

Message

President Boyd K. Packer

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

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I am very grateful to be here with all of you today and look forward to speaking to you.

In a new mission presidents' seminar nearly 50 years ago, Donna and I had gathered up our nine children and went to be trained to preside over the New England Mission. We have had a repetition of that many times. During the years, we have visited many missions. We went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to preside over the New England Mission, which then consisted of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, including Newfoundland and the New England states.

We moved into a house sitting on one-sixteenth of an acre next to Hawthorne Boulevard, a busy street bordering Harvard University. We settled in with our nine children for three years of vacation. We had a marvelous time.

Some of our missionaries, those up at St. John's, Newfoundland, were almost as close to London as they were to mission headquarters. We had just over 200 missionaries.

When we were called on our mission there were 30-some missions in the Church. There were seven mission presidents that went out at that time. We had what was called a mission

presidents' seminar in the Relief Society Building. Most of the instruction centered on how to keep records. We went into a mission and into a world greatly different from what we have now.

There were in the General Authorities three members of the First Presidency, 12 members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, 12 Assistants to the Twelve (I was number 12 of that group), seven Presidents of the Seventy, and three members of the Presiding Bishopric.

As I have watched over the years from a fairly visible seat, the Quorums of the Seventy have grown from seven Presidents of the Seventy (who in that day were employed mostly to attend stake conferences) to 328 Seventies called and ordained and eight Quorums of Seventy, with Seventies now scattered across the world.

We are in 182 countries. We print the literature of the Church in 119 languages. It is breathtaking when you look back at what was, and then look at what it is now.

Each of you is "called of God, by prophecy," and then authorized "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances

thereof.”¹ We have followed very carefully the admonitions that are outlined in the revelations.

At the time we went on our mission, the Church was just reaching the two million mark. Now we are past the 15 million mark. But we are just beginning, just a little speck in the great concourses of humanity across the world.

There is one doctrinal point that I would like to press upon you today. It has to do with the Spirit. No matter how inadequate you may think you are (and we all feel that way at times), the Spirit is the great enabler in His work.

The question is often asked, and perhaps your missionaries will ask you this question: What is the difference between the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of the Holy Ghost?

These terms are used interchangeably, but there is a significant difference. The Spirit of Christ “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”² Every soul born into mortality has born within him or her the Spirit of Christ. That is important to know because it makes a difference in how your missionaries will do what they do when they are out teaching. The idea that they are taking out something to try to embed in those whom they teach is only half true. It is much easier if they understand that what they are going out to do is to fan a flame that is already lighted—the Light of Christ.

We are all children of God. Anyone who is a child of God has born within him or her the Spirit of Christ. There are ways to fan that and also ways to douse it if we are not careful. But

it cannot be expunged; it cannot be killed; it is always there. The Spirit of Christ is a Light.

As I have worked with people I have thought to be hopeless, I have had to discipline myself to say, “No, not hopeless, because somewhere inside that soul there is a spark of decency and righteousness that will respond to the gospel when it is presented.”

An important principle for the missionaries to teach and understand is repentance. The article of faith reads: “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; [and] second, Repentance.”³ Repentance is a glorifying doctrine. Repentance means you can get back to where you were before you made your mistakes.

One of the most difficult exercises in repentance is to forgive yourself. Repentance and forgiveness are teamed up. That is one of the things that the missionaries are to come to understand, and part of that is to forgive yourself.

To the question, “How often should I forgive?” the Lord said, “Until seventy times seven,”⁴ which means as many times as it is required. If our missionaries can teach that and carry it with them, then they will do as they are called to do.

You have the responsibility to see that the missionaries are cared for physically and spiritually. Everything else will follow. It is not easy! And yet you have the advantage of knowing that “it shall be given you in the very [minute] that portion that shall be meted unto every man.”⁵ You will know what you are to do with the missionaries.

One of the concerns we have now is that we almost seem to be in the pattern of

establishing the *Church* across the world as compared to establishing the *gospel*. Let me make a little differentiation.

I was in a stake several years ago where they had a large number of widows. It was in Germany after the war. I had not seen that many widows in a congregation before. I made the comment to the stake president about the great resource he had with all of these elderly sisters and elderly brethren.

To my surprise, the stake president said, “Yes, but they are not active in the Church.”

I said, “But are they active in the gospel?” That was a new thought to him.

Building the Church seems to center around buildings and budgets and programs and procedures, but somehow in the midst of it the gospel is struggling for breath. Get that fixed in your minds and in the minds of your young elders and sisters.

Remember teaching doctrine will improve behavior quicker and more permanently than teaching about behavior will improve behavior. Missionaries should know the doctrine, and you should understand it.

You know what the Spirit is and how it operates or you would not be here. You have had your career as a Church leader and have been brought to this point prepared. There is much more that will be demanded of you than there was demanded of us when we went into the mission field those 49 years ago.

On July 25, 1847, shortly after the pioneers arrived in the valley, Brigham Young, with members of the Twelve and some others, climbed up to Ensign Peak, which is a low

peak just north of Salt Lake City. Heber C. Kimball wore a yellow bandana. Brigham Young took it from him and tied it to the staff that Willard Richards carried, a walking stick, and he waved it aloft as an ensign to the nations. These pioneers still living in wagon boxes determined that “from this ensign to the nations will go forth the gospel.” Brigham Young named it Ensign Peak. Then they descended to their worn-out wagons, to the few things they had carried 2,000 miles, and to their travel-weary followers. It was not what they possessed that gave them strength but what they knew.⁶

Behold what the Lord hath brought to pass since that time and how much farther we still have to go.

Elder M. Russell Ballard came to me years ago and said, “You and I are going up to Ensign Peak.”

I said, “Should we go change our clothes?”

He said, “No, we’ll go just as we are.”

And we did. We went and climbed up to Ensign Peak to the location where Brother Brigham and Heber C. Kimball and the others had been so many years before and made that bold prophecy.

The gospel will go forth unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people quicker and easier if it goes forth with a quiet knowledge and the Spirit that we are called to carry. The same Spirit is supposed to do in our homes what we want to have established in the Church. The place to begin is in the home with the father and the mother and the children. Respect them for who they are and

what they have. You will be blessed, and they will be blessed, and the Church will grow.

An experience I had once was calling a father to come up to participate in his son's ordination to become an elder. It was in one of the little cities close by, and there was a large congregation.

The stake president said, "We have this young man who needs to be ordained an elder. Could we do that? He is going in the mission field tomorrow."

I said, "Oh, yes."

So he called him up, and the elder said, "I've asked Brother Somebody to ordain me."

I had seen over his shoulder an unmistakable carbon copy of that boy, a little more aged. Obviously, I knew it was his father, and I invited him to come up. I said, "Your father will ordain you."

The young man said, "But I've already . . ."

And I said, "Your father will ordain you, and you'll thank the Lord for what happens today."

His father came up, and thank goodness he was an elder. If he had not been, he would have been! There are ways to cure things like that. In the military they call them field promotions. That has been done in the Church more than once.

So this boy was ordained an elder by his father, and the order of authority, as we know it, testifies that he was as much an elder when that ordinance was performed as if the Lord Himself had stood there. When he stood up,

the father and son embraced. You could see that was perhaps the first time this father had embraced his teenage son. The boy was going away for two years, and they were both full of emotion.

If you can catch that and catch that part of who we are and what we do, then the Lord will be with you. His Spirit is going to be with you.

Now, I do not worry about you. I do not fear for your safety because you are under the guidance and the power of the Almighty. You cannot make a mistake of any consequence without being told about it beforehand by the Spirit. Surely you have had those impressions when you have thought, "Well, there is something I'm going to do," but when it came closer you were sure you did not want to do that.

I have known that when there is a problem, if there is nothing else to do but move, we start to move, and if we are heading in the wrong direction, we will hear about it from the Spirit. If you know that, you will not make any mistakes dealing with the members, with the Church, with the administration, with anything else, because you are ordained now to have that power with you.

So we will not worry about you. We will send you out there with impossible circumstances, sometimes dangerous, but the Lord will be with you, and you will be all right.

You may think that you are unqualified, that your qualifications are not enough. Just think of Wilford Woodruff, a teenager who was a priest called to go out on a mission alone.

I invoke a blessing upon you husbands and wives going now into the mission field, nervous and unsettled as you are. I bless you with peace and confidence. I bless your families, your home, your children that you are leaving, the mothers leaving their kitchens and the fathers leaving their workshops and their businesses. It will be all right.

I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon you and your children. I bless you that they will be taken care of, whatever the problems are. And should there be a wayward one among them, in due time, all of your family will stand in a circle beyond the veil, and not one will be missing. That is one of the things you are earning now through the service that you are called to do.

I bless you that you will have an understanding of the gospel and an understanding of the doctrine, and, incidentally, an understanding of the Church. Carry that spirit with you as you go into the mission field where you are ordained and set forth by those of us who hold the keys.

I bless you with safety and with wisdom and with inspiration, and bless you with power. There is great power in the priesthood. You brethren hold it; you sisters share in that. It is the consummate power on this earth. Use it well. The world will be blessed because you accepted this call.

I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is His Church. He presides over it. We know Him. He directs the work that we are doing. It will not fail. You will not fail. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Articles of Faith 1:5.

² John 1:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.

³ Articles of Faith 1:4.

⁴ See Matthew 18:21–22.

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 84:85.

⁶ See Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 26, 1847, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 3:270–71.