

## MATE SELECTION

*‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; . . . it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage.*

—President Spencer W. Kimball

### SELECTED TEACHINGS

#### *Importance of Choosing Wisely*

##### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

“Marriage is perhaps the most vital of all the decisions and has the most far-reaching effects, for it has to do not only with immediate happiness, but also with eternal joys. It affects not only the two people involved, but also their families and particularly their children and their children’s children down through the many generations” (“Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 3).

##### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

“This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry. . . .

“. . . Marry the right person in the right place at the right time” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2).

##### **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

“The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 118).

#### *Background Factors*

##### **President David O. McKay**

“In choosing a companion, it is necessary to study the disposition, the inheritance, and training of the one with whom you are contemplating making life’s journey” (*Gospel Ideals*, 459).

##### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

“The difficulties and hazards of marriage are greatly increased where backgrounds are different” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 302).

“I have warned the youth against the many hazards of interfaith marriage, and with all the power I possessed, I warned young people to avoid the sorrows and disillusionments which come from marrying out of the Church and the unhappy situations which almost invariably result when a believer marries an unbelieving spouse. I pointed out the demands of the Church upon its members in time, energy, and funds; the deepness of the spiritual ties which tighten after marriage and as the family comes; the antagonisms which naturally follow such mismating; the fact that these and many other reasons argue eloquently for marriage within the Church, where husband and wife have common backgrounds, common ideals and standards, common beliefs, hopes, and objectives, and, above all, where marriage may be eternalized through righteous entry into the holy temple. . . .

“. . . We recommend that people marry those who are of . . . somewhat the same economic and social and educational background (some of those are not an absolute necessity, but preferred), and above all, the same religious background, without question” (“Marriage and Divorce,” 142–44).

#### *The Right Person*

##### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

“Be worthy of the mate you choose. Respect him or her. Give encouragement to him or her. Love your companion with all your heart. This will be the most important decision of your life, the individual whom you marry.

“There is no substitute for marrying in the temple. It is the only place under the heavens where marriage can be solemnized for eternity. Don’t cheat yourself. Don’t cheat your companion. Don’t shortchange your lives. Marry the right person in the right place at the right time.

“Choose a companion of your own faith. You are much more likely to be happy. Choose a companion you can always honor, you can always respect, one who will complement you in your own life, one to whom you can give your entire heart, your entire love, your entire allegiance, your entire loyalty. . . .

“. . . I could not wish for any of you more than I have had in my companionship with my beautiful wife.

“A good marriage requires time. It requires effort. You have to work at it. You have to cultivate it. You have to forgive and forget. You have to be absolutely loyal one to another. Most of you will marry and have children. They will become the source of your greatest pride and happiness. . . .

“All of this can come to pass if you make this most important decision, one guided by prayer as well as instinct, of choosing a dear companion who will be yours through thick and thin forever, throughout all eternity” (“Life’s Obligations,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1999, 2, 4).

#### **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

“The right person is someone for whom the natural and wholesome and normal affection that should exist does exist. It is the person who is living so that he or she can go to the temple of God and make the covenants that we there make” (in Conference Report, Sept.–Oct. 1955, 13).

#### **Elder Richard G. Scott**

“There is more to a foundation of eternal marriage than a pretty face or an attractive figure.

There is more to consider than popularity or charisma. As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness: a deep love of the Lord and of His commandments, a determination to live them, one that is kindly understanding, forgiving of others, and willing to give of self, with the desire to have a family crowned with beautiful children and a commitment to teach them the principles of truth in the home.

“An essential priority of a prospective wife is the desire to be a wife and mother. She should be developing the sacred qualities that God has given His daughters to excel as a wife and mother: patience, kindness, a love of children, and a desire to care for them rather than seeking professional pursuits. She should be acquiring a good education to prepare for the demands of motherhood.

“A prospective husband should also honor his priesthood and use it in service to others. Seek a man who accepts his role as provider of the necessities of

life, has the capacity to do it, and is making concerted efforts to prepare himself to fulfill those responsibilities.

“I suggest that you not ignore many possible candidates who are still developing these attributes, seeking the one who is perfected in them. You will likely not find that perfect person, and if you did, there would certainly be no interest in you. These attributes are best polished together as husband and wife” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 31; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 26).

### ***Outer Appearance and Inner Beauty***

#### **President David O. McKay**

“Yes, men are attracted by beauty, and thousands are ensnared by it. There are thousands of men who look for nothing else and who desire nothing else but to have their senses pleased or their passions gratified. These outward adornments will satisfy and only outward adornment will retain. When beauty fades, the passion seeks for gratification elsewhere. ‘Beauty is only skin-deep,’ and when outward adornment is all a girl possesses, the admiration she calls forth is even more shallow than her beauty. . . .

“But there is a beauty every girl has—a gift from God, as pure as the sunlight, and as sacred as life. It is a beauty that all men love, a virtue that wins all men’s souls. That beauty is *chastity*. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul; skin beauty without chastity can kindle only the eye. Chastity enshrined in the mold of true womanhood will hold true love eternally” (*Gospel Ideals*, 450).

***As you seek an eternal companion, look for someone who is developing the essential attributes that bring happiness.***

### ***Counsel for Single Sisters***

#### **President Wilford Woodruff**

“When the daughters of Zion are asked by the young men to join with them in marriage, instead of asking—‘Has this man a fine brick house, a span of fine horses and a fine carriage?’ they should ask—‘Is he a man of God? Has he the Spirit of God with him? Is he a Latter-day Saint? Does he pray? Has he got the Spirit upon him to qualify him to build up the kingdom?’ If he has that, never mind the carriage and brick house, take hold and unite

yourselves together according to the law of God” (in *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 271).

### President Ezra Taft Benson

“Dear sisters, never lose sight of this sacred goal [of a temple marriage]. Prayerfully prepare for it and live for it. Be married the Lord’s way. Temple marriage is a gospel ordinance of exaltation. Our Father in Heaven wants each of His daughters to have this eternal blessing.

“Therefore, don’t trifle away your happiness by involvement with someone who cannot take you worthily to the temple. Make a decision now that this is the place where you will marry. To leave that decision until a romantic involvement develops is to take a risk the importance of which you cannot now fully calculate.

“And remember, you are not required to lower your standards in order to get a mate. Keep yourselves attractive, maintain high standards, maintain your self-respect. Do not engage in intimacies that bring heartache and sorrow. Place yourselves in a position to meet worthy men and be engaged in constructive activities.

“But also, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so concerned about his physical appearance and his bank account that you overlook his more important qualities. Of course, he should be attractive to you, and he should be able to financially provide for you. But, does he have a strong testimony? Does he live the principles of the gospel and magnify his priesthood? Is he active in his ward and stake? Does he love home and family, and will he be a faithful husband and a good father? *These* are qualities that really matter.

“And I would also caution you single sisters not to become so independent and self-reliant that you decide marriage isn’t worth it and you can do just as well on your own. Some of our sisters indicate that they do not want to consider marriage until *after* they have completed their degrees or pursued a career. This is not right. Certainly we want our single sisters to maximize their individual potential, to be well educated, and to do well at their present employment. You have much to contribute to society, to your community, and to your neighborhood. But we earnestly pray that our single sisters will desire honorable marriage in the temple to a worthy man and rear a righteous family, even though this may mean the sacrificing of degrees and careers. Our

priorities are right when we realize there is no higher calling than to be an honorable wife and mother” (“To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96–97).

### Counsel for Single Brethren

#### President Ezra Taft Benson

“Work hard educationally and in your vocation. Put your trust in the Lord, have faith, and it will work out. The Lord never gives a commandment without providing the means to accomplish it (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

“Also, do not be caught up in materialism, one of the real plagues of our generation—that is, acquiring things, fast-paced living, and securing career success in the single state.

“Honorable marriage is more important than wealth, position, and status. As husband and wife, you can achieve your life’s goals together. As you sacrifice for each other and your children, the Lord will bless you, and your commitment to the Lord and your service in His kingdom will be enhanced” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

“Now, brethren, do not expect perfection in your choice of a mate. Do not be so particular that you overlook her most important qualities of having a strong testimony, living the principles of the gospel, loving home, wanting to be a mother in Zion, and supporting you in your priesthood responsibilities.

“Of course, she should be attractive to you, but do not just date one girl after another for the sole pleasure of dating without seeking the Lord’s confirmation in your choice of your eternal companion.

“And one good yardstick as to whether a person might be the right one for you is this: in her presence, do you think your noblest thoughts, do you aspire to your finest deeds, do you wish you were better than you are?

“God bless you single adult brethren of the Church. May your priorities be right. I have suggested some very important priorities this evening. May you seriously consider and ponder them” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 59; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 53).

#### President Gordon B. Hinckley

“I hope you will not put off marriage too long. I do not speak as much to the young women as to the young men whose prerogative and responsibility it is to take the lead in this matter. Don’t go on

endlessly in a frivolous dating game. Look for a choice companion, one you can love, honor, and respect, and make a decision" ("Thou Shalt Not Covet," *Ensign*, Mar. 1990, 6).

### ***The Role of Prayer and Personal Revelation***

#### **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

"Use both agency and prayer. It is not, never has been, and never will be the design and purpose of the Lord—however much we seek him in prayer—to answer all our problems and concerns without struggle and effort on our part. This mortality is a probationary estate. In it we have our agency. We are being tested to see how we will respond in various situations; how we will decide issues; what course we will pursue while we are here walking, not by sight, but by faith. Hence, we are to solve our own problems and then to counsel with the Lord in prayer and receive a spiritual confirmation that our decisions are correct" ("Why the Lord Ordained Prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11).

#### **Elder Dallin H. Oaks**

"If a revelation is outside the limits of stewardship, you know it is not from the Lord, and you are not bound by it. I have heard of cases where a young man told a young woman she should marry him because he had received a revelation that she was to be his eternal companion. If this is a true revelation, it will be confirmed directly to the woman if she seeks to know. In the meantime, she is under no obligation to heed it. She should seek her own guidance and make up her own mind. The man can receive revelation to guide his own actions, but he cannot properly receive revelation to direct hers. She is outside his stewardship. . . .

". . . When a choice will make a real difference in our lives—obvious or not—and when we are living in tune with the Spirit and seeking his guidance, we can be sure we will receive the guidance we need to attain our goal" ("Revelation," 25–26).

"A desire to be led by the Lord is a strength, but it needs to be accompanied by an understanding that our Heavenly Father leaves many decisions for our personal choices. Personal decision making is one of the sources of the growth we are meant to experience in mortality. Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they

pray for guidance and don't receive it. For example, this is likely to occur in those numerous circumstances in which the choices are trivial or either choice is acceptable.

"We should study things out in our minds, using the reasoning powers our Creator has placed within us. Then we should pray for guidance and act upon it if we receive it. If we do not receive guidance, we should act upon our best judgment. Persons who persist in seeking revelatory guidance on subjects on which the Lord has not chosen to direct us may concoct an answer out of their own fantasy or bias, or they may even receive an answer through the medium of false revelation. Revelation from God is a sacred reality, but like other sacred things, it must be cherished and used properly so that a great strength does not become a disabling weakness" ("Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall," *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13–14).

### ***Finding the Right One***

#### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

"While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. 'Soul mates' are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price" ("Oneness in Marriage," *Ensign*, Mar. 1977, 4).

#### **Elder Joseph Fielding Smith**

"We have no scriptural justification, however, for the belief that we had the privilege of choosing our parents and our life companions in the spirit world. This belief has been advocated by some, and it is possible that in some instances it is true, but it would require too great a stretch of the imagination to believe it to be so in all, or even in the majority of cases. Most likely we came where those in authority decided to send us. Our agency may not have been exercised to the extent of making choice of parents and posterity" (*Way to Perfection*, 44).

## ***Mission or Marriage?***

### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

“There is increasing evidence that some young women are being strongly encouraged to serve full-time missions. Though capable and effective, young women do not have the same responsibility to serve full-time missions as do young men who hold the priesthood. We are grateful that some desire to serve as full-time missionaries, but they should not be made to feel obligated to do so. A young woman should not be recommended for a mission if it would interfere with a specific marriage proposal” (in *Bulletin*, 1993, no. 2, p. 2).

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

“Now I wish to say something to bishops and stake presidents concerning missionary service. It is a sensitive matter. There seems to be growing in the Church an idea that all young women as well as all young men should go on missions. We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work. They can get in homes where the elders cannot.

“I confess that I have two granddaughters on missions. They are bright and beautiful young women. They are working hard and accomplishing much good. Speaking with their bishops and their parents, they made their own decisions to go. They did not tell me until they turned in their papers. I had nothing to do with their decision to go.

“Now, having made that confession, I wish to say that the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in saying to our young sisters that they are not under obligation to go on missions. I hope I can say what I have to say in a way that will not be offensive to anyone. Young women should not feel that they have a duty comparable to that of young men. Some of them will very much wish to go. If so, they should counsel with their bishop as well as their parents. If the idea persists, the bishop will know what to do.

“I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation.

“We do not ask the young women to consider a mission as an essential part of their life’s program. Over a period of many years, we have held the age level higher for them in an effort to keep the number going

relatively small. Again to the sisters I say that you will be as highly respected, you will be considered as being as much in the line of duty, your efforts will be as acceptable to the Lord and to the Church whether you go on a mission or do not go on a mission.

“We constantly receive letters from young women asking why the age for sister missionaries is not the same as it is for elders. We simply give them the reasons. We know that they are disappointed. We know that many have set their hearts on missions. We know that many of them wish this experience before they marry and go forward with their adult lives. I certainly do not wish to say or imply that their services are not wanted. I simply say that a mission is not necessary as a part of their lives.

“Now, that may appear to be something of a strange thing to say in priesthood meeting. I say it here because I do not know where else to say it. The bishops and stake presidents of the Church have now heard it. And they must be the ones who make the judgment in this matter.

“That is enough on that subject” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

### **Elder Boyd K. Packer**

“It does not matter if it interrupts your schooling or delays your career or your marriage—or basketball. Unless you have a serious health problem, every Latter-day Saint young man should answer the call to serve a mission” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 61; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 42).

## ***Making the Decision at the Appropriate Time***

### **President Harold B. Lee**

“I am not trying to urge you younger men to marry too early. I think therein is one of the hazards of today’s living. We don’t want a young man to think of marriage until he is able to take care of a family, to have an institution of his own, to be independent. He must make sure that he has found the girl of his choice, they have gone together long enough that they know each other, and that they know each other’s faults and they still love each other. I have said to the mission presidents (some of whom have been reported to us as saying to missionaries, ‘Now, if you are not married in six months, you are a failure as a missionary’), ‘Don’t you ever say that to one of your missionaries. Maybe in six months they

will not have found a wife; and if they take you seriously, they may rush into a marriage that will be wrong for them.'

"Please don't misunderstand what we are saying; but, brethren, think more seriously about the obligations of marriage for those who bear the holy priesthood at a time when marriage should be the expectation of every man who understands the responsibility; for remember, brethren, that only those who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage in the temple for time and eternity, only those will have the exaltation in the celestial kingdom. That is what the Lord tells us" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 120; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 100).

**First Presidency—Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson**

"When full-time missionaries return home, they should be counseled concerning such matters as continuing their education or employment, strengthening family relationships, participating actively in the Church, paying tithes and offerings, and preparing for temple marriage. It is unwise, however, to 'recommend that missionaries be married within a specific time. The decision to marry is so important that it should be made only after the most prayerful and careful consideration by the individual.' [*Mission President's Handbook* (31153), 1990, 23]" (in *Bulletin*, 1993, no. 2, 2).

## AGENCY OR INSPIRATION?



*Elder Bruce R. McConkie*  
*Of the Quorum*  
*of the Twelve Apostles*  
*New Era, Jan. 1975,*  
*38–43*

My wife and I were having a serious discussion recently in which we were counting our many blessings. We named a host of things that have come to us, because of the Church, because of our family, because of the glorious restoration of eternal truth that has taken place in this day; and then she

climaxed the discussion by asking this question: "What's the greatest blessing that has ever come into your life?"

***The most important single thing that any Latter-day Saint ever does in this world is to marry the right person, in the right place.***

Without a moment's hesitation I said, "The greatest blessing that has ever come to me was on the thirteenth day of October in 1937 at 11:20 A.M. when I was privileged to kneel in the Salt Lake Temple at the Lord's altar and receive you as an eternal companion."

She said, "Well, you passed that test."

I believe that the most important single thing that any Latter-day Saint ever does in this world is to marry the

right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and that then—when they have been so sealed by the power and authority that Elijah the prophet restored—the most important remaining thing that any Latter-day Saint can ever do is so to live that the terms and conditions of the covenant thus made will be binding and efficacious now and forever. And so I'd like, if properly guided, to make some suggestions that apply in all fields of choice—in all fields, at least all major fields of activity—but that apply particularly to the matter of eternal marriage, singling that out as the one thing paramount above all others.

When we dwelt in the presence of God our Heavenly Father, we were endowed with agency. This gave us the opportunity, the privilege, to choose what we would do—to make a free, untrammelled choice. When father Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden he was given this same power, and we now possess it. We're expected to use the gifts and talents and abilities, the sense and judgment and agency with which we are endowed.

But on the other hand we're commanded to seek the Lord, to desire his Spirit, to get the spirit of revelation and inspiration in our lives. We come into the Church and a legal administrator places his hands upon our head and says, "Receive the Holy Ghost." This gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead, based on faithfulness.

And so we're faced with two propositions. One is that we ought to be guided by the spirit of inspiration, the spirit of revelation. The other is that we're here under a direction to use our agency, to determine what we ought to do on our own; and we need to

strike a fine balance between these two, if we're going to pursue a course that will give us joy, satisfaction, and peace in this life and lead to eternal reward in our Father's kingdom.

When we were with our Father in the preexistent sphere, he observed and studied us and he knew how we would respond to his laws when we were in his presence, when we had the knowledge that he was our Father and that the teachings presented to us came from him. We walked by sight. Now he's finding out how we'll respond when we walk by faith, when we're outside his presence and we have to rely on things other than the personal counsel that we once received from him.

I'd like to present three case studies, out of which, perhaps, we can draw some very realistic and sound conclusions as to what ought to be in our lives. I'll take these illustrations out of the revelations that the Lord has given us.

### ***"You Have Not Understood"***

Case study number one: There was a man named Oliver Cowdery. In the early days he operated as an amanuensis to the Prophet. He was the scribe. He wrote down the words that the Prophet dictated while the Spirit rested upon him in the translation processes (the Book of Mormon was then being translated). Brother Cowdery was relatively spiritually immature at that time, and he sought and desired to do something beyond his then present spiritual capacity. He wanted to translate. And so he importuned the Prophet, the Prophet took the matter up with the Lord, and they got a revelation. The Lord said, "Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive. . . ." And then one thing he might receive is defined as, "a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records, which are ancient, which contain those parts of my scripture of which has been spoken by the manifestation of my Spirit."

Having thus dealt with the specific problem, then the Lord revealed a principle that applies to it and all other like situations: "Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation." (D&C 8:1-3.)

Oliver did what a good many of us would have done. He had the instructions I have read, and he assumed that they meant what they seemed on the surface to say, which was that if in faith he asked God, he'd have power to translate. But in his condition of relative spiritual immaturity, he hadn't yet learned what was involved in asking of God, or how to generate the kind of faith or do the specific thing that has to be done in order to get an answer to a prayer. And so he asked. And as you know, he failed; he was totally unable to translate. This caused some concern, I suppose, to him and the Prophet. The matter was referred back to the Lord, whose promise they had been attempting to conform to; and the answer came, the reason came, why he couldn't translate: "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me." (D&C 9:7.)

Now, seemingly, that's all he'd been instructed to do, to ask in faith; but implicit in asking in faith is the precedent requirement that we do everything in our power to accomplish the goal that we seek. We use the agency with which we have been endowed. We use every faculty and capacity and ability that we possess to bring about the eventuality that may be involved. This is translating the Book of Mormon, it's choosing a wife, it's choosing employment, it's doing any one of ten thousand important things that arise in our lives.

The Lord continued:

". . . I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

"But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me." (D&C 9:8-9.)

How do you choose a wife? I've heard a lot of young people from Brigham Young University and elsewhere say, "I've got to get a feeling of inspiration. I've got to get some revelation. I've got to fast and pray and get the Lord to manifest to me whom I should marry." Well, maybe it will be a little shock to you, but never in my life did I ever ask the Lord whom I ought to marry. It never occurred to me to ask him. I went out and found the girl I wanted; she suited me; I evaluated and weighed the proposition, and it

just seemed a hundred percent to me as though this ought to be. Now, if I'd done things perfectly, I'd have done some counseling with the Lord, which I didn't do; but all I did was pray to the Lord and ask for some guidance and direction in connection with the decision that I'd reached. A more perfect thing to have done would have been to counsel with him relative to the decision and get a spiritual confirmation that the conclusion, which I by my agency and faculties had arrived at, was the right one.

### ***“Why Are You Asking Me?”***

Now, case study number two: There was a man whose name is not preserved to us in the ancient record. He's known as the brother of Jared. From other sources we know his name was Moriancumer. He was the spiritual leader, initially, of the Jaredite people. As they started their progress from the tower of Babel to their American promised land, he was the one who communed with the Lord to get the direction, the spiritual guidance that they as a people needed.

And some very interesting things occurred. They got to the waters that they were going to cross, and the Lord said to him, “Build some barges.” But interestingly, the Lord didn't tell him how to build the barges. The brother of Jared had done it on a previous occasion; he didn't need instruction; he didn't need revelation to guide him. So he built the barges.

But this time they were going to be used under some peculiar and difficult circumstances, and he needed something more than was now present in them: he needed some air. And this was a problem that was beyond him. So he took that matter up with the Lord, and because it was totally beyond his capacity to solve, the Lord solved it for him and said, “Do thus and so and you'll have air.”

But then the brother of Jared—having confidence because he was talking to the Lord, because he was communing and getting answers—asked another question: he asked for a solution to a problem that he should have figured out by himself and not taken up with the Lord. He said, “What will we do for light in the vessels?”

And the Lord talked to him about it a little and then he said this: “What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?” (Eth. 2:23.) In effect, “What are you asking me for? This is something you should have solved.” And he talked a little more, and he repeated in essence the question:

“What will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?” (Eth. 2:25.) In other words, “Moriancumer, this is your problem. Why are you troubling me? I've given you your agency; you are endowed with capacity and ability. Get out and solve the problem.”

Well, the brother of Jared got the message. He went up into a mount called Shelem, and the record says he “did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass.” (Eth. 3:1.)

Well, the brother of Jared took sixteen little crystals of some sort (he could hold all of them in his hands) up on the mount. The record says, “He did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount” (Eth. 3:1), and then he said in effect to the Lord, “Now this is what I hope you will do.” You really don't tell the Lord what to do, but you get some inspiration, and you use your judgment, and then you talk the matter over with him. And so Moriancumer said to the Lord: “Touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.” (Eth. 3:4.)

And the Lord did what the brother of Jared asked, and this is the occasion when he then saw the finger of the Lord; and, while he was in tune, he received revelation that exceeded anything that any prophet had ever gained up to that moment. The Lord revealed more to him about his nature and personality than ever theretofore had come forth, and it all came about because he'd done everything that he could do and because he counseled with the Lord.

There's a fine balance between agency and inspiration. We're expected to do everything in our power and then to seek an answer from the Lord, a confirming seal that we've reached the right conclusion; and sometimes, happily, in addition, we get added truths and knowledge that we hadn't even supposed.

### ***“They Shall Counsel between Themselves and Me”***

Now, case study number three: In the early history of the Church, the Lord commanded the Saints to assemble in a certain place in Missouri. The decree went forth: “Assemble.” Specifically, the decree went forth, “Let the Presiding Bishop come here and do

such and such." Now notice what happened. The Lord is talking:

". . . as I spake concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence, and those whom he has appointed for his counselors; and also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse;

"Wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, [and here's the point] as they shall counsel between themselves and me." (D&C 58:24–25.)

You see, the Lord said "assemble" to Zion. The details and the arrangements, however, the *how* and the *when* and the *circumstances*, are to be determined by the agency of those who are called to assemble, but they are to counsel with the Lord. Now, when you counsel with the Lord, you talk something over. I bring my children in and we counsel on a problem. I don't tell them what ought to be; I say, "What do you think? What's your evaluation? What do you want to do in this situation? What's the best thing to do?" And they tell me what they think, and if I happen to have any wisdom or judgment on the matter, I express my views. The Lord has all wisdom, all knowledge, and all power; he knows how to govern and control and direct us in a perfect manner. He lets us determine what we should do, but he expects us to counsel with him.

Now, after the Lord had said this to the Presiding Bishopric of the Church, he gave the principle that governed in that situation, and it governs in all situations. And this is one of our glorious revealed truths. He said:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

"But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned." (D&C 58:26–29.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith was asked, "How do you govern so great and diverse a people as the Latter-day Saints?"

He replied, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves."

Now, that's the order of heaven. That's how the Almighty operates. That's how the Church is supposed to operate. We're supposed to learn correct principles and then govern ourselves. We make our own choices, and then we present the matter to the Lord and get his approving, ratifying seal.

### ***"Counsel with the Lord in All Thy Doings"***

Those are the three case studies; let us come to the revealed conclusion. There was a man named Alma, a mighty and a great prophet. He had a son named Helaman, who was a holy and righteous man, following the pattern that his father had set. And to Helaman, Alma said this: "O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God. Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support." (Al. 37:35–36.) Do you think that if you're counseled to pray to the Lord for support, both temporal and spiritual, that that's all you have to do? The Lord's prayer says, "Give us this day our daily bread." Do you go out and sit down in the desert or on the mountain and pray with all the fervor you can possess, "Give us this day our daily bread," or do you go out and plant crops and raise herds and do everything that you can in your situation to accomplish the end result?

Continuing: "Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever." (Al. 37:36.) Now note: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good." (Al. 37:37.)

What was Oliver Cowdery's problem? "You took no thought save it was to ask . . . you must study it out in your mind." (D&C 9:7–8.)

Well, do you want a wife? Do you want anything that's right and proper? You go to work, and you use the agency and power and ability that God has given you. You use every faculty, you get all the judgment that you can centered on the problem, you make up your own mind, and then, to be sure that you don't err, you counsel with the Lord. You talk it over. You say, "This is what I think; what do you think?" And if you get the calm, sweet surety that comes only from the Holy Spirit, you know you've reached the right conclusion; but if there's anxiety and uncertainty in your heart, then you'd

better start over, because the Lord's hand is not in it, and you're not getting the ratifying seal that, as a member of the Church who has the gift of the Holy Ghost, you are entitled to receive.

“. . . yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep, and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”

(Al. 37:37.) If you learn how to use the agency that God has given you, and if you try to make your own decisions, and if you reach conclusions that are sound and right, and if you counsel with the Lord and get his ratifying seal of approval upon the conclusions you've reached, then you've received revelation, for one thing; and for another thing, you're going to have the great reward of eternal life and be lifted up at the last day. We're not all equal by any means; some have one talent and capacity and some another. But if we use the talents we have, somehow we'll come out all right.

One Monday when we were celebrating Washington's birthday, I was down at my mother's sawing a log in the backyard. She came out to give me some direction and see how I was doing it, and she wasn't very pleased. She thought I ought to do it differently. She went back into the house and in a few minutes my younger brother arrived. She said to him, "I think you'd better go out in the backyard and give Bruce some help and see that he does this thing right." And then she said to him, "Bruce isn't very bright." Well, so I'm not. So I start where I am, and I go forward from there. I start using such talent as I have, and I begin to apply the principles of eternal truth to my life. I consult and counsel with the Lord in the process, and no matter where I am, the gospel takes me forward and onward and upward, and blessings flow to me that will ennoble and sanctify and improve me in this life and eventually give me glory and honor and dignity in the life to come.

### ***We Have the Spirit of Revelation***

I think we've said enough; the principles are before us. Let me just do one thing more. Let me do, in effect, what my friend Alma would do. After he'd preached a sermon, he said, "And this is not all. Do

***If you get the calm, sweet surety that comes only from the Holy Spirit, you know you've reached the right conclusion.***

ye not suppose that I know of these things myself?" (Al. 5:45.) That is he'd given them the case studies, he'd quoted the revelations, he'd told them what was involved, and then he bore personal testimony. This is what we ought to do in the Church. We ought to learn how to teach by the power of the Spirit, so that when we get through talking about the gospel

subjects we'll know whether what we've said is right, and we'll be in a position to bear testimony, not alone of the truth and the divinity of the work, but also that the doctrine we proclaim and the everlasting truths we expound are right, that they are the mind and voice and will of the Lord. The glorious, wondrous thing about this work and about these doctrines is that they are true. There isn't anything in this world, no truth that we can conceive of, to compare with the truth that the work we're engaged in is true, that the Lord's hand is here. It's a literal fact that we have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. We have the spirit of revelation, the spirit of testimony, the spirit of prophecy. These things must be, or we're not in the Church and kingdom of God; we're not the Lord's people.

The fact is that we do have them; revelation works. Don't shy away from getting revelation. Joseph Smith said, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149.) We're entitled to the spirit of revelation, but what I'm attempting to teach is that there's a how and a procedure, and there are conditions precedent. It is our obligation to go to work on our problems and then counsel with the Lord and get the ratifying seal of the Holy Spirit on the conclusions that we've reached; and that ratifying seal is the spirit of revelation.

God grant us wisdom in these things. God grant us the courage and the ability to stand on our own feet and use our agency and the abilities and capacities we possess; then let's be sufficiently humble and amenable to the Spirit to bow our will to his will, to get his ratifying, confirming seal of approval, to get in our lives in that way the spirit of revelation. And if we so do, there's no question about the result; it's peace in this life; it's glory and honor and dignity in the life to come.