lehi was told to get these plates he asked his four sons to get them. Laman and Lemuel didn't want to go. I figured they would jump at the chance to go back there, and maybe even stay there. They thought the trip was too dangerous. They weren't sure they could get the plates. But Nephi



thought differently. 1:65 *And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.*

They headed back to Jerusalem to the house of Laban who was the keeper of the records. Before they went to his house they decided to draw lots. What does that mean? We've done it before where you take toothpicks and break them up and whoever picks the shortest one loses. Remind me, Tanner, to do that with you sometime when we're doing chores. Which brother lost? Laman lost. He drew the short straw. So he went in to Laban's house told him who he was and what he wanted. What do you think happened? Did Laban say "Sure here are the plates go ahead. Glad to give them to you." Didn't happen that way did it? Laban got quite angry, didn't he? Very angry, what did he want to do to Laman? He wanted to kill him. Laman had to flee with his life. He got back to his brothers and said they better come up with a better plan. They knew Laban was a greedy guy. They thought maybe if they got some of their gold and silver, they might be able to buy the plates. Sound like a good idea? Should work shouldn't it?

So they went back to their old house and collected some of their valuables and returned and offered them to Laban for the plates. How do you think he reacts? Did he want the valuables? Yes, he wanted them didn't he? Did he want to give up the plates? Nope, he didn't want to give up the plates. He took the valuables, kept the plates, and he sent the servants off to kill the 4 brothers. They escaped and hid in a cave in the mountains outside Jerusalem. Now Laman and Lemuel had been going along with this pretty well up till now. I was surprised after the first time that Laman didn't come back pretty hot. You would have thought he would have. He was almost killed. But to have it happen twice, to narrowly escape with his life, by this time he was livid. So he and Lemuel started beating on Nephi and Sam. It says with a rod, I suppose it was a club, I don't know, but they were beating on them. What happened? An angel appeared, didn't it? An angel appeared unto them and ordered them to stop. They were reminded that Nephi would rule over them.

The angel told them to go back and if they would go back God would prepare the way. Laman and Lemuel still weren't real convinced of this. They still had doubts. They were still grumbling. But this is what Nephi had to say:

**1:99** *And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying, Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands. 1:100* *Therefore let us go up; let us be strong like unto Moses; for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea, and they divided hither and thither, and our fathers came through out of captivity on dry ground, and the armies of Pharaoh did follow and were drowned in the waters of the Red Sea. 1:101* *Now behold ye know that this is true; and ye also know that an angel hath spoken unto you, wherefore can ye doubt? 1:102* *Let us go up; the Lord is able to deliver us, even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban even as the Egyptians.*

So even though they didn't want to, they followed Nephi back to the city. When they got outside the walls of the city, this time Nephi decided to go to the house by himself. So he started in. As he got close to the house he sees this guy lying on the ground. It was Laban who had gotten drunk and passed out. I don't know if any of you have been tempted to drink, but this is one reason why you should never do this because something like this could happen to you. Nephi saw him there and thinks hmm what a great opportunity. He took out Laban's sword and when he did that the Holy Spirit told him to kill Laban with it. Nephi didn't want to do that. He'd never killed anybody. I have a feeling he must have been a really kind and gentle person. That just wasn't in his nature to kill. Even though Laban had not been cooperative, would not give them the plates, and even though he had tried to kill them. Even though he had taken their things. It was still difficult for Nephi to do what the Spirit had told him to do. But then the Spirit spoke to him again and said these words: **1:113** *And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again, Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. 1:114* *Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes.*

*This is key: 1:115* *It is better that one*

*man should perish, than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.*

If Lehi hadn't done this we never would have had the Book of Mormon. We would have had a group of people in the Americas who wouldn't have known about God, wouldn't have known about his ways. We wouldn't be where we are today.

**1:116** *And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying, that inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise. 1:117* *Yea, and I also thought that they could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the Law of Moses, save they should have the law. 1:118* *And I also knew that the law was engraven upon the plates of brass.*

So Nephi took the sword and killed Laban. Then he did something kind of strange. Do you know what he did Josh? That's right, he took Laban's clothes and put them on along with his armor, and took his sword. When I first heard that I thought it was kind of odd. It was surely a hot sticky night and he had to put on all those clothes, and they probably smelled like booze. That couldn't be pleasant. But he did. I didn't understand that until I heard this next part. He put on those clothes and headed toward the treasury where the plates were kept. As he got there one of Laban's servants named Zoram approached him. Zoram looked at him and thought it was Laban. He asked Nephi a question. Right then Nephi thought it was going to be a giveaway. As soon as he heard his voice he was afraid Zoram would know that it was not Laban. But when he spoke he sounded just like Laban. It was Laban's voice that Zoram heard. He asked Laban what he wanted. Laban said he wanted the plates to show to his brothers. Zoram thought he was taking them to some other people. They went and got the plates and Nephi said "Why don't you come with me?" Zoram thought, why not, and went with him. As they got close to where the brothers were, the brothers saw them coming and got scared. They started to run off. Nephi called to them in his natural voice and they stopped. This frightened Zoram. He realized he had been fooled and he tried to run off. Nephi grabbed him and persuaded him to join in with him. Zoram agreed to go with them.





So they traveled back to where Lehi and Sariah were. This was interesting. This kind of tells you a little bit about Sariah. Was she happy while these boys were gone? Typical mother, wasn't she. She was very concerned about her sons. She was very worried that they would not get back safely. Lehi assured her that if the Lord promised this would happen they would be safe. When their parents saw them they were really happy and gave praise to the Lord because they knew God had protected them and helped them do what he had commanded. Lehi anxiously looked through the records and was very pleased with what he found. He found that he descended from Joseph. Guess who else descended from Joseph? Laban. Laban was related to him. Then Lehi said these things:

**1:169** *And now when my father saw all these things he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed; that these plates of brass should go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, who were of his seed. 1:170* *Wherefore he said that these plates of brass should never perish, neither should they be dimmed any more by time. 1:171* *And he prophesied many things concerning his seed. 1:172* *And it came to pass that thus far I and my father had kept the commandments wherewith the Lord had commanded us. 1:173* *And we had obtained the record which the Lord had commanded us, and searched them and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children. 1:174* *Wherefore it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.*

I like that story. I think it's important. Whenever I hear this story, I think about some things. I think about the people of Jerusalem and their resistance to change. I'm glad we're not like that. We don't have any trouble changing. We don't have any trouble listening to the people of God. Do we? We don't ever get angry when we're told to change our ways, do we? We never get angry when we are told we're doing wrong. We aren't like that. We're listening to God's commandments. We're doing what he wants us to do, aren't we? How do we feel when someone tells us to repent and follow the Lord. Each Sunday

we come here and we are told what to do. Do we make those changes? Its hard for people to make changes, to leave their comfort zone. I sometimes get to thinking pretty good about myself, that I am doing pretty good with my life. I think wow, I am doing a great job. Look how much I love my wife. She knows this. But she sometimes reminds me that I'm not there yet. Not too long ago she got upset with me and she let me know it. I don't know if any of you have experienced that from Debbie or not. It's not a good situation. Trust me, you do not want her upset with you. Mainly we argue about the cows. She thought I loved them more than her. I couldn't argue with her too much about that. There were things that I was doing or not doing that was really upsetting her. She had been doing a lot outside to help me with the cows and we would come in for lunch and I would sit down on the sofa and she would fix the meal. She didn't think it was quite the way it should be. She didn't think that I was appreciating her enough. I don't know if it was because it was around Mother's Day and she was wanting me to get her something. Maybe there was a plan as to why she does things. I wasn't real happy. I thought I had been doing a really good job. I had been treating her the way dad treated mom. He didn't do any of the housework. I doubt if Grandpa did any of the housework. I was just doing it the way I was raised. She didn't think that was right. Just to spite her a little bit I started doing things. I did a load of laundry, which is really unusual. I started putting the dishes in the dishwasher and starting it. That felt strange. I bought her some flowers. The more I did for her the happier she was. The happier she was, Tanner, the happier I was. It taught me a lesson. I need to do a better job of this. I need her happier yet. It does give me something to talk about when I have a sermon to write. I think I'm improving. We have a long ways to go. One thing I have noticed, and this is important in a lot of ways, I need to do things without being asked. Do you understand what I'm saying? I need to just go buy her a turnover just for the heck of it. I need to do that as a father. I need to do things for my sons just to be doing them. And for my granddaughters. And for my neighbors. I need to go help them sometimes without even being asked. And for you people here, I need to do things for you, just because I want to. Sometimes it's not in

my comfort zone to do that. I don't know if I would ever have gone on a priesthood visit if it hadn't been for Sherman and Ed. I need to do things like that. It's part of my calling.

I have never understood how Laman and Lemuel with their upbringing and the times they experienced the power of the Lord that they chose not to follow the Lord. If an angel visits us, how long will that last until we start grumbling? Hopefully a long time. If they've been visited by the spirit, won't they know they should be following God's commandments. Won't they soften their hearts? We see people like that around us. Hopefully it's none of us or we wouldn't be here this morning. There are people that all we can do is pray for them. Like Lehi, all we can do is love them. Hopefully some day their hearts will soften and they will come back to the Lord. They will come back to following his ways.

Growing up I can probably identify with Sam. I've sat where these guys are and I didn't know what the Holy Spirit was. It wasn't until I was in my 20's and trying to serve the Lord that I really felt that burning in my bosom. I remember when I was at the conference I was going to decide and vote. I was just sitting there not really paying attention. All of a sudden I had this feeling inside me. It was unlike any feeling I had ever had. I believe it was the Lord telling me this is what he wanted to do. We need to have that experience. Delbert used to say you should have a new testimony of Jesus Christ everyday. I believe that's true. We should constantly be renewing that testimony that we have of Jesus in our lives so that we can share it with others.

On Mother's Day, Debra and I went up to the diner after church. We thought Tina would be there, but it was her day off. We were happy to see Tony and Sandy Crandel, and sat down by them. We had a really good visit. I like those people. I believe they are really trying to follow God's commandments and serve him the best they can. They told us on that Sunday they didn't have a speaker because of the graduation and not being able to get anyone. They talked about some of the things they have done. I said wow I would like to be included in some of those things. During our conversation, I expressed my hope that our two congregations could do



more things together. As we discussed this they asked me if I would consider speaking at their church. Almost without hesitation I said yes. Afterward it dawned on me that I had volunteered to speak. That is not my nature to do that. But I know I need to be more like this. I need to be more willing to serve. Those people need us. They need people from here to visit them once in awhile and to help them with their ministry. Talking to Tony and Sandy I don't think they believe that much different from us. I'm not sure, but they don't like what's going on in the church. I'm afraid they will have another split there. There's some people there that go to church that didn't used to go. I don't know what will happen to those people. We need to find a way to help them if we can. I need to have a stronger faith to know that God's Spirit will be with me as I share my testimony with others. Like Nephi, I need to understand God will go with me as I try to serve.

A couple of weeks ago I was scheduled to preach here. As I prepared, I felt like the Lord was giving me something to say. On Thursday, before the Sunday service, Ron called to see if I would mind if Eric Odida might speak in my place. Normally I would have said, thank you Lord. I have prayed for snowstorms before. But this was different. I knew it would be good to hear Eric speak and I knew that with him being in our area it was good to take advantage of this opportunity, but I felt guilty about it. Like I was letting God down and not serving him like I should. It was so different for me to feel like this. I need to be more willing to serve. I need to be more like Eric to offer to serve. Think what it would be like for Sherman here if he had people come up to him and say, "I want to speak on that Sunday, or I want to preside." "I want to take up the offering." "I want to be in charge of the potluck." "I want to teach a class." Think what Sherman's life would be like if that would happen from us. And it should, shouldn't it? We need to be more eager to serve, whatever our calling is, whatever we think we can do.

Today we are called to repentance. We are called to follow closer the commandments of God. We are called to be more loving and caring. We are called to be more willing to serve. To have a stronger faith so that we will know that

God goes with us as we try to do his will.



## GRATITUDE



Seventy George Knotts  
Lamoni, Iowa  
July 8, 2012

High Priest Rob Rolfe used 2 Nephi 8:66, 67 as a Call to Worship. *In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the earth excellent and comely to them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, them that are left in Zion, and remain in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.*

I want to call your attention to the display today. Dear Sue (Beck) put this up here. It says, 'Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet, a Light to My Path.' Is this how we find His word, that it is a light unto our path? Just recently I had a chance to place two Book of Mormons in an Indian Ribbon Bible Church down in Oklahoma. I felt earlier that day that I should share the Book of Mormon with the pastor in light of the gospel. I told him that he had the principles of the gospel in Hebrews 6:1, 2, but I told him that here was the principles of the gospel in the Book of Mormon. I opened it up and marked it for him. Actually I had two Book of Mormons. One of them was the small Book of Mormon, one of the little ones. I had started out with two larger Book of Mormons but I had shared one of them with a lady. He assured me that he could

read the little Book of Mormon. However, when I marked the little one I could barely see the type so the next day I brought him a big one. I told him that he could loan the little one out to someone else or I would pick it up when I came back.

Here's the gospel that's in the Book of Mormon. What we have in Hebrews 6:1, 2 is repentance, faith, baptism, resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment basically. Here's what he will relish out of the Book of Mormon. . . . *but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.* [He was talking about contention here.] *Behold, verily, verily I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; And I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me, and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me; And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me, believeth in the Father also; And unto him will the Father bear record of me; for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.* [3 Nephi 5:31-37] I'd like to have more record of that. Would you like to hear what happened in Lamoni yesterday with fire and the Holy Ghost? How about last week at the reunion? How about the reunion before that? We don't hear much about fire and the Holy Ghost any more. I'd like to hear a lot more but you know we won't get that unless we repent. Patriarch Fred Greene told us that we might have a president in our group if we'd repent but I don't know if we really want one that bad. We'd have to repent. Anyway fire and the Holy Ghost is a very desirable thing to look forward to. *And thus will the Father bear record of me; and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost, are one. And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things. And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto*



*you, that this is my doctrine; and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock.* . . . [3 Nephi 5:38-42] Actually that Baptist minister is going to get a lot more of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His doctrine than he did in Hebrews 6:1, 2.

I was at a reunion on the campus of Graceland University with another Baptist minister two weeks ago. He said that the Book of Mormon testifies more of the teachings he believes in than any other book. When it comes to the back pages of the Book of Mormon it summarizes very well. He was bearing testimony of that. He's getting recognition and is in demand around the country. He went out to Utah where he was in demand. I don't know if that is just his way to get attention or not but that's what he's telling people. I can maybe take advantage of his testimony and share it with the Baptist minister in Oklahoma. I would enlist your prayers for the two Book of Mormons I placed in that congregation in Oklahoma.

A while back I left a Book of Mormon with the man I stay with in Lawrence, KS. He reads interesting books and said he would read this book. Also the Baptist minister said if I would give him a Book of Mormon he would read it so I am hoping that he does that. When I checked yesterday with the man in Lawrence, KS he hadn't gotten around to reading it yet. He said he hadn't read hardly any books lately. I would appreciate your prayers on this one too.

When I was at the Baptist Church in Spavinaw, OK they asked if anyone had had a birthday. I told them that they had missed my birthday which I had in October so I went up front. I thought they would just sing Happy Birthday to me like we do here in Mount Ayr and I would put a dollar in the kitty. Two other people also went up front with me. The whole congregation came up and put money in the kitty. After a while the lady in charge of the Sunday School came and shook hands and put \$15.00 in my hand. I asked her what this was for and she said they took what was in the kitty and divided it up among the three of us. I was really surprised. I asked that congregation if anyone knew John Fixin Davis. He was the old Indian man who was the father of the boy I grew up with.

They did. In fact one of his daughters was there. She stood up and bore testimony that I had been a part of their heritage a long way back in her family. She said that when I came around their house she was just a little girl. She asked me if I remembered her and I told her I did.

It was an interesting experience to go to that Baptist Church. It went so well with the pastor because I would sit in his classes and help him with illustrations to get across his point. I was in harmony with him about accepting Jesus and following Him. He appreciated that. The time before last when I was there I was giving away pennies. Actually the people would come up when I was sitting with the pastor and ask, 'How are you?' I would tell them that I was blessed and ask them if they were. I would do that with about three or four people in a row. Later on when the pastor was up front he shared that that really was a testimony when you tell someone you are blessed and ask them if they are blessed.

I'd like to ask you. Are you blessed? Hold up your hand if you are blessed. Everyone in this room is blessed. Stretch (his youngest son) came out to the cookout the other night when we celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. He felt good about that. I was glad to see him there. He remembered several people including Ed (Anderson). Stretch was out at the shoot out that the men had at the Anderson's last fall and remembered the chili that Diane (Anderson) had fixed for the men to eat. He's remembering a lot of good things about this congregation so I hope the next time we invite him to go to one of these suppers at least he will know more people than he thought he did. All things work together for good and I'm glad that you are blessed.

Are you happy? What does it take to make you happy? Being well accepted and appreciated by people around you? Does that make you happy? 'Blessed again' is another good phrase that I picked up from Harry Doty. He came and preached out our reunion in Stewartsville, MO when I was under appointment. Bishop De Lapp was scheduled to be at that reunion and became ill and couldn't make it so John Blackstock got Harry Doty to come and preach. He preached so dynamically that every time he preached we had tears running down our cheeks because he was telling us about supernatural things.

Brother Doty seemed to be in the right

place at the right time. A priesthood member needed him to help with an administration. When he went to pick Brother Doty up he was already in the street waiting for him. He asked Brother Doty why he was standing there waiting and he said that the Lord told him to stand out there. The man picked him up and they went on to the administration. Brother Doty was just telling us supernatural things. I presided at a particular service and after the service when people went by and told him what a good job he did his response was that the Lord had blessed them. He turned that compliment back to the Lord. It's kind of like saying, 'Blessed again' when people compliment you on something. You are giving the Lord the credit. That's good.

You know the Lord really appreciates our praise and our recognition and our response. All day yesterday did you give the Lord your appreciation, response and recognition for something He did for you? He has done good things for you and He appreciates you appreciating Him. Some people take the things He does for them for granted. Some people take getting up for granted. Every human being has that quality of thankfulness built in them. God created us in His image. We like to be appreciated and so does the Lord. I hope that if there is one thing that you get out of this sermon it's that you will not forget to give the Lord recognition when He does something for you, even the simple things. I used to thank the Lord for passing in school because I didn't take that for granted. I needed His help. At Graceland I made average grades. Then I got to KU and had all the basics out of the way so I had art courses. When my supervisor went to check on my grades so that she could write the draft board about how I was doing in school, she found that I had the leading score among all the men in education. It was almost like cheating. I was taking art courses and they were taking academics.

I got a letter two days ago from a friend of mine who is 92 years old. He wrote thanking me for the books I'd shared with him. I thought that this guy had had a streak of gratitude come over him. Being 92 years old he could be writing his last letter. The handwriting looked pretty good but when I called to find out if he wrote the letter, I found out that he dictated the letter to a lady who came by to help him. I thought that it was nice that he had at least





dictated it. There were two pages of gratitude. I called him and told him how much I appreciated the letter last night. We have had a nice fellowship over the years. In fact he addressed the letter to George Hawk Knotts. He gave me that handle because of my working with the Jayhawks of KU. He was my sculptor professor and we had a good relationship.

We had something to be thankful for lately. Our air conditioning went out. The same time the air conditioner went out in the car. Last Sunday we drove back to Lamoni with no air conditioning. I have an appointment this Tuesday to go see about it. That's something to be grateful for isn't it. We haven't gotten anybody to come out to the house to put Freon or whatever that is they put in the air conditioner but our son Dan put in a window air conditioner in Beth's studio. We turn it up and use fans to blow cool air through the house. It's not perfect but it's comfortable so we are grateful for that. Now if we ever get the central air conditioner fixed we have a backup with the window air conditioner. I will let you know after Tuesday if the air conditioner in the car gets fixed. We have to take it one day at a time. The Lord will see you through one day at a time.

George asked if there was anyone in the congregation who had a concern that needed to be prayed for. Steve Smith offered a prayer for the young people who are going to Mammoth Camp that they would be able to survive the hot weather during that week. Becky Starks asked for prayers for Alma Hawley as he was going to start counseling that afternoon for some needs he had.

How many of you have received your Patriarchal Blessing? I'd recommend if you haven't had your Patriarchal Blessing that you find somebody who has a talking relationship with the Lord and go into it fasting and praying. A group of my friends at a reunion fasted three days when I got my blessing. It has really been of great value to me. The Patriarchal Blessing is like a page of scripture just for you.

The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel.



## FOUNDED UPON THE ROCK



Elder Gordon Winkler  
Mount Ayr, Iowa  
July 15, 2012

I have three very short scriptures that I want to use this morning. The first one is from I Corinthians 3:11 which says, *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* The second one is from Proverbs 22:66. *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* The third one comes from the beginning of the Book of Mormon, 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi 1:1. *I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days-- nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. . .* Now what's the connection or the theme here? They all talk about being taught or being trained and developing a strong foundation but also the scriptures talk about being built upon a rock, about a good seed and good soil and bearing fruit, and holding onto the Rod of Iron. All of these things talk about how deeply the word of God resides in you.

Well, as you've read in the bulletin today is my birthday so it's really a privilege to stand here and share with you on this day. It's great to have Heidi home for the weekend and I talked to Melissa this morning and listened to our grandson

Joshua laugh over the phone so it's been a wonderful start to the day for me. Now I get to share the word of the Lord with you.

I'd like to begin this morning by telling you of an experience that I had just a few weeks ago. Linda and I were in Des Moines and as is our usual pattern she had a list of things that we needed to accomplish and a schedule so that we would get everything done as efficiently as we could. One of our stops was at the Earl May Garden Center. Linda really enjoys flowers and spends time in the garden although it's been quite a struggle this year with the hot weather and lack of rain. On this trip Linda was looking for some additional perennial flowers to add to the garden. She usually adds a couple a year because some of them that she plants don't really develop and fit where she thinks they should and they get changed out for something else.

As we were wandering through the garden center, I was just kind of thinking and looking. She was in one area wandering through and looking and I was in a different area looking at different things. I started thinking about what the purpose of a garden was. Here are some of the things that I came up with:

The first purpose of a garden is to bring forth fruit whether that's vegetables or flowers or berries.

The second purpose is to take in the sun. Photosynthesis is an essential part of plant nutrition so the plant must take in the sun.

The third purpose of a garden is to help support other life. I looked in our garden and we had bees, butterflies, toads and hummingbirds that stop in so I thought the purpose of the garden was to help support other life.

Fourth is to show forth its beauty. It brightens up your day. How many of you don't like to see flowers or have a bouquet brought to you out of the garden?

Well if that's the purpose of the garden, what's the purpose of the gardener or the husbandry as the scriptures call him?

To feed and water plants in the garden.

To weed the garden which is a much less enjoyable task. Sometimes you have to be careful because the roots of those weeds go down a long ways. We dug up some dandelions that had roots that were probably 14



inches long. If you don't get that root the weed comes back.

The third purpose of the gardener is to place the plant in the right spot for it to grow. Some of the plants that we were looking at had little cards on them that said 'full sun' or 'partial sun' or 'shade.' It also talked about needing to be placed in well-drained soil or sandy soil so you need to be cautious as to where you put the plant.

The fourth purpose of the gardener then is to prune and stake. The gardener needs to be able to cut away the unhealthy branches to help shape the plant so that it provides its fruit. Some plants need support to keep them off the ground. I really enjoy gladiolas but they always fall over if you don't have some way to keep them staked up. Peas are the same way. We have the peas grow up a rail of some sort and most of us put our tomatoes in cages to keep them off the ground so that they don't rot.

I was thinking about these things as I was walking through the garden center, and I found myself over looking at the fruit trees in containers. There were probably five or six gallon containers with trees in them. Linda and I had talked off and on about planting some fruit trees at our place. As I was standing there, one of Earl May's employees came to me and asked me if I had any questions. I asked him how long would it be before these trees in containers would bear fruit. That seemed like a simple question. He answered that it depended on how you planted them. I told him to go ahead and tell me. He told me that if I just planted it as it was in the container it would have fruit next fruit. He said that it may have fruit for about ten years and then it would stop bearing fruit. He told me that if I took the plant out of the container and disturbed the roots, spread and pulled them apart, it would take about three years before the tree would bear fruit but the fruit would be larger and of a better quality, and it would produce for 50 to 70 years. Just the preparation of how you put that tree in the ground was remarkably different. It seemed like a simple question but I got more of an elaborate answer than I expected.

What do the scriptures say about seeds, plants, soil and preparation and trees and bearing fruit? Actually the scriptures say quite a lot, more than I think I can cover this morning but after giving

consideration to the many accounts recorded in the scriptures I've decided or hopefully was led to the parable of the sower. The parable of the sower is recorded in the gospels of Matthew chapter 13, Mark chapter 4, and Luke chapter 8. Jesus shares the parable for the first time and also immediately gives the interpretation of the parable to those that are there. I like the plainness and clarity of Luke's recording of Jesus interpretation found in Luke 8:11-15 so if you would just take a minute with me and if you have your scriptures follow along. I want to read this so that we can then have some discussion.

I am going to be reading from Matthew the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter 1-21. *And it came to pass the same day, Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea side. [Scholars of the Bible say that this probably indicated that he was in Capernaum and He traveled outside to the Lake of Chinneroth sometimes referred to as the Sea of Galilee.] And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up; and when the sun was up, they were scorched, because they had no deepness of earth; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit; some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. [Then there's a section that follows where Jesus is talking to His disciples which changes who His talk is directed to.] Then the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? [This is Jesus answer.] He answered and said unto them, [the disciples] Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the multitude] it is not given. For whosoever receiveth, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; But whosoever continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. [He's talking about an understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven there.] Therefore*

*speaking I to them in parables; because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias concerning them, which saith, For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. And blessed are you because these things are come unto you, that you might understand them. And verily, I say unto you, many righteous prophets have desired to see these days which you see, [the disciples see] and have not seen them; and to hear that which you hear, and have not heard. [Now Jesus goes back to the multitude and talks about His interpretation of the parable.] Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he who received seed by the wayside. [That's the first group.] But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word and readily with joy receiveth it, yet he hath not root in himself, and endureth but for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. [That's the second group.] He also who received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. [That's the third group.] But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth and endureth; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty. [That's the fourth group.] I'd like to talk a little about those four different groups.*

The multitude Jesus was sharing with had gathered on the edge of a beautiful lake. They pressed closer and closer to Jesus so that He found a ship and put off a little ways from the shore and preached and taught from there. Jesus spoke many things to the crowds in parables, the first being the sower. It rests like so many others in one of the common familiar doings of daily life. This parable is about planting seeds. Jesus is using the common



every day activities of life to show eternal and spiritual truths, using them to reveal and set forth the deepest mysteries of the kingdom. As a comparison Jesus is the teacher and the multitude are the students but also in this parable Jesus sets himself up as chief sower and the good seed is the word. What kind of seed is being sown?

In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:23 reads, *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.* That's the kind of seed that Jesus is sowing. Jesus' entrance into the world was a going forth to sow the word of the kingdom. The word He first proclaimed was His seed – the hearts of men, you and I, are His soil.

So, the first seed fell on the wayside. Verse 18 in Matthew said Jesus refers to those that 'understandeth not,' those that do not recognize themselves as standing in any relationship to the word which they hear, or to the kingdom of heaven that the word proclaims. All that speaks of man's connection with the eternal world and all that speaks of sin, of redemption, of holiness are unintelligible to them. It has no significance whatsoever to that first group but how do people arrive at that state? The scriptures would indicate that they have brought themselves to it. They have exposed their hearts as a common road to every evil influence of the world until it has become hard as pavement, until they have laid waste the very soil in which the word of God should have taken root. It is now trodden down. The soil was not prepared to receive the seed of the gospel. What renders this case more hopeless and greatly reduces the chances of the word germinating is that there is one watching to take advantage of the evil conditions. The devil, that satan, uses every weapon against man's salvation.

Luke 8:12 says, . . . *and the devil cometh and taketh away the word out of their hearts, [Why?] lest they should believe and be saved.* Satan does not want any one of us to be saved and so he uses whatever means he has available to deceive and lead away those that would believe. The devil enters into our hearts in the shape of evil thoughts, worldly desires, carnal lusts and as Mark 4:14 records it, . . . *immediately taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.* . . . These are they that receive the seed by the wayside. So that group that is being spoken of as the wayside is a group that the seed never even got into. It wasn't received or accepted.

Now there was other seed which showed promise at first but in the end had no better success than the first group. This seed is the seed that fell upon the stony places. I was thinking of what the stony places really represented, and I think stony places probably is not referring to a mixture of rocks and pebbles with the soil so it's not like a gravelly situation. I think from the description it's probably like a thin one quarter to half inch coating of soil that's covering the surface of solid rock. I guess I would compare that to a recent experience I had in helping Heidi and Stephen build fence in their back yard. They live on the north edge of Kansas City in the Liberty area. We were trying to dig postholes for a new fence. We could go down a small amount and there were some pebbles and dirt but at some point we hit pretty large sections of flat rock. In some cases we could dig around and get it out but some of them we discovered were huge. They were probably three or four feet long. I really don't know how deep because we never got to the bottom. We had to adjust some of the spacing on the fence in order to accommodate those posts. That's what I visualize in my mind as the stony places. It's a small coating of topsoil over a large rock. In that case it would create a barrier which would be almost impossible for roots to penetrate and to gain nourishment and water to grow. So, the seed sprang up but not rooted deeply in soil and lacking moisture was scorched in the sun and withered up and died.

Luke said in 8:13 *That which fell on the rock are they, who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and they have no root, but for a while believe, and in a time of temptation fall away.* This group of hearers of the word appear receptive of the good news of the kingdom and receive it at once with gladness and joy. I think receiving it with gladness and joy is probably appropriate. I think that's something we should all do when we are exposed to the good news of the kingdom and the gospel, we should have joy. I was reminded of reading in the Book of Acts where Philip was preaching in Samaria. I'll just read that for you. This is in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts starting with the 5<sup>th</sup> verse. *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud*

*voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.* That's the kind of joy that I think is available to those that recognize and receive the good news of the gospel. However, this group received it but in this case the joy expressed did not account for the sacrifices and the tribulations that were to come. They were overlooking and leaving out the calculation of those costs and hazards that separate their joy. Unlike the joy found in Matthew in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter where Jesus is sharing another parable about the man who found a treasure in his field and in the end He says and, *straightway, for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* That's the kind of joy that's represented in the gospel of the kingdom.

What we have here in this life is a state of mind not stubbornly repelling the truth of the gospel, but woefully lacking in a deeper commitment. The 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke talks about a deeper commitment. Jesus is talking here. This is from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> verses. I'm going to start kind of in the middle here. . . . *or in other words, is afraid to lay down his life for my sake, cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Therefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.* That's the kind of commitment Jesus is looking for out of us if we are to be His disciples, the kind that would lay down our life and follow Him. This is exactly what the hearer described in that group didn't want to do. Whatever was fair and beautiful in the gospel as it first presents itself had attractions to him, comfortable promises, loveliness of doctrine but he had not contemplated having to endure harshness in the world and the attacks of satan. The word was found in some place here but when faced with hostile influences, both outward and inward trials, he had no root in himself the scriptures say and he fell away. As I read the second group was offended. It says for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. That reminds me of the story in 1st Nephi of Lehi's dream and vision. Those that had gotten up to the Tree of Life and were partaking of the great fruit, looked around and saw the people pointing fingers and scoffing at them. Eventually they fell





# August 2012

## Sunday Schedule

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

DATE	AUGUST 5	AUGUST 12	AUGUST 19	AUGUST 26	SEPT 2	SEPT 9
<b>SPEAKING</b>	High Priest H. Alan Smith	Patriarch Milo Burnett	Priest Jim Barber	High Priest Rob Rolfe	Seventy Ron Smith	Priest Ed Anderson
<b>PRESIDING</b>	High Priest Rob Rolfe	Elder Michael Jordison	High Priest H. Alan Smith	Priest Rod Bastow	Elder Steve Smith	Elder Steve Cunningham
<b>PIANIST</b>	Pat Bolingbroke	Becky Starks	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke
<b>SPECIAL MUSIC</b>	Michael Jordison	Rob Rolfe	Beth Knotts	Sue Beck	Ron & Di Smith	Anan Smith
<b>FAMILY DEVOTIONS</b>	Steve Cunningham	Bob Rowland	Ed Anderson	Jim Barber	Michael Jordison	Rob Rolfe
<b>GREETERS</b>	Sherman Phipps	Bob Rowland	Rob Rolfe	Ron Smith	Alan Smith	Steve Smith
<b>CUSTODIANS</b>	Rod Bastow	Michael Jordison	Rob Rolfe	Sherman Phipps	Bob Rowland	Alan Smith
<b>SUNDAY EVENING</b>	Steve Smith	Norman Nelson	Rob Rolfe	Bob Rowland	Ron Smith	Steve Smith

## Wednesday Prayer Service Schedule

DATE	AUGUST 1	AUGUST 8	AUGUST 15	AUGUST 22	AUGUST 29	SEPT 5
<b>LOCATION</b>	Steve Smith	Rob Rolfe	Alan Smith	Norman Nelson	Gordon Winkler	Ron Smith
<b>PRESIDING</b>	Elder Gordon Winkler	High Priest Sherman Phipps	Priest Ed Anderson	Priest Kent Clisby	Seventy Ron Smith	Priest Jim Barber



## Special Events & Activities

**Sunday August 1st:** Priesthood Meeting at 8:30AM - Potluck following Communion service

**Saturday August 11th:** Baby Shower for Heidi & Stephen Bader 2 PM at Winkler's home

**Wednesday August 15th:** Day of Fasting & Prayer

**Sunday August 19th:** Priesthood Meeting at 5:00 PM

**Sunday August 26th:** Business Meeting - 9:45 AM during Class time

**Youth Activities:** Boy Scout Camp-out August 10-11 at Anderson's

**Birthday's this month:** 19th- Sue Beck; 27th- Ryder Rowland; 29th- Denise Elefson;

**Anniversary's this month:** 22nd- Rob & Lynda Rolfe



**Church of Jesus Christ  
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch**

c/o Cheryl Phipps  
15581 270th St  
Lamoni, IA 50140

away and were lost.

Back to the fruit trees for just a moment. Even though the roots of trees are out of sight they are what provide the firmness and the stability. The roots hold the tree strong in the wind and deep roots help to survive through times of drought so is the life of Christians relying upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus is out of sight from others. After I say that—maybe not we should be showing our good works so they would represent Jesus Christ in our life. It is what our firmness and stability depends on. The hidden roots in the tree draw up nourishment through the stem into the branches and into the leaves so it is in the life which is hid up in Christ in that He is our source of strength and our spiritual prosperity. Paul describes his commitment in this way in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:17-18. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

There is still other seed. What about the seed that grew among the thorns? This seed fell not among the thorns that were already full grown but in the soil that had not been properly prepared or was previously infested with thorn plants that went to seed. I'm reminded of the thistle in our pasture. When Linda and I first bought the property, we sprayed thistle for years and still once in a while one or two show up. So, the thorns and the good seed grew together. Only the thorns overtook the good seed, shut them out from light, drew away the moisture and nourishment of the soil from their roots which would have allowed them to grow. This is different from the seeds that fell upon the wayside and stony places. These seeds actually did fall into good soil. What lacked was good farming practice. Care to diligently eradicate the thorns either by hoeing or cultivating would have eliminated the thorns that sprang up and stunted the growth and development of the seeds such that the plants never produced fruit.

It is not here as in the first case that the word of God is totally ineffectual nor as in the second case that after temporary obedience to the word there is



a falling away. Here in this case a degree of spiritual life is retained but the life and the power of godliness is choked out and departed. What are the two disastrous influences? The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches the scriptures say. Luke includes the pleasures of life. These are the thorns, thistles and briars that strangle the life of the soul.

This part of the parable is a warning. Life has an enticing and satisfying side as well as a threatening side. Those who have heard and received with gladness the word of the kingdom are still in danger of being strangled by the cares of life and deceived by the flattery and allurements of the world. Unless the soil of the heart is being diligently watched, the thorns, thistles and briars will again grow up and choke the good seed. The attempt to combine the thorn and the good seed will bear no fruit. "You can not serve both God and Mammon." Matthew 6:24

Lastly other seed fell in good soil and brought forth fruit. In Luke 8:15 it says, *But that which fell on the good ground are they, who receive the word in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep what they hear, and bring forth fruit with patience.* What is an honest and good heart? I think it's a condition of preparedness to hear God's word – to coming to the light – to receiving the truth. Although none are good except for God some hearts are a soil more fitted for receiving the seed of everlasting life than others. Jesus recognizes honest and good hearts. In John 1:47 Jesus welcomes Nathanael and in His welcome He says, . . . *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!* Jesus recognized Nathanael as having an honest and good heart.

So, I ask you is your heart fitted for receiving and nourishing the word of everlasting life, for bringing forth fruit with patience? Is it open to God's preparation, ready to accept His best gift, the knowledge of Jesus Christ? In the first chapter of James the 2<sup>1st</sup> verse it reads, *Wherefore lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness, the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*

Through the grace of God it is possible that hard soil may again be soft, shallow soil may become deep and rich, soil infested with thorns may be made clear. You are not stuck in any of those earlier situations. You have the opportunity to be good soil and to receive the seed of the word of Christ. Decide this day to become good soil so that God's word will find place in you and that you will be able to bear good fruit.

