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General Conference— No Ordinary Blessing

A fine member of the Church was talking with a neighbor who was not of our faith. When the topic of discussion turned to general conference, the neighbor asked, “You say you have prophets and apostles? And twice a year in a worldwide conference they reveal the word of God?”

“Absolutely,” the member replied with confidence.

The neighbor thought about that for a moment. He seemed genuinely interested and then asked, “What did they say in the last general conference?”

At this point the good member of the Church went from feeling excited about sharing the gospel to feeling embarrassed. Try as he might, he couldn’t think of the details of a single talk.

His friend found this troubling and said, “You mean to tell me that God speaks to man in our day and you can’t remember what He said?”

The brother felt humbled by this exchange. He vowed that he would do better to remember the words spoken by the Lord’s servants in general conference.

We all know how hard it is to remember every message of general conference, and I’m confident that we need not be embarrassed if we don’t remember everything. Nevertheless, there are messages in each general conference given as a gift and a blessing from heaven

specifically for our personal life situations.

In preparation for general conference, let me suggest three basic concepts that may help us to better receive, remember, and apply the words spoken by the Lord’s servants.

1. Members of the Church are entitled to personal revelation as they listen to and study the inspired words spoken at general conference.

As you prepare for general conference, I invite you to ponder questions you need to have answered. For example, you might yearn for direction and guidance by the Lord regarding challenges you are facing.

Answers to your specific prayers may come directly from a particular talk or from a specific phrase. At other times answers may come in a seemingly unrelated word, phrase, or song. A heart filled with gratitude for the blessings of life and an earnest desire to hear and follow the words of counsel will prepare the way for personal revelation.

2. Don’t discount a message merely because it sounds familiar.

Prophets have always taught by repetition; it is a law of learning. You will hear repetition in themes and

doctrines in general conference. Let me reassure you: this is not due to a lack of creativity or imagination. We continue to hear messages on similar issues because the Lord is teaching and impressing upon our minds and hearts certain foundational principles of great eternal importance that must be understood and acted upon before we can move on to other things. A wise builder first lays the foundation before erecting the walls and the roof.

3. The words spoken at general conference should be a compass that points the way for us during the coming months.

If we listen to and follow the promptings of the Spirit, they will serve as a Liahona, guiding us through the unknown, challenging valleys and mountains that are ahead (see 1 Nephi 16).

Since the world began, God has raised up prophets who speak the will of heaven to the people of their times. It is our responsibility to listen and then apply the messages the Lord provides for us.

Our merciful and loving Heavenly Father has not forsaken and will not forsake His children. Today, as well as in times past, He has appointed apostles and prophets. He continues to reveal His word to them.

What a marvelous privilege it is to hear God's messages for each of us during general conference! Let us prepare well for this great blessing of divine guidance delivered by His chosen servants.

For this is no ordinary blessing.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

- Read the article together. Encourage the family to identify things to listen for during general conference.
- To help young children apply the counsel given by President Uchtdorf, show them a General Authority chart (found in the conference issue of the *Liahona*). Let them know that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be speaking in general conference. Encourage children to listen to conference and draw a picture to help them remember what they learned. Parents can visit conferencegames.lds.org for more conference activities for children.

YOUTH

Good, Better, Best

By Mary-Celeste Lewis

In his October 2007 general conference talk, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles talked about activities that are “good, better, and best.” When he got to the part about “the overscheduling of children,” I squirmed guiltily in my seat.

I knew I was doing too much. I was in school plays, taking challenging classes in school, and was involved in several other activities. I hadn't been attending Young Women activities faithfully, and my Sundays were filled with the stress of trying to complete last-minute homework. Practicing music and editing the school newspaper had lost their element of fun and had become work.

Elder Oaks's talk made me take a good look at my schedule. My activities were good, but there were too many of them. I had to choose the best ones. As I tried to decide which activities to forsake, I realized that the gospel of Jesus Christ was the best priority anyone can have. I put prayer and scripture study at the top of my list, and since then, my life has run more smoothly.

Elder Oaks taught me that when we do what the Lord wants us to do *first*, everything else will fall neatly into place. If I study my scriptures before I play games or even before I do my homework, everything important will get done. When I base my life around the Lord, instead of adding Him in as an afterthought, my life has an added measure of peace and success.

Now I'm very careful to listen to the counsel given at general conference!

CHILDREN

I Can Find Answers through General Conference

President Uchtdorf teaches that if you think of some questions before general conference, the Lord can speak to you through His prophets and apostles during conference.

1. As a family or class, discuss what you need to learn, either individually or together. (For example: How

do I strengthen my testimony? How should I deal with a problem at school?) On a piece of paper or in your journal, write down your questions.

2. In the weeks leading up to conference, you could think and pray about these questions.
3. Listen carefully during conference (it may help to take notes). Then write how the Lord—through Church leaders—answered your questions.
4. On another piece of paper, you could draw a picture of yourself doing what you learned.



Faith • Family • Relief

Strengthening Families by Increasing Spirituality

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president, said: “There has grown in me an overwhelming testimony of the value of daughters of God. . . . I have felt that there has never been a greater need for increased faith and personal righteousness. There has never been a greater need for strong families and homes.”

Sisters can help create strong homes and families as they act on personal revelation. “The ability to qualify for, receive, and act on personal revelation is the single most important skill that can be acquired in this life,” Sister Beck continued. “Qualifying for the Lord’s Spirit begins with a desire for that Spirit and implies a certain degree of worthiness. Keeping the commandments, repenting, and renewing covenants made at baptism lead to the blessing of always having the Lord’s Spirit with us. Making and keeping temple covenants also adds spiritual strength and power to a woman’s life. Many answers to difficult questions are found by reading the scriptures because the scriptures are an aid to revelation. . . . Daily prayer is essential to having the Lord’s Spirit with us.”¹

We also strengthen our family members spiritually as we help them understand Heavenly Father’s

eternal plan. “What can we do to better prepare our children spiritually for their eternal roles?” asked Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Perhaps the most inclusive answer is: Teach them how to live the principles of the gospel.” This teaching comes through daily prayer, scripture study, and family mealtimes as well as weekly family home evening and Church attendance. Elder Ballard explains: “We prepare each day, right now, for eternal life. If we are not preparing for eternal life, we are preparing for something less, perhaps something far less.”²

From the Scriptures

Proverbs 22:6; 1 John 3:22; Doctrine and Covenants 11:13–14; 19:38; 68:25

From Our History

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the sisters in an April 1842 Relief Society meeting that they had a solemn obligation to seek their own salvation. He said, “After [my] instruction, you will be responsible for your own sins; it is a desirable honor that you should so walk before our heavenly Father as to save yourselves; we are all responsible to God for the manner we improve the light and wisdom given by our Lord

to enable us to save ourselves.”³ He taught them to be righteous individuals, to become a holy people, and to prepare for temple ordinances and covenants.

NOTES

1. Julie B. Beck, “And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit,” *Liahona*, May 2010, 10, 11.
2. M. Russell Ballard, “Spiritual Development,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 65, 66.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 355.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help my sisters increase in spiritual self-reliance?
2. How can I improve my own ability to recognize and respond to the Holy Spirit?

For more information, go to www.reliefsociety.lds.org.