

Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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God's Handiwork



News & Notes

Community Sing

A special March activity will be the community sing set Sunday, March 8, at 5 p.m. at the Baptist-Presbyterian Church.

We need to gather about 4:45 p.m. for the prayer for the groups before the service.

Rob Rolfe, Steven Smith and the MARB group will all be participating.

Retreat being planned

A branch retreat will be held the

weekend of March 20-22 at the Farwesta Reunion Grounds in Stewartsville, MO.

We will gather at Stewartsville Friday night, spend the day in activities Saturday and close with worship services on Sunday morning.

A page in this month's newsletter gives details of the event.

April Activities

Some special activities are planned

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TRUST AND OBEY

**High Priest
Sherman Phipps
Lamoni, IA
February 8, 2015**

Good morning. Rob Rolfe asked me earlier what I was going to talk about this morning and I told him, but I have to tell you folks that I felt like the Spirit gave me what to talk about some time ago but I am still struggling up here this morning wondering how to convey that.

My theme is "Trust and Obey." More to the point, trust in God, and obey the word of God. I want to read a couple of short scriptures to you. The first one is from Joshua 22:5. *But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.* Another scripture comes from 1 Nephi where Nephi is speaking to his brothers. If you are acquainted with the story you know that they had been sent to do a job and it wasn't going well for them. In fact his older brothers thought, 'We need to abandon this and get out of here. We're just going to end up dead, and we've already given away everything that we had.' They were complaining about this job but Nephi, who I think had this trust and obey thing pretty well defined, said to his brothers, *Wherefore let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord.* (1 Nephi 1:76)

Even though things weren't going well he was not going to give up but he was going to look at the impossible and keep going. Then after they had obtained the plates and they were headed back to their family, apparently Zoram who was the servant of Laban must have questioned what they were doing because then Nephi said to him, *... shall we not be diligent in keeping the*

commandments of the Lord? (1 Nephi 1:138) That was Nephi's explanation. We're here doing this because the Lord commanded us to and it is incumbent on us to be diligent. That's what I hope can come out of our time together this morning, that we will have a greater determination to be diligent in obeying the commands of the Lord that He might be free to work with us as He desires.

Would you bow your head with me for just a moment? Father in Heaven, as I stand here this morning I know that that which needs to be done cannot be done by me but only by you. So I pray, Father, that you would bless us this day that even though my words may be weak that your Spirit might be strong that each one who has taken time to come here this morning might be blessed because of their presence and because of your presence. I ask this, Father, in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen

When I thought about trust and obey, the trust part kind of comes easy to me at this point in my life. Don't think that I am saying that I have that part down pat because I don't mean that. I still have a lot to learn but it comes easy to me most of the time because the Lord has been so good to me and He has blessed me and my family in so many ways under so many circumstances that I don't know how I could not trust Him.

Although I suppose that something could still come up to challenge that and test me. I remember the saying that Gordon and Linda put on the sign out by the road a while ago. It said that the way to test God is to trust Him. I appreciated that sign. It made me stop and think and realize that that was true. The only way we can ever really know if He is what He claims He is, is to trust Him long enough to let Him express Himself to us and show us that He is.

The part of this theme that has been a little harder for me is the obey part. I've had to kind of revise my thinking on the trust part because when I say trust God I always think about how

He'll bless you and take care of you. I have some scriptures I want to share with you as to why we should trust Him and what He will do for us, but what I've also had to learn (sometimes the hard way) is that if I really trust Him I have to acknowledge that when I don't obey Him His word will still be sure and I'll have to suffer the consequences of not obeying Him.

One of the things that I wanted to ask you to trust in this morning is the fact that God created every one of you. He knows you perfectly well. He talked with you before He sent you upon the earth. To Jeremiah He said, 'I knew you before you went into your mother's womb.' I want you to trust that that is true and that He KNOWS you very, very personally. Never from the day that He created you has He taken His eyes off of you. He sent each one of you to a time and a place with a work to do.

Sometimes we wonder what that work is. Sometimes it seems hard for us to understand. We think there is nothing going on in our lives and we don't seem to be accomplishing anything. But I want you to trust this morning that you are not just here floating through life and you are not just here trying to get what you can get and accomplish for yourself. You are here because the Lord sent you here.

I have to be careful with that too, I guess because we have our agency and so He could send us to a time and a place and we could say, 'No thanks. I'm not doing that.' Then we are on our own. I hope you won't leave here this morning doing that. I hope you will leave her asking yourself, 'What is it that the Lord has sent me to this place and this time and this people for?'

We have a lot of examples in the scriptures of people who when we look at them and read their stories we think, 'Yes, they certainly trusted God. They must have obeyed Him because look at what they accomplished.' I want to talk to you about a few of those people this morning. Hopefully talking about them

will be of some worth to you when you look at your own life and try to evaluate what's going on there.

One of these people that I want to visit with you about is Nephi. When I think about him I think of a really good person who really had his act together. Just like the scriptures that I read earlier indicates, when the Lord would tell him to go do something, he went and did it. I wish I could be more like Nephi but there's a part of his story that I don't think we consider much which makes him seem more human to me.

He went to the Lord and wanted to understand the vision that his father had had and shared with them. He asked Him to show him what all of these things meant. In the meantime his brothers, who had a tough time sometimes believing what their father told them, were arguing about what their father's vision had meant. And they said, *Behold, we can not understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, (they were talking about the parable of the olive tree at this point) and also concerning the Gentiles. And Nephi said to them, Have ye inquired of the Lord? Did you bother to go ask the Lord yourself? They said, We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.* (1 Nephi 4:8-10)

They didn't seem to have any trust or any faith that they could go and ask the Lord. Again Nephi seems like the solid one. He's the one that goes and asks and he has the experiences. But before this little interchange there are a couple of paragraphs that maybe we can identify with ourselves. Even though Nephi seemed to be the strong one all the time as he's considering what's going on between his father and his brothers and how he would like to be able to help, he says, *And it came to pass that I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destructions of my people; for I had beheld their fall.*

As he considered what was going on with his brothers and how they wouldn't believe and this vision that he had seen and how he knew that his peo-

ple were going to fall away from God, he says I considered that mine afflictions were great above all.

Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever feel like you are really afflicted and that somehow you are being asked to carry more than you can? I usually don't think of Nephi that way. I just think of him being the strong one but he had these feelings too because of the things that he had to deal with. It didn't just come naturally for him to always be the one to say, 'Yes, I'll go take care of that.' He had to struggle with that, but the scriptures reveal that as a general pattern he trusted and obeyed. This choice bore much good fruit for the Lord's people.

The story of Ruth and Naomi also makes this whole thing of trust and obey seem more real to me. If you know the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth you know that Naomi lost her husband and then both of her sons. This was in a time and a society that if you didn't have a husband or sons you were pretty much left with nothing. There was nobody to provide for you or protect you. She had told her daughters-in-law to return to their families but as you know Ruth wouldn't do that. She stayed with Naomi. They returned to the land that Naomi had come from originally.

After they got there Naomi told Ruth to go down and talk to Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's, to see if he would let Ruth go through the fields after they had been harvested and pick up what was left over. Ruth did that.

As the story goes Ruth ended up marrying Boaz but the thing I wanted you to remember was that earlier in the story when Naomi returns to her family and the country from which she had originally come, the people in the city where she was from welcomed her. But she told them not to even call her Naomi because she wasn't the same person that they had known. *I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty; why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?* (Ruth 1:8)

She really felt down. She felt like the Lord had abandoned her and taken

everything from her but Ruth helped her stay faithful.

Once Ruth married Boaz she had a child and she brought this child back to her mother-in-law. We have a lot of children here this morning so maybe you can imagine what joy there was for Naomi who felt like the Lord had dealt very harshly with her but now had another "son." She felt God had removed Himself from her but then her daughter-in-law who remained faithful and stayed with her brought this child and gave him to Naomi and told her that the child was Naomi's.

The significance of all this and the reason that I bring it up this morning is here is, another person, Naomi, who had basically given up. She thought there was no purpose in life for her but Ruth her daughter-in-law wouldn't let her get away with that. She told Naomi that she still had a purpose and then gave her the child to raise.

One of the really important parts of this story is that this child that Ruth brought to Naomi turned out to be the grandfather of David from whose lineage Christ came. Even though Naomi was ready to give up and she couldn't



Sherman Phipps



see in her life anything that was worthwhile it was there. It was just waiting for Naomi to choose faith and obedience and open the door to the Lord to act.

I guess that's one of the things I'd really like for you to think about this morning. All of these people in the scriptures that seem to be faithful and obedient had their struggles too. As you have struggles don't let those struggles prevent you from coming to the Lord and giving Him a chance to work in your life.

A couple of other men that I thought of were Caleb and Joshua. Caleb and Joshua were part of a larger group of men who were sent into the land of the Canaanites to look the land over. The Lord had told them that he was going to give the land of Canaan to them, that it was a land of plenty. They went in and found that it was a land of plenty and they brought back evidence of that.

But with the exception of Joshua and Caleb the rest of them said that it was a land of great bounty but that they didn't dare go there because there were giants in the land. They thought if they tried to go in and take the land the giants would kill them so all but Caleb and Joshua "chickened out." Caleb and Joshua were the two that said, 'If the Lord tells us to do this He will provide a way. Let's go do it.' The rest of them said, 'No.' As a result the people of that generation never did go into the land and were never able to experience all of the bounty that the Lord had prepared for them.

When you look at your lives and you see where things are going you may decide that it isn't going to work. 'I feel like the Lord prompted me to do this but I don't see how it could ever work.' So we may "chicken out" and we may not go forward and do the things that the Lord has asked us to do. Somehow this morning I hope that the Lord will convey to you that if you turn to Him and trust Him and obey His commandments that He will make it possible for you to do things that will be of great worth to your brothers and sisters, as well as yourselves.

You might say to yourself, 'So what's the motivation for trusting God and

obeying His words.' Fairly recently I decided I would go back and read the Bible again and then I decided that maybe I should be reading the Book of Mormon again also so I have been trying to read both of them again.

The thing that really stood out to me this time as I read the Bible and Book of Mormon is this theme of obedience. All the way through the scriptures, over and over and over God is saying, 'You have to obey. You have to obey my commandments.'

Some people I think object to that. Maybe we all object a little and decide we don't want to obey somebody else, that we are perfectly capable of doing things our own way. When I've said that, I usually get myself in big trouble. All the way through here for generations, for centuries, the Lord has been looking for a people who would submit themselves unto Him and obey Him. He is the creator and has all power but is asking us to obey His commandments so that we might find ourselves in a condition that would be acceptable to Him and result in our choosing to have His power in our lives and, thereby, the ability to build up the cause of Zion.

Let me share some scriptures with you first and then hopefully I won't lose my train of thought here. These are a few of the things, within just four sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, that are promised to us if we will obey God's commands. One place says, . . . *Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion: . . . then shall you be made rich.* (D & C 6:a-c) We're not talking about worldly things here: money, cars, houses although he can do that also.

He has certainly been good to Cheryl and me. We would have absolutely nothing except for His intercession and His blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Another place it says, *Say nothing but repentance unto this generation: keep my commandments, . . . and you shall be blessed.* (D & C 6:4)

There you go. Are we going to trust Him? Do we want to be blessed? I think all of us do and we want to experience God's hands working in our lives. How

will that happen? He tells us IF we keep His commandments we will be blessed.

Another one says, *Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.* (D & C 6:9c) Do you ever feel like you need that in your life? You need someone to love you and care about you. He says He will do that if we obey His commandments.

Another place He says, if we obey His commandments we will inherit the kingdom of heaven. (D & C 6:16) In D & C 7:2c He says that He has sent certain servants to minister unto us and they shall be as flaming fire, and a ministering angel to the heirs of salvation. Who are the heirs of salvation if it's not those who obey His commandments?

Do you ever feel like you needed somebody or something other than yourself and your own power in order to address the things that come to you daily? I do. Maybe I am just talking to myself up here. I hope not. He says He will send His Spirit. He will even send these servants to work with us, preserve us and minister to us IF we are His heirs of salvation which would surely require that we obey His commandments.

You could find place after place where He says, 'Obey my commandments and I will bless you.' Do we believe that? Again I'm not criticizing anyone else, but too many times in my life I haven't obeyed His commandments. Maybe I just don't want to be blessed. That's not true. I want to be blessed and I want my family and church family to be blessed. So, am I willing to obey the commandments in hopes that you will be blessed as my family?

I thought about that a lot too, whether or not I'm willing to obey the commandments even if the people around me don't appear to be obeying the commandments in hopes that through my obedience the Lord will work to bless them.

He said in another place that if we will obey His commandments and trust Him that He will enlighten our minds and fill our souls with joy. Do you want that? It's there if we will just believe in God and obey His words.

Here's one that really strikes me. It



kind of goes back to the thought that I was sharing with you a moment ago. He says that if we will trust God and if we will keep His commandments that we will have His Spirit. He doesn't just say have His Spirit He says that we will have His Spirit, the power of God unto the convincing of men. Do we want to be able to share with our brothers and sisters the power of God and the meaning that He has in our life? He says if we will obey His commandments He will give us that power.

Of course, the other thing that He tells us over and over in the scriptures is that if we obey His commandments we will have the greatest gift of all which is eternal life. I don't know if anybody else thinks about that. I should probably think about it more than I do and be more concerned about it than I act like I am sometimes.

I don't feel like I've shared very effectively with you this morning what I wanted to share. It is still my hope that the Spirit might touch you and allow you to understand how important each one of you is to God and how there really is something He wants to allow you to do. It's not like He wants you to come and be His slave. He wants to allow you to assist in His work that you might have great joy. He wants YOU to have joy. He wants you to be blessed and His ability to do that depends on whether we will let Him. He's God. He's all powerful. He can do whatever He wants but the one thing He's told us He won't do is to take away our agency.

Another thing that struck me as I was trying to get ready for this morning was we talk about these blessings and obedience and how obedience opens the door for those blessings. I thought about Zion. Do we talk about Zion anymore? Do we believe in Zion? Do we actually believe that Zion will be? The scriptures say it will be. Are we motivated to obey His words so that Zion will be?

What's He tell us will happen if we tithe ourselves? He says He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings that you won't have room enough to receive. Would we like to have those blessings? Do we believe in

Him? Do we believe His words? Do we think if we tithe ourselves that He will pour out the blessings of heaven that we won't even have room to receive them? That's what He says.

I'll just add this that from Cheryl and my perspective that's been true. Tithing is something that we've tried to make a part of our lives, and He has certainly blessed us - again, not just materially.

When I thought about Zion and the building up of Zion and the cause of Zion, I thought about how that's waited all these generations because we haven't been willing to obey the commandments. We want the blessings but are we willing to obey the commandments.

Can we imagine God saying, 'OK let's just go ahead and have Zion even though nobody is willing to obey.' Can you imagine that? It would be like saying, 'You know what, I was just kidding. I'm not really God and you don't really have to do these things.' No. It can only be done one way and He's given us the way and He's left us for generation after generation to decide whether we're going to accept that way and keep His commands and then let Him complete the work or not.

Again I hope you will understand how important it is for each one of you, not just individually but how important it is to the rest of us around you that we all learn to obey His commandments. I hope the Spirit will rest upon you in such a way that you will desire to obey His commandments like you've never obeyed them before in order to open the door to His blessings.

Sometimes I think it's hard to talk about this with much meaning in our society because we have so much. We oft times don't really feel much need for anything. We eat well. We're clothed well. We go on vacations. We do this and that and the other thing it seems we have what we want without being concerned about obedience to God's commands. I find that I don't have the really important things unless I try to obey the commandments. I don't have peace and joy. I don't feel the arms of the Lord

encircling me and holding me up unless I'm making an effort. These things are more important to me than the material things. I hope they are to you too.

Probably the most powerful experience in my life was when the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me. (I can never fully explain what happened.) It was like an out of body experience. He took my Spirit, my soul and showed me His love. He not only showed me, I felt it. I experienced it.

In the Book of Mormon it talks about the tree of life having this choice fruit above all else. That's what it was like. It's the greatest thing I've ever tasted or experienced in my life to stand in the presence of His love. I knew it wasn't just His love for me. It was His love for every one of you, for all of His creation.

It's because He loves us so much that He wants us to obey His commandments. He just simply wants to be free, in harmony with His truth, to share these blessings with us, maybe as a young family, maybe as a group, Zion. He wants to share with us. What did He say His purpose was in creating us? That we might have joy and that's what He wants for us. When I say this morning please learn to trust Him and obey His commandments, I'm just asking you to open the door and let Him in so that you can have that joy that He created you for.

I hope you will consider your role in this work and how important it is for each of us to obey His commandments so that we can fulfill that role and how important that will be to the people around us if we will do that.

I want to read one more scripture that comes from Ruth. My prayer for you this morning is that you will learn to trust Him, to obey His word and that *The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.* (Ruth 2:12) Trust Him. Obey Him. Come under His wings and let Him gather us together as the scripture says. He loves us. He wants to give us things that we've never experienced yet, but they're right before us if we'll just obey.

CONVICTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Elder Tony Crandell
Lamoni, Iowa
February 15, 2015

Jim Major who presided over the service read Moroni 6:9; 10:5 as a presiding statement and declaration. *And their meetings were conducted by the church, after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach or exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done. (6:9) And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. (10:5)*

As a scripture reading Brother Tony Crandell read John 16:7-11. *But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer.*

There is a song Rob sang here last "sharing day" titled, "Preacher, Tell Me Like It Is," which has this phrase:

I want to hear from Heaven a clear word from God,

A sermon of conviction straight from the heart.

That phrase.... "a sermon of conviction..." got my attention. As I look back the memorable sermons I remember were sermons of conviction. While I don't remember the sermon in total, I can remember a phrase or a thought that convicted me of the truth and the

need to change.

This morning I want to speak about the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit brought conviction to my life a couple of times. Farther down in that same song is what they call in Southern Gospel music the "tag line", which says this:

Life is quickly passing, the world is fading fast

and the foolishness of preaching is the only hope we have.

That lyric is based on 1 Corinthians 1:21: *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

While I hope my time with you this morning is not "foolishness" in the normal connotation but that it will add to your understanding of conviction.

As I shared with you last month during the Sunday school hour, I occasionally have these "ah ha" moments. The moments are times when everyday simple or trite phrases or concepts all of a sudden come clear to me. If you remember during that lesson the "ah-ha" moment had to do with my understanding of how Christ could live as a man and yet be sinless.

If you remember, I said sin was made up of the following piece parts: desire, opportunity, and action. Christ had every opportunity as a human to sin...His temptations were far greater than ours will ever be. But "Ah ha! - He had absolutely no desire as He knew who He was and what He had come here to do. An example for me would be that if you invited me for dinner and served liver, I would have the opportunity to eat but no desire.

Sin would have frustrated and destroyed Jesus' work before He completed it, and He was very conscious of it. He had no desire...therefore He took no action even though He had plenty of

opportunity. It was just another one of my personal Ah-ha moments. I no longer have any trouble with that concept.

Well, the other day I was considering both the concepts of "conviction" and the works of the Holy Spirit when I came upon another dilemma. Why was it necessary for Christ to leave this earth before the Holy Spirit could come?

When Jesus told the apostles of His pending departure and return to the Father, there was much disappointment among them. Jesus' great work of redemption required His death so that through His resurrection from the dead death could be defeated. But Jesus assured His followers that He would not leave them alone, but would send His substitute, the third member of the God-head. Jesus had to leave so the Holy Spirit might come and empower the church for life and witness.

Jesus had been telling His disciples that they were being equipped to be more than conquerors in their battles for the souls of man. The Holy Spirit was to come and bring about a probing or convicting of the eternal nature of man so their consciousness might be awakened to sin, righteousness and judgment.

The Holy Spirit is the official representative of Jesus and God Almighty on earth. Jesus explains that if He stays: the Holy Spirit cannot come. The reason is that Jesus, the man, could only be in one place at a time. Ah Ha! The Holy Spirit is not so limited. Jesus does not explain explicitly why the Spirit cannot come unless the Son departs from the earth and returns to His home above, but it probably has to do with His work on the cross.

Jesus went away so that He could send His replacement, or representative, the Holy Spirit. The scriptures say that when the Spirit establishes His

presence in the hearts of believers, He will convict the world through their life, words, and deeds. I believe by example. Experiencing conviction is the most needed event today for our complacent and unbelieving age. It is not that the world does not know about Jesus Christ. They simply choose not to act on that knowledge. The Holy Spirit deals with people concerning the truth of Jesus Christ and their lives.

The Spirit comes to men in different circumstances and in different places. He has come to some of you in this very meeting place in the singing of a hymn, the reading of the Word, in some spoken message, in a holy time of silence you have become conscious of The Holy Spirit's dealings. When the Spirit has exercised His convicting power in the heart of man, a man chooses to either surrender or rebel.

But most folks today don't want God involved in their life. That's why The Bible frequently warns us of sins against the Holy Spirit. We have the power within us to resist the Holy Spirit. Acts 7:51 says, *You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!*

How do we resist the Holy Spirit?

- We quench the Holy Spirit
- We grieve the Holy Spirit
- We insult the Holy Spirit
- We blaspheme the Holy Spirit

God does not take lightly these sins against Himself and His revealed will. God will not always strive with those who refuse to be moved by His Spirit.

Therefore the first work of the Spirit is convicting man of sin. Sin is the rejection of God or the rebellion against God. The Holy Spirit can lay bare sin in the hope of awakening the consciousness to mourning and repentance. The Holy Spirit's ministry is convicting our conscience! The Holy Spirit troubles our conscience so that a person might turn to God in faith. Another area of Holy Spirit conviction is that our thoughts, words, and actions will be judged by God's absolute standard.

Did I mention witnessing? Witnessing is a great privilege, but it is also a serious responsibility. For unbelievers, it

is a matter of life or death! How we need to depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us to the right persons and give us the right words, but it is most certainly the work of the convicting Holy Spirit that brings others to faith in Christ.

I normally preach about things that I don't really understand thoroughly because it forces me to think about and research the topic to be able to relate it to you in a sermon. One of the responsibilities of my priesthood that has always convicted me of my lack of action....is the matter of witnessing.

Sometimes you say things publically and do not realize what impact your casual statement may have.

Julia Jordison said one Sunday that she really didn't have a testimony. I think she really has many, but like me, she couldn't think of one that was one that you would ooh and aah over. Her statement has bothered me for some time; if you remember I said I could certainly identify with her as I didn't have one either.

I was raised in the Church; I ran the slide projector for Dad for many, many cottage meetings. The church was a natural step for me to take without fanfare, without conviction, no brilliant light from above, or even one of my famous "ah-ha" moments.

I went to church because Dad told me to. I sang in Doris Winans' junior choir and we practiced every Saturday morning. I mention this only because I know there are those of you who knew Paul and Doris Winans (I still remember the two songs we sang over and over - "Fairest Lord Jesus" and "Holy, Holy, Holy.") Doris Winans had the patience of a saint. She knew I didn't want to be there. But nevertheless, I was active in church because Dad told me to be there.

As I look back now, I am so thankful Dad made me be active and took me along on so many church activities and visits - cottage meetings, delivering communion, funerals, meetings with the district president, reunions, church suppers. Why do you say church suppers? I guess this will be another one of those testimonies I "don't have".

Our congregation held a "hunter's

supper" one fall Friday night, and in my judgment, the supper was doomed to fail due to the lack of any advertising and the church location. I was very concerned, as I knew Dad had put his heart and soul into preparing the event. All we had was a single sandwich board sign on the parking. We were doomed to fail.

I went upstairs by myself and prayed that somehow, some way, we might at least break even on the event. Well, Dad must have prayed too, or he had much more faith that I did. The supper was a sell out.

All of those spiritual experiences prepared me for now....but now is almost 74 years down the path...I am getting the feeling "now" is rapidly becoming too late. I worry now about my lack of ability to witness. The Holy Spirit is convicting me of my lack of witness. Yet, I marvel at how this congregation is able to witness.

Witnessing is a great privilege, but it is also a serious responsibility. It can be a matter of life or death for people! How we need to depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us to the right persons and give us



Tony Crandell



the right words! But it is most certainly the work of the convicting Holy Spirit that will bring others to faith in Christ.

Here is another testimony I don't have. One Sunday in the Leon congregation it was Bill McElroy's and my turn to take the communion over to the hospital. I asked Bill if he had called over to see if anyone was there that might want to receive it. He said "No, we'll just go over."

Oh, I hated that. It was always right during the dinner hour and generally visitors were coming in. It was always a difficult time to work around them. It was always an awkward time for me. I again asked Bill if any had requested us to come? If they had, then it was easier than just walking in and asking them if they would like the Communion.

Well, this particular Sunday, there was one private room with a gentleman in bed. He had been asleep and we woke him up. We asked if he would like to be served. He said in a weakened voice... yes he would. I would say he was even anxious to receive the communion. We then administered it.

What is important about this story is that this gentleman passed away just a day or two later. What if I had demurred and walked on by because he looked like he was sleeping. What if I had talked Bill into not even going over to the hospital since no one had requested our visit. What if...What if...I shudder everytime I think of that...The Holy Spirit continually reminds me of this event and how close I came to denying the gentleman his last communion before he passed away.

You know, we believe that in the process of partaking communion our sins are forgiven and the slate is wiped clean. Oh, woe is me, if I had denied him his last opportunity. Who was that gentleman you say? It was Ed's Anderson's father.

I have asked myself a million times why I am hesitant to witness. I admire folks like Ron Smith who can step into another culture in another world and witness. I know historically one of the strengths of this congregation is to witness.

So, what role does the Holy Spirit

play in preparing us to witness? It convicts us of that need and responsibility to reach out to others. It convicts us of our priesthood responsibility.

I believe that the world is truly looking for answers. I know there are many, many moral dilemmas in the world today, you can look at television and see that, but I believe we live in a world that is primed and ready to hear and receive the gospel. I believe that they want answers to their questions. I believe people are seeking for truth and are contemplating eternal things. They may go to the wrong areas, but what an opportunity for this church, which has the precious truth of Christ. The problem is, I cannot expect the world to be convinced of something I am not demonstrating a conviction of myself.

There is a tale told of a great English actor MacReady. An eminent preacher once said to him: "I wish you would explain to me something."

"Well, what is it? I don't know that I can explain anything to a preacher."

"What is the reason for the difference between you and me? You are appearing before crowds night after night with fiction, and the crowds come wherever you go. I am preaching the essential and unchangeable truth, and I am not getting any crowd at all."

Macready's answer was this: "This is quite simple. I can tell you the difference between us. I present my fiction as though it were truth; you present your truth as though it were fiction."

Perhaps a great problem in the church, and one reason why we are not reaching more people, is because we, the people in the church, do not really believe what we say we believe.

I see it this way: I believe that there is a Heaven which is going to be an amazing place and a Hell which is going to be awful, but yet I personally have never been able to successfully confront people about Jesus. If I really believed it wouldn't you think I would have more motivation to share Jesus with my non-Christian family and friends? It is my prayer that this recognition of my problem and the conviction of it might lead to action; that I might overcome my

hesitancy.

One thing that amazes me about God is His incredible patience with us. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just give up on us at times? God cares enough about us to bring conviction to our hearts to show us our wrong. He does that because He loves us. When you receive conviction, it is not a time to be mad, angry, or frustrated, but it is a time to be thankful for God's patience.

Today I hope you believe and realize that God is involved in our lives today and cares enough about us to bring conviction of our sin when we err in different ways.

The most common response is that there is just not enough time to do what we know we should do with respect to witnessing. There is a story about a little girl who was playing in front of her father's desk in his home office. She had been there for some time and noticed that her father was frustrated and exasperated over what he was doing. Wincing and murmuring...She asked him, "Daddy, what are you doing?" He told her not to worry...and took the time to explain to her he was putting information into his book, a DayTimer Calendar. She asked "What kind of information?" He told her he was trying to find time to meet and talk with all of the important people in his life and there just wasn't enough days in the week. She said, "All of the important people?" And he said, "Yes, the people who are most important to me for what I do." She paused a moment and with tears in her eyes...said "Daddy, am I in your book?"

Is Jesus in your book? Is He one of your important people? Is there time for Him this week?

My point today is that we need to reorder our priorities in our lives such that we can increase our witness. For me personally, I need to catch up to the standards and benchmarks this congregation has already set for witnessing. I initially will be the encourager, you will be the teachers. This week let's make sure we have time in our DayTimer each day for Jesus...Lets put witnessing down as our primary "To Do" each day. You know you don't have to be anybody



special to witness.

(As a summary, the following song was played.)

I Can Pray

You say I'm not able
I'm too young or I'm too old
And I can't sing or teach and
No title do I hold Lord
What can I do?
For I want to do my part
And I want to help the hurting
With all of my heart

Chorus:

I can pray until the walls come down

Until there's healing all around
That's something I can do
I can pray in my secret place
Calling on your name
That's something I can do
I Can Pray

My family shows no interest
My child has gone so far
Though I try my best to reach them
Their hearts just seem so hard,
Lord what can do
To help bring them back to you,
For my families lost and dying
And my words do not get through

Chorus:

You can pray in your secret place
calling on his name
That's something you can do

Tag:

You can pray
I can pray
We can pray
I can pray
You can pray
I know you hear us lord when we pray
We will pray
I will pray
Will you pray?



MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Brother Tim Carr Independence, MO February 22, 2015

Brother Sherman Phipps shared: I told you Gordon (Winkler) was supposed to preside and since he was ill he called me last night and asked if I would preside. I had received a call Friday morning asking me if I would preach in another congregation today. Normally if I get asked, I just say, 'yes' and then hope the Lord will give me what to say. For some reason I felt that I should be here so I said, 'No, I am sorry. I don't think I can do that. I need to be at Mount Ayr.' I am really grateful for that prompting because I'm really happy to be up here with Tim this morning. I am very happy to have Tim and his wife, Natalie, and the rest of the family that he brought with him.

This might be the only time I get to say this. I didn't talk to Tim about it, and I hope I don't embarrass him. I am very grateful to be up here this morning with Tim. Several years ago I had, what for me anyhow, was a very powerful experience with regards to his priesthood. I know that Tim is here today as

an instrument in the hands of the Lord. I know that he's called of the Lord to act on the Lord's behalf.

Of course that doesn't mean that he should be lifted up because all of us who have had this experience of being called to the priesthood understand that we can do what needs to be done only by the power of the Holy Spirit. I know as I stand before you this morning that Tim is an instrument in the hands of God.

He's been called to assist in the shepherding of the flock. I hope that you will uphold him in your prayers that he can stand in the calling that is his this morning. I have been impressed that inasmuch as we support him and uphold him and present ourselves to the Lord with broken hearts and contrite spirits as we've been told to do that we will receive the Lord's ministry today.

Our call to worship this morning comes from 2nd Nephi 13:29-32. *Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold,*

thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

I want to begin reading this morning out of the Book of Ephesians. This is the Apostle Paul speaking to the people at Ephesus. I'm going to read from the 4th chapter and start with the very first verse through the fifteenth. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, In one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the*



gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? [to preach to the souls in the prison house] He who descended, is the same also who ascended up into heaven, to glorify him who reigneth over all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we, in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

I'd also like to read a scripture from the Book of John 12:32, a very short but powerful verse. *Hear the words of Christ. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

I want to thank you for inviting us to be with you this morning. I'm here because I love each and every one of you. I'm here because the Lord Jesus Christ loves each and every one of you. The great hope that I have this morning is that He would use me, as flawed as I am, to bring you the truth.

I had an experience a couple of months ago just after Christmas that I'd like to share with you this morning. With a few friends and family I had an opportunity that I didn't think I would experience in my lifetime. We walked through the inner workings of the Auditorium and were able to go and stand on the rooftop and look out over the city of Independence and the broader Kansas City metro. As I looked out I saw many wonderful things: the Temple lot ground, the Stone Church in the background, the train depot where the Saints of old would ride in for Conference and where missionaries would ride out on appointment. It was a wonderful pow-

erful reminder of the rich heritage of the Lord's Church, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

But more than a reminder of the past it was a reminder to me and I would remind you this morning of the glorious hope that we have in that which is to come. We know that the Lord's Temple will be built on that very Temple lot ground that sits between the Auditorium and the Stone Church. From that very place the city of Zion will be established and will grow outward from there to its Stakes.

I also looked around me and saw that behind me was the Visitor's Center of the church that Brigham Young established, the Community of Christ Temple, the Remnant headquarters just east down Lexington Avenue, the Hedrikite church building adjacent to the Temple lot. I don't think we need to be reminded, we are very aware of the spirited division that has separated and continues to separate men and women one from another and people one from another and from their God. But despite the division and the confusion that I saw all around me, and it was literally all around me, I was reminded that the peace that comes from the Spirit of God will ultimately prevail.

Iwould remind you of that this morning. With all the uncertainty and the confusion and division in this world, within the Church, between churches we can wake up every morning with a confidence and assurance that Christ will indeed return to the earth and He will establish the Kingdom of God, even Zion. Jesus Christ prayed to the Father for that very thing when He said, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

That prayer, brothers and sisters, will not go unanswered. Even though the plot is very sad and we are confused at times, we know how this story ends from the Book of Genesis the 7th chapter. *And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I made unto you concerning the children of Noah. And the day shall come that the earth shall rest.*

But before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth. And great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven, and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men. And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine own elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare; an holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion; a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch, Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there; and we will receive them into our bosom; and they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years shall the earth rest. And it came to pass, that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth, in righteousness, for the space of a thousand years. (Genesis 7:67-73)

Apostle Oakman who later became an Evangelist preached a sermon 42 years ago that I think is very, very timely for us today. In that sermon he spoke of the ministry of reconciliation which God has ordained whereby men and women can be reconciled one to another and to their God. He prefaced his remarks from the 2nd Book of Corinthians the 5th chapter. I'd like to read starting with the 14th verse. *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then are all dead; And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth live we no more after the flesh; yea, though we once lived after the flesh, yet since we have known Christ, now henceforth live we no more*



after the flesh. Therefore if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, And receiveth all the things of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (14-20)

When Adam and Eve fell we know that God and man became separated and to tear down that wall of separation God sent the crown jewel of His Kingdom even Jesus Christ His only begotten Son to the earth to pay a debt that He did not owe because we owed a debt that we could not repay. The scriptures tell us very plainly that the wages of sin is death and through Christ's sacrifice the demands of justice were met which allows us to obtain the forgiveness and mercy of God through repentance, true repentance demonstrated by our obedience to the commandments of God.

Through that atonement the path was laid whereby we may be reconciled to God eternally through Jesus Christ. And the great calling of our ministry, your ministry and my ministry, is to travel that path of repentance and to bring God's children with us and to do that we must be willing to make our lives a living sacrifice devoted to loving the Lord by loving His people.

Apostle Oakman said it more eloquently than I can. *As we look into the life of the Lord Jesus and remember that we are His body does it not occur to you that what Jesus did in His earthly body, in His body of flesh, we are called to do in our social life and that if we are truly His followers and we are His Church than we shall find ourselves bearing in our body, in the same way that He bore in His body, the sins and the limitations, the shortcomings, the problems and the strifes and the grief of those around us and bearing these things in our own life shall find the answer to these problems and yield to men thereby the ministry of*

reconciliation for which they are looking.

Brother Oakman made an important point that I'd like to make to you this morning. The point is that there are many, many things in this world that are not meant to be reconciled. You can't reconcile communism and democracy. You cannot reconcile Catholicism with Methodism. You cannot reconcile Presbyterianism with Lutheranism or Islam with the tenets of Christianity. You cannot reconcile the Remnant Church with the Temple Lot Church or the Community of Christ theology with the teachings of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

But, you can reconcile people one to another, persons one to another. Drawing upon the power from Heaven that's been promised to this Church, even that of the Holy Ghost, we must as Apostle Oakman preached find ways in which, under the Spirit of God, all the enmities which separate men one from another which set them at variance one from another whereby all these separate things can be annihilated. Where men of different temperaments, national backgrounds, cultural traditions, men of different economic circumstances, of different educational backgrounds, of different mental capacities can come together under God and share with each other so that the time will come when this Church will be dominated by a single personality, the personality of our Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I share with you this morning that is the only hope of reconciliation is when this Church, each and every one of us, are dominated by the personality of our Lord Jesus and dominated by that personality each one of us can find our individual place in the scheme of things, this infinite variety in the midst of a glorious unity. These are powerful words.

I would like to share with you a testimony. I believe it was my freshman or perhaps my sophomore year at the University of South Dakota. I was the only church member on campus and I felt isolated so I looked for a group of people that I could worship with, a group of students that believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. I started attending a group called

Campus Crusade for Christ which you'll find at many different college campuses around the country.

I had attended for several weeks and an opportunity presented itself. After each meeting they would hand out what they called a 'Comment Card' and each person would have the opportunity to volunteer for various tasks. I volunteered to share my testimony of Jesus Christ at one of the upcoming meetings that took place on Wednesday night. I submitted my card without much thought about it.

I was sitting in class one day. I think it was World Politics and the Spirit of God rested on me and told me and instructed me, not audibly but silently, that I needed to stop everything that I was doing and start writing down my testimony of Jesus Christ and that's what I did.

Probably a week later I received a phone call from the leader of this campus organization. He wanted to meet with me. He didn't say why but I knew why. He wanted to make sure that the things that I believed were consistent with the mission statement and the beliefs of that group. So I met with him and he laid before me a series of 20 questions, a quiz if you will, on different points of doctrine. We agreed on many things. We agreed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We agreed that the Bible was the word of God. We agreed that Jesus would come again to the earth but there were a couple of areas where we had disagreement.

I was not willing to tell him that I thought that the Book of Mormon was false. I wasn't willing to tell him that there will not be a judgment in which each and every one of us will be judged according to our works on this earth. I agreed with him that we are saved by the grace of God and that we have the opportunity to live eternally BUT the sacrifice of Jesus Christ did not take away our agency. It didn't remove our responsibility to choose. He chose us, brothers and sisters, but we must choose Him.

The door of reconciliation has been opened through the atonement but we can only come into God's presence



through repentance which requires that we live the example set by His Son that we might be made as the scriptures say, *'the righteousness of God in Him.'*

The only way I knew to love my friend was to tell him the truth and as we set and talked I couldn't help but feel compassion and love for him. There are times in each and every one of our lives where we're tempted to believe that love requires us to set aside the truth or at least a portion of it to keep peace within our families or among friends or within our congregations. But, I would say to you, and I believe I have the Spirit with me when I say it, that truth and love are inseparable and in many ways indistinguishable. It's through love that we manifest the truth which is in Jesus Christ and it's through the truth which is in Jesus Christ that we manifest His love in the lives of others.

Love never ever, ever requires you to abandon the truth. It demands that you embrace it. I never had the opportunity to share my testimony with my friend. Perhaps in some way by standing for what I know and believe with all my heart to be right, I did bear a testimony. I pray that someday whether in this life or the life to come I'll have that opportunity.

I was speaking with a friend of mine the other day, this kind of leads into what we were talking about in class this morning. He is a good friend of our family who attends a Baptist Church in the Des Moines area. I shared with him the beliefs of the restored gospel and he listened but at the end of our conversation he said essentially that quite frankly maybe what I said to him was true, maybe it wasn't.

He said that he had met with some Mormons about a week ago. Maybe what they said was true, maybe it wasn't but at the end of the day it really didn't matter. What mattered was that each and every one of us accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. He said, 'I'm content to let God deal with the details.' Is he right? I think we need to be able to answer that question.

I don't believe that he is. The 90th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants which I highly recommend that you

read over and over and over again says that the Spirit of God is truth and without truth men can never receive the fullness of joy that God desires of them and they can never receive a fullness of His Spirit. Without that Spirit they cannot receive a fullness of joy which comes through a knowledge of the truth.

Brothers and sisters, there is truth and we can find it if we will search for it and ask. Is there not joy that comes from an understanding that little children are without sin? Is there not joy that comes from an understanding that Enoch's city Zion will return to the earth? Is there not joy that we have to share with mankind from the Book of Mormon's explanation in simplicity and purity of how the body and the soul will ultimately be reunited after death? Is there not joy in an understanding of the rewards that await us in eternity if we are faithful even those of the celestial, the terrestrial and the testial glories?

Is there not joy in a knowledge and an understanding that Jesus walked this very continent, that He walked the Americas? Do we not have a wonderful story to share with our Indian brothers and sisters, descendants of the tribe of Manasseh? Is there not joy in knowing that the priesthood which was passed down from father to son from the very beginning was restored to the earth with power and authority to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ?

The reality is that within these scriptures there is either a doctrine of a church or there is a doctrine of the Church. If this is but a church I would suggest to you, brothers and sisters, that there is not much reason we have for being here this morning. My testimony to you, if you hear nothing else this morning, is that the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is indeed the Lord Jesus's Church and His Church exists where His doctrine is taught in Spirit and in truth and where His sacraments and ordinances are performed in purity by those whom He has chosen.

Satan has created a counterfeit if you will to the ministry of reconciliation that God has ordained. I know

that many of you are aware of this. It's a reconciliation, in today's terminology, that comes through tolerance and acceptance of all lifestyles and ideas and religions regardless of whether those things are true or good. By blurring the lines between truth and deception the spirit of confusion takes hold and when the storms of life blow down upon them those whom Satan has deceived have nothing in which to place their hope and no one in whom to place their trust. In this way he accomplishes his goal, his mission of making men just as miserable as he is. Searching for something in which to place their trust, they gravitate to belief systems which control and destroy the very people who advocate them.

Arthur Oakman again put it more eloquently than I can. *The enemy of mankind is threatened and has sworn to destroy the handiwork of deity. He does this by spreading abroad in the world idea systems with such tremendous power that men give their allegiance to them. These idea systems which are mutually incompatible destroy those who espouse them and bring destruction upon all.* I'm sure that those who lived during the rise of Nazi Germany or the reign of communism in the Soviet Union can appreciate that truth. We see this today in our country through laws which attempt to limit public expressions of faith. We see it in the homosexual marriage movement which stifles descent and leaves spiritual destruction in its wake.

I want to warn you today that that same spirit of control we see active in governments and religions also creeps into our relationships with one another, our relationships with our spouse, with our friends and it extinguishes any light of truth that is within us. When that light of His Spirit is extinguished we become separated from God and we often-times separate others from God in the process.

The words of Joseph Smith from the Liberty Jail in 1839 touched on the temptation men of the priesthood have that comes with priesthood authority. *We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men as soon as they get a little authority as they suppose to begin to exercise*



unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long suffering, by gentleness, by meekness and by love unfeigned without hypocrisy and without guile, reproving with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Ghost and afterwards showing forth an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved. Brother Oakman said under the influence of the Spirit in that sermon in 1973, *It is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord that the work of reconciliation shall be accomplished.*

As I read the 4th Book of Nephi it amazes me, and we see parallels in our time, how quickly the peace, the unity, the love and the truth that Jesus Christ made possible through His example were destroyed. From the 4th Book of Nephi 1:18-20, (This is not quite 70 years after Christ ascended into Heaven. This is the state of the world.) *And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; And surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God: There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.*

Can we even imagine, in the condition in which we find ourselves on this earth, a society where all the things that separate men and women one from another are torn down, where all the barriers that lead to societal unrest are annihilated? So it will be, brothers and sisters, in the Kingdom of God even Zion for we know Apostle Paul speaks of this in the Book of Galatians that in Jesus Christ there is no male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Greek but all are one in Christ Jesus.

Then if you turn back to 4th Nephi but a hundred years later starting with the first chapter the 27th verse. *And now in this two hundred and first year, there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the*

world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them, and they began to be divided into classes, and they began to build up churches unto themselves, to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ. (27-28)

So began, brother and sisters, centuries of spiritual darkness and political conflict but hope of a spiritual awakening remained and in time the Lord in His infinite wisdom and mercy rose up men of great spiritual understanding to prepare the world for a restoration of the truth which was to come.

Alexander Campbell who founded the Disciples of Christ Church said this, *We have to pattern after the first church as well as we can but we can never equal it. With all of our efforts the great disparity will ever remain and could the apostles and primitive Christians be here they would doubtless weep at beholding it. We argue that all Christian sects are more or less apostatized from the institutions of the Savior. That by all of the obligations of the Christian religion they that fear and love the Lord are bound to return to the ancient order of things in Spirit and in truth.*

That Church that Christ established did return to the earth in the year 1830 just as had been prophesied and apostles were set forth to preach the soul reviving news that Christ's Church had been restored to the earth for the last time and with it the sacraments, the ordinances, the priesthood offices and the gifts of the Holy Ghost experienced during Christ's ministry. Through that Church the ministry of reconciliation would go forth and must go forth whereby the strife between nations and churches and people would come to an end.

Apostle Oakman speaking, *Has it occurred to you that in this ministry of reconciliation, which we cannot of ourselves accomplish, there is joined to us through the powers of the priesthood an innumerable company of triumphant souls who have gone on before us who await the consummation of all things when the Lord Jesus will finish His ministry of reconciliation and not only will man be reconciled to man, not only will*

nature be reconciled to man, not only will beasts be reconciled to man but Heaven and earth shall also be reconciled.

The ministry of reconciliation, friends, not only seeks to reconcile man with God but man with each other. He established His Church in the last days of the earth for that very purpose. I encourage you to read from the 3rd Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. I'll read a portion of it. . . . *and this I do, that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention.* (D & C 3:15c) Is that not the very thing that Joseph Smith went to the woods and prayed regarding? He asked a question that all of us ask in our lifetime. What is truth and where do I find it? The Lord answered his prayer and the Lord has answered that prayer of our hearts by giving us His gospel in these latter days that the confusion and the contention might ultimately come to an end.

The scriptures go on to say, *yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention, concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the Scriptures, and do not understand them.* (15d)

We cannot hope to bring the ministry of reconciliation, brothers and sisters, to those around us unless we ourselves are reconciled to God and to our fellowman. I can think of many, many people I've met and talked to in my short life who have fallen away from Christ's Church because of a harsh word or an unkind deed. Many of them today sit at home. I've talked to many as I've moved to the Center Place who have become offended and relationships that lasted for years and years and years were destroyed and they've moved from church to church, from congregation to congregation.

Brothers and sisters, each and every one of us has been blessed with unique gifts and talents. We also, each and every one of us, possess unique flaws and shortcomings. That's why it is imperative in these latter days that each and every one of us be converted to the message of the gospel, not the messengers. People will let you down. People that you trust will offend you. God won't.

So, I would challenge you this morning if there are those relationships



in your life that have been severed, if you have taken offense or have caused an offense, go to that person in the spirit of meekness and humility and love and make it right that you might be reconciled with your brothers and sisters and only then can you be reconciled to your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In traveling to various congregations in Iowa, Missouri and Oklahoma, Natalie and I have sensed discouragement, sadness. It's evident on the faces of the people we meet but we've also sensed glimmers of hope and anticipation. Some in this room have sat under the voices of apostles and a true prophet and have fond memories of Stake reunions and gathering to the Auditorium for World Conference. Some of us don't have those memories, those testimonies to draw upon.

I would say today to those who may have doubts or fears concerning the future of the Lord's Church, your fears are misplaced. Be more concerned about the day of judgment and prepare for that day in which you will meet God. The Lord will not forsake His Church and He has not forsaken His Church nor will He ever. The return of Christ, the establishment of Zion will not be delayed or frustrated. The Lord in His mercy is giving us time. He's giving us time to share the good news of the gospel with those who haven't heard it, and those who have heard it, that's us, have a grave and important responsibility to share it.

I talked with a Jewish lady last year who confided in me of her greatest hope in life, a day in which a Messiah would return to the earth and usher in world peace. I think we have a wonderful story to share with people like her and we are running out of time to tell it.

I would say to those who long for the days when the Church will have a leader and leadership that the Church has never and will never be without leadership. Jesus Christ is the leader of His Church. He's the leader of the priesthood and joining Him in preparing for the kingdom of God on earth are generations of faithful servants who have gone on before us.

Apostle Oakman would certainly

be included in that number. The Lord's work is far bigger than our eyes can see or our ears can hear. Again, quoting Brother Oakman, *So it is with our Heavenly Father who has sown into humanity the seed and the power of His Kingdom has not vacated the soil in which it has been planted but continues to cultivate and prepare and there are many, many forces for righteousness which are geared to the endeavor which you and I share today which God has in His keeping to usher and ensure that that which is ordained shall certainly come to pass. The only certain thing in this uncertain world is the coming of the Kingdom of God, the building of Zion and our Heavenly Father has many agencies at work. From every conceivable place men are called according to the gifts and callings of God in industry, government, social life and education. Men are doing the will of God who know not the God they are serving because He has ordained it that way.*

I would say to the older members of this congregation especially. Your faithfulness to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints matters. It's important and if faithful your testimony will echo in generations to come. Many of you are familiar with Jason Briggs. He had an experience in the fall of 1851. For those of you who know about Jason Briggs he had wandered, if you will, from faction to faction after the death of Joseph Smith Jr. searching for truth, searching for the restored gospel that he longed to hear. When he went to one of those factions and found that they were not preaching the truth in its fullness, he left and kept searching. He never, ever compromised on what he knew to be true. That man has had a profound impact on my life and the impact of our family. In 1868 in Hardin County, Iowa my third great grandmother Sarah A. Carr was baptized a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She grew up as a Quaker in the State of New York. Your testimony, your faithfulness matters.

I would say to the youth of this congregation, tune in to me for just a sec-

ond. Satan wants you to fall away and he is actively sowing seeds of doubts and confusion and discouragement within you and around you. At times our life doesn't go as planned, does it, and it seems that the Lord has forgotten us. I want to say to you this morning that the Lord knows you personally. Every hair of your head is numbered. The Lord Jesus Christ will never ever, ever leave you alone if you'll turn to Him and ask Him for guidance and direction and if you'll do the things that He did in His life and ministry. Remain prayerful in good times and in bad times and with time and patience you will recognize the hand of God working in your life, guiding your path, directing your footsteps. I have this testimony. Many in this room have that testimony and you will have that testimony if you will ask. There will be trials and temptations in your life that will cause you to question your faith. We sometimes wrongly believe that because we are members of Christ's Church that we are entitled to a life without trial or tribulation. Brother Oakman made a profound point when he said that, *When our Lord Jesus was sent into this world there was no special protection about Him except as that special protection was geared to the preservation of His life to do the work that He was called to do.* We don't know how long our lives will last, whether five years or 20 years or 49 or many years but we can know of a surety and with certainty that the Lord will preserve our lives to do the work that He's called us to do.

Darkness and confusion within the world and within the Church will continue to grow and you'll want to give up and stop fighting for the truth. There will be more false churches that pop up and false leaders in your lifetime who will try to lure you away from the truth. There will be added pressure to become less rigid and conservative in terms of what we believe and in the way in which we worship. You will not be able to withstand these trials and temptations unless you have a testimony that Jesus is indeed the Christ and that indeed this is His Church. My testimony to you is that if you will ask Him in humility and



meekness He will give you that testimony and your life will never be the same.

Within modern Christianity you will find churches that meet every need or whim or want imaginable. You'll find churches with praise bands, live music, with Starbucks coffee, flat screen TVs. Churches that teach that you don't have to change your life or what you do that God will accept you as you are. God will accept you as you are but He loves you far too much to allow you to stay that way. Natalie and I drove by a church in Independence that was giving away Kansas City Chiefs' tickets for those who would come to church. I'm not certain that that promotion was particularly popular but they tried nonetheless. All of those things, they may entertain but they will not convert. We have something in this Church far more powerful and more precious than any of those things, the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost which comes through truth. Do not, I plead with you both old and young, do not trade those things for things of lesser worth.

I want to leave you with my testimony. I believe it was the summer of 2008 I found myself in our nation's capital, Washington D.C. I was interning there that summer in the U.S. House of Representatives. I got there a day early to kind of walk around and get my bearings so to speak. I got off at the metro stop on the south end of the capital and walked around.

I saw the Supreme Court building, the Library of Congress, the National Mall off to the west and Union Station to the north. I found myself in a park on the north side of the capital contemplating life, contemplating the Lord's Church, contemplating the state of the nation. I found myself in prayer praying that God would not forsake His people and that He would not forget this nation despite our sins and iniquities.

As I prayed to Him suddenly seemingly out of nowhere a beautiful melody from the sound of a trumpet rang out. A hymn I have sung in church since my childhood, a hymn that many of you are familiar with, 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.' In that moment all the complexities and the problems despite all

of the confusion and the noise around me, in that moment though the problems seemed complex it became very apparent to me that the answer was very simple.

It's Jesus. *What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.* Does that not apply, brothers and sisters, to this Church? Does that not apply to this nation? As I sat on the rostrum preparing to speak to a group gathered at South Crysler Reunion last year and asked the Lord what I should share I felt led to share that testimony that I had six years earlier. As I sat up front an ensemble gathered to begin our service with song. Would you care to take a guess the song that that ensemble played? With the sound of a trumpet the same melody was played that I had heard north of the capital building in 2008. *What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to*

God in prayer. The Lord is still moving in His Church and He will always and continue to move in His Church so long as there are but a few committed to defending His gospel and the teachings of His Son Jesus.

I would like to leave you this morning with a scripture from 2nd Nephi 15:11-15. *And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words, and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words, believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ, ye will believe in these words; for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good. And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye: for Christ will shew unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day. And you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness: And I pray the Father in the name of Christ, that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom, at that great and last day.* That is my prayer for you this morning, brothers and sisters.

Food for Food Pantry



A total of 151 food, health and paper good items were collected to take to the Mount Ayr MATURA Neighborhood Center in the month of February, tripling our January total. The branch is using the third Sunday of the month to collect the items that help the hungry in the area with needs.

THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

**High Priest
Rob Rolfe
Lamoni, IA
July 13, 2014**

As a Call to Worship Rodney Bastow read from Psalms 27:1, 14. *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Thou didst say unto me, Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.*

I'd just like to say in preface to my scripture reading in Daniel that this is in reference to King Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar would roast people alive in a metal critter to get even. If he didn't like somebody he would kill them, their family and destroy their house and then make a manure pile out of it. I am just telling you this because he was not one to mess with. You might say today that he didn't have a sense of humor and yet Daniel went to him and gave him a message that was anything but good.

Typically you didn't go to people like that and give them bad messages because you ended up dead. This tells you something about Daniel, that he wasn't afraid of the king. King Nebuchadnezzar didn't listen to the message that Daniel gave. I'm going to be reading from the 4th Chapter verses 28-32. *All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.* (You are going to have to read for yourself to see what came upon the king.) *At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it*

is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. I'd like to leave you with this question, do you think Nebuchadnezzar is in heaven?

I'd like to preach today on a way to be a good and faithful servant that I don't recall hearing before. Basically, it rests on the concept of what God wants His servants to be. We have lots of misconceptions and misunderstandings of what God expects of us. One is what He expects of us as disciples. Another is what God thinks about money. How much money does God have? How much money does he control? I'm saying this to make a point.

God, we believe, is our Father. We have absolutely the richest father ever. And,--he loves us. What is the likelihood that our father would provide money to us, when he literally has an unlimited supply of money. How do we, as his children, make that happen? Or can we?

Money is not---the root of all evil. Money is not---the root of all evil. Our Scriptures just do not say that. What it does say is that the love of money---is the root of all evil. Basically this comes down to a very real spiritual proposition--- whatever you love more than God is evil. God is a jealous God and he doesn't like us putting anything in front of our love for him. The first commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and with all thy soul and all thy mind.

If you believe that money is evil, the next natural consequence of that belief is that you believe that people who have money are evil. The next natural consequence of this line of thinking is that if

you are successful, you are evil. If you have money, you are evil. Being rich is evil. There is a drumbeat in America that if you are successful, you are evil. Don't the scriptures say that? No, the scriptures don't say that.

Let consider for a minute our situation, being Americans. The average household income in America is close to \$50,000. If you are an average American household, compared with the rest of the world, you are in the richest 1% of the income earners in the world. If you make enough as a family to be just at the "poverty" guideline, \$11,000 per year, you are still in the top 14% of the income earners in the world. What does that mean for us in this room? It means we are all rich. If we are all rich, then we are all evil. That is, if you believe that if someone has wealth, that shows they are evil. I'm speaking to a congregation of evil people. I know you don't feel rich. You probably don't feel like you live with rich people. That is because you are comparing yourself with other rich people.

Jesus did talk about managing money or wealth. And managing money is an appropriate use of money in the kingdom of heaven. America is the wealthiest nation on earth. What happened in America hasn't happened anywhere else. Citizens of America are rich because we share in what is called the Judeo-Christian heritage of our fathers. For example, as a nation, we believe you should tell the truth, particularly when you are in business. If we deal with someone in business and we find they have lied to us, what do we do? We quit doing business with them. You probably don't know this, but the top 500 companies in America, with the highest standard of ethics, are the most profitable. But having integrity is not viewed as a positive in many parts of the world.

Americans have a problem in how



we view money. Part of reason for that attitude is the revision of the scriptural attitudes in our culture, imposed by evil people who want to use money to control others.

There are three possible ways to view money. Two of them are wrong. I've had all three views at different times in my life. The scriptures give us great advice about money. I'm going to use some of these scriptures to illustrate our views on money and wealth. It is likely that all of these accounts happened about the same time in the ministry of Jesus. There are 3 characters in this study: Mary, Martha and Judas. The first is found in Luke 10:39-43. The second is in John 12:1-7

In Luke we find Jesus at the house of some sinners. *Now it came to pass, as they went, they entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister, called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his words. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* Apparently, He spent a lot of time there. Just like we sometimes do when saints meet at a home, He was talking about the kingdom.

First view of money

This comes from a spirit of pride. This view comes from the spirit of pride. MONEY COMES FROM ME. My work is where money comes from. It comes from my efforts. If we have this view, we tend to sometimes be politically conservative. Some people who vote Republican think this way. If we are good workers...good performers, then we get money for our work. These people like Bible verses like: If you don't work, you don't eat. If you are faithful with little, you are given more. The diligent prosper. You reap what you sow.

With this view, the farmer plants the seed, he gets a good rain, the seed

comes up and he says, 'didn't I do a good job with that rain thing?' That crop is all based on my work. It is interesting to me that as I just read the account in Luke, it is likely that both women knew Jesus well. One is "doing all of the work" and the other is just sitting there listening to Jesus. Apparently, Jesus approved of Mary's decision to sit and listen. It appears to me from this account, that the Son of God was in Martha's house, and Martha was vacuuming the floors and cooking, or doing the dishes, rather than enjoying His presence and his wisdom.

Second view of money

This comes from a spirit of poverty. Wealth is evil. Those who possess wealth are evil. This is a form of Gnostic heresy. These people quote Jesus saying it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven. These evil people, the rich people, can't get into heaven. Does the Bible say that? How about the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine & Covenants? Sometimes our problem is that we misread the actual intent in the scripture. For example, the statement, 'a woman without her man is nothing.' If you read this statement correctly, it says: A woman, without her, man is nothing. The words are the same, but the message is the opposite. Are we getting the correct message from our reading of the scriptures?

The story of the rich man coming to Jesus is found in Matthew 19:16-24. *And, behold, one came and said, Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and mother. And, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure*

in heaven, and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Did the disciples get the correct message, or not? Verse 25 says, when his disciples heard this, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? Who then can be saved? Just poor people? Did Jesus say that poor people would be saved by being poor? No he didn't! Jesus said: Blessed are the poor---no He didn't say that; He said blessed are the poor in spirit. He also said: If you don't become as a little child, you won't set foot in the kingdom; if you break even the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall in no wise be saved in the kingdom of heaven; no rich people? Are you telling me that the blood of Jesus can get murderers, adulterers, prostitutes, thieves, etc, into heaven, but not rich people? Those who believe in this view will tell you: the little man can't get ahead; the deck is stacked against you; the corporations control everything; and so forth. Some of the people who think this way vote democratic.

Is it true that the deck is stacked against you? That you won't ever be able to succeed? The truth is that America is one of the few places on earth where you can become wealthy. In fact, 88% of America's newest millionaires, started with nothing. This second view of money has cousins of jealousy and envy. Proverbs 6:16-19 gives us a list of the 7 deadly sins. What are they? *These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

This second view of money judges and criticizes our brethren for the type of car they drive. You shouldn't buy that



expensive a car. Do you know what car is appropriate for a servant of Christ to buy under this view and not lose their salvation. A 1993 Toyota Camry. That's it. The most expensive car a Christ's servant can buy.

Judas had that spirit of poverty. You shouldn't have done that. You should have given the money to the poor. But, he said this, not because of his righteousness, but because he was a thief! If Judas was a thief, from whom did he steal. He was the treasurer of the apostles. Duh, take a good guess.

Then Jesus six days before the pass-over came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein, Then said Jesus, Let her alone; for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

In this story Mary is again recognizing a spiritual truth. She anointed Jesus with expensive and powerful perfume. It says the odor filled the house. It probably filled the streets as well. The text says this oil was worth 300 pence (some say denari). According to some of the commentators, this perfume cost a year's wages. (\$50,000 in America) That was a \$50,000 bottle of perfume she dumped on Jesus. How did Mary get it? How did she get a \$50,000 bottle of perfume? From the text it would appear that she and Martha and Lazarus were poor people. Could this be Mary's "life savings," accumulated from a life of sin? Jesus said she anointed him in token of his burial. In Matthew 26:10, Jesus said *wherever this gospel is preached*

in the whole world, this thing that this woman hath done shall also be told for a memorial of me.

Third view of money

This view comes from a spirit of gratitude. This is the proper view, I believe, if you are a goodly servant of Christ. In this view, wealth not only comes from God, it is God's. The psalmist says, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; in that spirit, thank you God for all you have given us; thank you for providing for my future; as where there is no vision, the people perish. Under this view, we are given everything we possess by God. What for? To manage as good stewards. How do you want me to manage what you've given me, God? I'd like to read another scripture with the same people present.

The third view of money (to look at our money with the spirit of gratitude) requires us to take care of whatever God has given us. Our God is wealthy beyond compare. AND, he wants to share his wealth with us. We should always be grateful to Him for His gifts to us. To be a good servant of Christ, we need to get out of debt and stay out of debt. You need to save money, (as in, increase our talents) because that's what the scriptures tell us to do.

Proverbs 22:7 says *the rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* Proverbs 21:20 says: *There is treasure to be desired and oil in the house of the wise, but a foolish man spendeth it up.* If you spend everything you make, you are a fool. We need to control our spending. Just like this country needs to do today, we need to live within a budget. If you're going to build a tower, count the cost first. If you are faithful with little things, you are given bigger things. We are called to be a peculiar people.

In America today, normal is being broke. We need to develop a proper understanding for the scriptures, just like my little saying: A woman, without her man, is nothing. Properly read, it actually says, A woman, without her, man is nothing. Our perspective is everything. Here is a different perspective regarding being rich and being poor.

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?" "It was great, Dad." "Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked. "Oh yeah" said the son. "So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father. The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them." With this the boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks dad for showing me how poor we are."

Too many times we forget what we have and concentrate on what we don't have. What is one person's worthless object is another's prize possession. It is all based on one's perspective. Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for all the bounty we have, instead of worrying about wanting more

The spirit of gratitude. Am I saying that God wants us to have money? That is exactly what I am saying. But you had better have your heart right and your motivation right. Who owns your stuff anyway? Jesus! If you forget who the owner is of all you possess, you're already in big trouble. I've been in trouble. I've operated with the spirit of pride. I've operated with the spirit of poverty. I've judged people for what they bought. It was too nice! They wasted their money. I've been prideful over what I had done, what I had accomplished, or so I thought. You know what. You can't make your children have gratitude. What will you do if they don't? Give them a spanking? Send



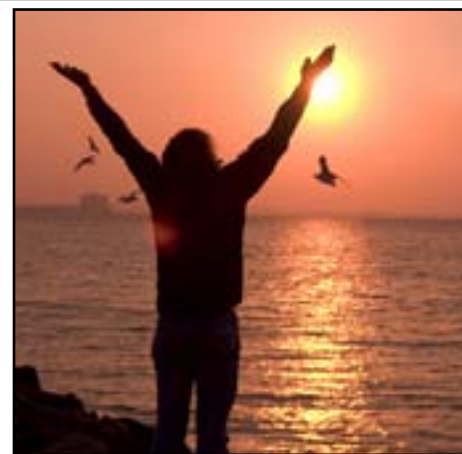
them to their room? Gratitude simply cannot be forced. God cannot make us be grateful.

If you are grateful to God, you make your accounting. You pay your tithing. Abraham paid tithing to Melchisedek. Moses commanded the people to tithe their crops, their flocks, their fruit, etc. Leviticus 27:30 and Malachi 3:10 say to bring the tithes into the storehouse and you'll receive such a blessing there won't be room enough to receive it. This comes from the spirit of gratitude. If you respond better to negative consequences, Doctrine & Covenants 64:5 says, he that tithes will not be burned. If you tithe happily, you will be richly blessed.

The month after Lynda and I were first married, we went to Graceland. We paid our rent, our tuition, for our books, bought groceries and were ready to go. We also completed our first tithing statement. As I remember, we owed \$270.00. At that time we had about \$285.00. We talked about it and decided if we had the money we ought to pay, knowing it wouldn't be long and we would have spent the money on something else. A couple of months later, we received a check from Lynda's great aunt's estate for \$2,700.00. (Perhaps I should have wished I had paid \$50,000.00.)

The best part is, we never needed anything that the Lord did not provide from that day forward. A secretary of mine (a Lutheran) noticed this and commented. She said, 'every time you need money, right before you need it, it comes in the mail.' God is great! Tithing shows you are grateful. May I increase in gratitude all the remainder of my days on this earth.

One of my favorite passages of scripture, which is based on gratitude, comes from Jacob 2:21-24. *And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls. Think of your brethren, like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all, and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will*



seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted.

Saints, you must recognize that building Zion (the brick and mortar kind of Zion, with roads, sewers, water and so forth) is going to take money. You simply cannot assist in building Zion unless you have something left over after you provide for your family's needs. Zion cannot be built by a people who spend everything they make every year, and perhaps, get a little deeper in debt.

Being a steward, means you are taking care of everything God gave you for who? For him and his purposes, not for your purposes. Grateful people manage their stewardship for their Lord. Another favorite passage of scripture is found in Mosiah 2:28-32; and for poor people, 2:40-41. *And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; And ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say, The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance, that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just. But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done, he perisheth for ever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same be-*

ing, even God, for all the substance which we have; for both food, and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts, that I give not because I have not; but if I had, I would give. And now, if ye say this in your hearts, ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned, and your condemnation is just; for ye covet that which ye have not received.

In the justice of God, every one of us is held to the same standard. We need to be willing to use what God has given us to serve His purposes. What did Jacob say again? Read verse 24 again. Do you see how it is the attitude of the heart that makes the difference?

If you were God, could you trust your riches to a steward that had this attitude? God could, and He does. What kind of attitude about God's assets do you have today?

One of God's most precious servants is Nephi, as found in the book of Helaman. I really love what I see Nephi doing. He is tireless. He is determined. He cannot be swayed by public opinion. He is devoted to God. He prays three times every day. What does God do for a servant like this? He gives him a checkbook with all of the checks signed. Nephi can fill in any amount he wants. Who do you know that you could or would give your checkbook to with all of the checks signed?

Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but have sought my will, and to keep my commandments. And now because thou hast done this with such unweariness, behold, I will bless thee for ever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.



We're All In This Together: One Heart, One Mind, One Family

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch Retreat Camp Farwesta • Stewartsville, MO Friday-Sunday, March 20-22, 2015

We have a wonderful weekend planned to help us grow together and closer to our Lord. Please plan to spend the weekend with us . . . and bring your friends.

Let the church again be admonished that the task of establishing Zion presses heavily upon us. Barriers and hindrances to the achievement of this goal should be removed as speedily as possible and practicable. To lay securely the foundations for Zion and her buildings the work should be accomplished in peace and harmony. Unity should prevail. To this end all the Saints should work together in the rich fraternity which can and will prevail among them when they keep faithfully the commandments. Great blessings are in store for the church if it will in faith and saintly devotion go forward in its tasks.

Doctrine and Covenants 138:3

What to bring:

- Scriptures
- Bedding for single or double beds
- Board Games
- Clothing for outdoor activities

Registration:

To help with room assignments and food preparation, please let Valle Smith know that you plan to attend.

Cost:

Costs are covered by the branch budget.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Friday, March 20

Gather at camp as soon as you can after 5:30 p.m. We will have snacks available. We will settle in and visit and play board games for the evening.

8:30 P.M. Campfire

10:30 P.M. Lights Out

Saturday, March 21

8:00 A.M. Breakfast

8:30 A.M. Morning Devotions

9:00 A.M. Break

9:15 A.M. Loving Each Other Class

10:15 A.M. Break

10:30 A.M. Let Your Light Shine Class

12 Noon - Lunch

1:00 P.M. Rest Period

2:00 P.M. Team Building Activities

5:30 P.M. Supper

6:30 P.M. Mixer Games

7:00 P.M. Movie Night

8:30 P.M. Campfire

10:30 P.M. Lights Out

Sunday, March 22

8:30 A.M. Breakfast for those who want it

9:00 A.M. Worship Service

11:00 A.M. Lunch

11:30 A.M. Clean Up and Break Camp

March 2015 Schedule

Date	Mar. 1	Mar. 8	Mar. 15	Mar. 22	Mar. 29
Speaking	Gordon Winkler	Steve Smith	Eldon Anderson	RETREAT	Music Service
Presiding	Sherman Phipps	Jim Barber	Rob Rolfe		Joel Loving
Pianist	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Cheryl Phipps		Pat Bolingbroke
Special Music	Steve Smith	Sue Beck	Michael Jordison		Bonnie Major
Family Devotions	Bob Rowland	Rob Rolfe	Gordon Winkler		Jim Barber
Greeters	Jim Major	Rodney Bastow	Sue Beck		Steve Smith
Custodians	Rob Rolfe	Michael Jordison	Alan Smith		Ron Smith
Sunday Evening	Steve Smith	Rob Rolfe	Bob Rowland		Steve Smith
Wed. Prayer Service	Mar. 4	Mar. 11	Mar. 18	Mar. 25	Apr. 1
Location	Steve Smith	Bob Rowland	Ron Smith	Alan Smith	Rob Rolfe
Presiding	Rob Rolfe	Ron Smith	George Knotts	Jim Major	Jim Barber
Special Events					
Mar. 1- Potluck following Communion					
Mar. 8- Community Sing at the Baptist Presbyterian Church in Mt. Ayr @ 5pm					
Mar. 22- Congregational Retreat					



Happy Birthday to Isabel Jordison (1), Kathy White (5), Barbara Houston (6), Tanner Rowland (11), Megan Clisby (12) and any others we missed.



Happy Anniversary to Steve and Elaina Smith (31) and any others we missed.

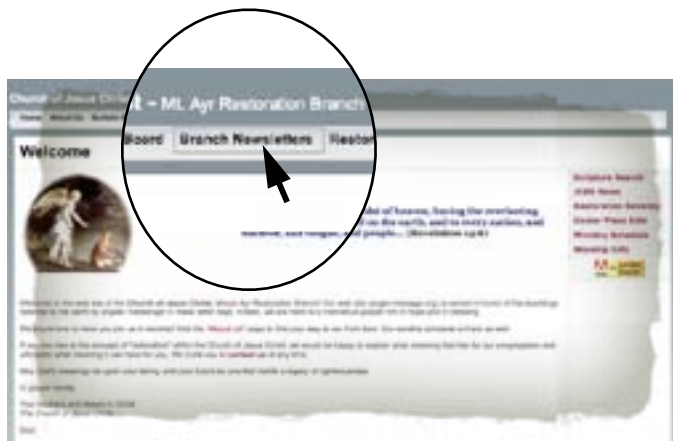
Camp Farwesta
6091 SW Hwy 36 • Stewartsville, MO 64490
Phone 816.588.3159



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

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

Have you misplaced your MARB Newsletter?
Want to read it online or search past issues?
Visit the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch website at:
www.gospelrestored.org



CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

during April for the branch.

Easter Sunday in April 5 and we will have the annual Easter breakfast to begin the morning of worship. The breakfast will begin at 9 a.m.

Signup for bringing things for the breakfast will be handled by Valle Smith.

We will have the regular morning schedule following that with Tony Crandell bringing the Easter message.

A baby shower for Mia Schoff will be held Sunday, April 19 for our evening gathering at the Rowland home.

Mia is the daughter of Brandi and Josh Schoff of Cameron and the granddaughter of Ed and Diane Anderson.

February activities

Two special activities were planned for the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch during the month of February.

On Sunday, Feb. 15, the branch had a Valentine's dinner at the home of Ron and Di Smith in Lamoni.

The youth of the branch prepared and served the meal and planned the program.

A good crowd attended the event.

A group from the branch planned to attend the Booth Brothers gospel trio concert Saturday, Feb. 28, at the Country Meadows Baptist Church in Independence, MO.

That events was postponed because

of the weather.

Winter cancellations

Several services were cancelled during January and February because of the weather. We used a sermon from the summer when we don't have newsletter to fill in for the first Sunday in February when we did not have services.