

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Cleave unto Each Other and to God

By Carl B. Cook

Africa Southeast Area

I was inspired by a young South African couple I met during a recent devotional on strengthening families. The husband shared an experience he had with his wife. They ate breakfast one Sunday morning, and like many rural couples, walked two hours to Church, participated in three hours of meetings, and then walked two hours home. They were tired and hungry, of course, but they were also out of food. They eventually went to bed.

At about 2:00 a.m. they woke, their stomachs growling. The husband felt terrible that he hadn't provided food for his wife. He was concerned how she was feeling about him. Instead of acting sad or angry, she teased him about the funny noises his stomach was making. They both laughed together and fell asleep.

He expressed appreciation for her kindness, support, and loyalty. He said, "She could have left me. It is my responsibility to support her. But we are the same."

When asked to share her thoughts about the experience, his wife said, "He is my best friend. He does so much for me. When I have problems with people at work, he gives me

advice and helps me feel better."

It was evident that this couple is working through life's challenges together. In the husband's words, they are "the same." Having no food was not "his" problem or "her" problem, but "their problem." They did not treat the lack of food as a major marriage crisis, but as a temporary setback that they would work through together. They used humor to soften the situation. They demonstrated faith by going to sleep, anticipating that they could improve their situation the following day.

I sensed that this man and woman are not only committed to each other, but they are committed to God. They have faith that if they keep His commandments, He will help them work through challenges. This couple emanates a quiet confidence, a feeling of peace and serenity. They are enjoying the journey of life together as husband and wife. They are truly being blessed by a kind, loving Heavenly Father.

Each of us can experience similar blessings in our marriages. The Lord has provided a pattern for us to follow to achieve unity in marriage, and unity with God.



*Elder
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Our first parents, Adam and Eve, established the pattern for us to follow. We learn in the scriptures that the Lord created Adam and Eve, and then He counseled all of us, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Moses 3:24).

Adam and Eve did cleave to each other. They were blessed in their relationship as they kept the commandments and followed the Lord's counsel. Adam and Eve did not allow the challenges that came into their lives to separate them from each other physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

What did Adam and Eve do?

- They worked *together*:
". . . Adam began to till the earth, . . . and Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him" (Moses 5:1).

“Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World”).



He is my best friend.

- They prayed *together*: “Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord . . .” (Moses 5:4).
- The mourned *together* over their wayward children: “Adam and his wife mourned before the Lord, because of Cain and his brethren” (Moses 5:27; see also *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 1.3.1).

How can husbands and wives cleave to each other and to God today, amid all of the demands of life and the distractions of the world?

Prophets provide inspired answers to this question.

Prophetic Counsel

Prophets counsel us to “give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities” (*Handbook 2 Administering the Church* [2010], 1.4.1). We must set aside and turn away from things that distract us from our marriages and our families. We must simplify our lives and give highest priority to basic worship activities in our homes.

We must spend time with those we love. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, told of a nurse who cares for the terminally ill. He related, “She has often asked a simple question of her patients as they prepared to depart this life. ‘Do you have any regrets?’ she would ask. . . . Perhaps the most universal regret dying patients expressed was that they wished they had spent more time with the people they love.” President Uchtdorf counseled, “Let us resolve to cherish those we love by spending meaningful time with them, doing things together, and cultivating treasured memories” (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Of Regrets and Resolutions,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012,

21–22); see also Susie Steiner, “Top Five Regrets of the Dying,” *Guardian*, Feb. 1, 2012).

During a particularly busy time in our lives, Sister Cook and I found it challenging to incorporate all of the counsel of the prophets into our family life. She was occupied in caring for our children and our home. I was involved in a demanding career and a busy Church calling. We were doing our best to have regular prayers, scripture study, family home evening, and family activities, but we had very little time together as a couple.

One day I was going to the hardware store to buy a board to make a repair to our home. Sister Cook asked if she could go with me. I was surprised that she wanted to take time out of her busy day to go to the hardware store, but I agreed. A few days later I had to deliver some papers to a neighbor. Once again, Sister Cook asked if she could go along. This pattern continued until I finally asked her why she was acting so strangely.

After some prodding, she told me that she had been reading her scriptures. She turned to Doctrine and Covenants section 25, the Lord’s revelation to Emma, wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord acknowledged Emma as “an elect lady” (D&C 25:3)

and admonished her to be a comfort to her husband “in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness” (D&C 25:5).

Sister Cook then revealed the verse that inspired her recent behavior: “And thou shalt go with him at the time of his going” (D&C 25:6). During personal scripture study, the Spirit prompted Sister Cook to find ways to spend more time with me. One way was to run errands with me. I found that I enjoyed having Sister Cook “go with [me] at the time of [my] going.” The pleasant time we shared together

caused me to look for ways to spend more time with her. Her small act of love led to increased unity in our marriage.

Promised Blessings

Cleaving to each other requires faith, diligence, and persistence. As we make our marriage and family relationships our highest priority, we are richly blessed. Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, said, “The promises of the Lord are extended to all those who follow the pattern of life that builds happy, holy marriage relationships. Such

blessings come as the delightful, predictable consequences of faithfully living the gospel of Jesus Christ” (L. Whitney Clayton, “Marriage: Watch and Learn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013).

May each of us cleave to our eternal companion, and to God, and reap the associated blessings. ■

“The sweetest feelings of life, the most generous and satisfying impulses of the human heart, find expression in a marriage that stands pure and unsullied above the evil of the world” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “What God Hath Joined Together,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 71).

Getting the Royal Treatment in Uganda

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Sister Alice Johnson Haney is the daughter of Billy Johnson, one of the first members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ghana. By the time the missionaries arrived there, Brother Johnson had prepared over 1,000 people to receive the gospel and be baptized, forming 10 new congregations.

In 1998 as a young woman, Sister Johnson (as she was at the time) was called to serve a mission in her own country. She shares this experience:

“One of my most humble moments occurred while serving in Koforidua, when a senior couple from England, Elder and Sister Reeves, were assigned to serve in the same branch with us. The Reeves’ past bishop in England, Bishop Twum

Danso, was a native of Ghana, and when this good bishop died, his remains were sent to Ghana to be buried near Koforidua.

“When the Reeves were called to serve in Koforidua, their ward in England asked them to lay a wreath on the bishop’s grave. This act of kindness opened a marvelous work. My companion and I, the Reeves, and the branch president of Koforidua, travelled to Akim Mase, home of the late bishop. That was memorable.”

Little did they know that Bishop Danso had been a member of the royal family in his village. Because of this, the group needed permission to visit the royal cemetery where he was buried.

Sister Haney relates, “We visited the Akim Mase

palace and met with the chief and his elders. The Reeves informed them all of the purpose of their visit and also their desire to share the gospel. We were permitted to visit the cemetery to lay the wreath, and then we were paraded through the town with the help of the king's men. We later scheduled a date with the palace to introduce the gospel to the community leaders, a week after the visit.

"The first discussion took place at the palace, and there was a large group. Many of our investigators were the schoolteachers of the town, most of whom eventually accepted the gospel. Our first baptism was 30 converts."

Subsequently, they conducted baptisms of 27 and then 21 people. Most of these converts became the first leaders of the Church at Akim Mase. The death of Bishop Danso in England indirectly brought the gospel to dozens of wonderful people in his distant village. ■

Taken from a letter written by Alice Haney, documented in an article by Mark Albright in Meridian Magazine ldsmag.com/article/1/12910/2/page-2



Sister Alice J. Haney

Establishing the Church in Gabon

Elder Randall and Sister Barbara Knudsen

For many years the Church had been trying to gain recognition in Gabon so it could establish branches and send in missionaries, but over and over the applications to receive that recognition had moved through the approval system and then simply stopped.

In 2012 the Church advised the Africa Southeast Area legal office that Church recognition in Gabon was "now a priority." Jeff Clayton, the Area Legal Adviser, was tasked with getting things moving. He felt such a spiritual burden over the issue that he began to pray mightily for guidance. He and his assistant, Elder Dave Larsen, asked their children and grandchildren to fast and pray for Gabon, and President Holland put Gabon on the Temple prayer roll of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Then Brother Clayton had two impressions: first, "find the people who have been prepared to help," and secondly, "stay there long enough." So with only one appointment available in Gabon, Brother Clayton booked the hotel for Elder Larsen and himself for a whole week. Then they invited Bishop Gaetan Kelounou of Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, to accompany them, since he had relatives in Gabon.

Gabon was a French colony, so the Area legal office put together a packet of information about the Church in French to take with them. Then they contacted the mission president of the Kinshasa Democratic Republic of Congo Mission, President Jameson. He knew of a few members in Gabon that had been baptized in France or in the Congo, and he advised those members of a sacrament



Brother Jeff Clayton (left) and Elder David Larson (right) receive provisional recognition from the Ministry of Gabon.

meeting to be held the next Sunday in Libreville, the capital city of Gabon. They also contacted two stakes in Paris, France, that had many members who had emigrated from Gabon and still had contacts with the government there. They were trying every way they could think of to “find the people who had been prepared to help.”

The two Church attorneys and Bishop Kelounou arrived in Gabon on a Saturday and attended a sacrament meeting the next day in a large, empty house that Bishop Kelounou’s sister had provided. The Spirit was so strong during the meeting that Brother Clayton, a previous bishop, stake president, and mission president, was deeply impressed. As the meeting concluded, he felt fully edified, even though he understood no French. After the meeting, they collected the names and contact information for everyone there. Those names turned out to be essential for the Church’s application for recognition that week.

Monday began the difficult task of moving through government bureaucracy. However, miracle after miracle smoothed their way. Their previous application was located, even though the files were not computerized and the application was several years old. The packet of information they had brought opened hearts and doors for them. The member list from their sacrament

meeting was sufficient to complete the additional data the Ministry of the Interior needed. Suddenly, on Wednesday morning things just stopped. Their application was “still under consideration,” but no one was contacting them. They were afraid they would have to make yet another trip.

Brother Clayton and Elder Larson decided to fast and pray all day Wednesday, and again they felt they should stay. On Thursday they returned to the Ministry of the Interior and just sat there, essentially refusing to leave. After more than an hour’s wait, they were promised that they would receive the approved application that day, so they returned to the hotel. Sure enough, by the end of the day, a representative from the Ministry brought the approved provisional recognition for the Church in Gabon. The Church now had permission to formally organize a branch, send in missionaries, and conduct Church business. Though it was only a provisional recognition, it was a start—a start the Church had been trying to get for more than eight years.

When their families were told of their miraculous experiences, Elder Larson’s grandson wrote to him, exclaiming, “When I grow up, I want to go to Gabon on my mission!” ■

Taken from an oral interview with Jeff Clayton and David Larson given on November 29, 2012.

A Leap of Faith

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Johnny Poo Shuping came from a strong, close family that originally immigrated to Africa from Europe during World War II. They settled in Bloemfontein, South Africa. In Johnny's words, "My place of birth and early



Johnny Poo Shuping

life has always been a matter of deep meaning to me, a meaning I felt even in childhood."

However, when Johnny was sixteen, he met missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The glow they carried with them felt familiar. He says, "They were looking for somebody to teach, and they found me. We set an appointment, and a spiritual awakening began."

Not long after beginning the lessons, Johnny's father reminded him that their family belonged to

a different church. He refused to allow Johnny to be baptized and insisted that he attend the family church. Finally, Johnny and his father reached a compromise: Johnny would be allowed to attend the LDS church only *after* he had first attended his family's church. He recalls, "For the next two years, I woke up early on Sunday mornings to attend the 7:00 a.m. service at the local chapel in town and would then run swiftly over to Station View to make it on time for my sacrament and priesthood meetings."

When Johnny was old enough to serve a mission, he had completed his first year of university education. Because of his excellent grades, he had received financial aid to pay for his schooling. However, if he left school to serve a mission, he would lose his scholarship, and all his work to get good grades would have been in vain. With a leap of faith, Johnny decided to earn money and prepare for his mission.

With no support for his decision at home, he treasured the support and encouragement he received from the Wainwright family. He was so grateful for the role they played in his life for the two years he prepared for his mission. They were almost as excited as he was when he received his mission call to

the Uganda Kampala Mission.

Elder Shuping served diligently on his mission, even extending his time there. But eventually he knew he had to return home, mend his relationships with his family, and figure out what do about school.

After he returned from his mission, Johnny enrolled in the university, knowing he had a huge outstanding debt from previous years, since his scholarship had been invalidated. He recalls, "Discouraged a bit and not knowing what to do, I felt I should get to campus one morning to check exactly how much I owed. The lady at the administration center printed out the account, and I anxiously scanned through it, looking for the 'Balance Due' section to see the bill. I couldn't find it. What I found instead was 'Credit.' I asked the lady at the desk to explain to me what that meant. She looked into the details and found that some financial aid program had come across my grades and, impressed with what they saw, paid the entire outstanding fee I owed the school. Furthermore, the amount under the 'Credit' section was money owed to me for my good grades.

"What a tender mercy! I sat there, drowning in amazement at the thought that I was debt free, and 'confused at the grace that so fully He proffers me' ('I Stand

All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193).

“I remembered reading President Ezra Taft Benson’s promise that those who put the Lord first will find that all things will fall into their proper place (see Ezra Taft Benson, “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4). I experienced the truth of that promise.” Johnny has since

earned a degree (with honors) in communications and is preparing to launch his own enterprise. He has never regretted that, even when it was difficult to do, he took a leap of faith and trusted in the Lord. ■

Excerpted from a collection of Bloemfontein Stake Young Single Adult Conversion Stories and Testimonies October 2013

of Brother Lange, who was 70 years old when he ran across a newly converted member, Brother Marcus, who was digging a well near Brother Lange’s ranch. Brother Marcus gave Brother Lange a lot of reading material about the Church.

A week later Brother Lange walked 18 miles into town to tell Brother Ratcliff that he was “ready to be baptized!” He had obtained his own watering tank and filled it with water from the very well Brother Marcus had been digging, which didn’t actually produce much water at all; just enough for a baptism. He only needed someone with authority to come and baptize him.

Brother Ratcliff went out to the ranch and performed the ordinance. He remarked, “It all seems to be the work of the Lord that Brother Marcus should be there to sink the well and that Brother Lange would go to this spot seeking the Lord and then find Brother Marcus there with a Gospel message.

Water is very scarce in Namibia.

Just Enough Water for a Baptism

Excerpt by Sister Marnae Wilson

In 1927 the Cape Town Mission in South Africa had been receiving tithing from a Brother Ratcliff, who lived in Karibib, a tiny town northwest of Windhoek, the capital of South West Africa which would later become Namibia. The Church was not yet established in South West Africa, and the Cape Town Mission wanted to know more about this member who kept sending tithing money. Finally, President Samuel Martin took the four-day train ride from Cape Town to Karibib to visit with this member and his family.

They met together and shared testimonies, and Brother Ratcliff explained that he had never been ordained to any priesthood office, but he felt impelled to pay his

tithing. The mission president ordained him to the priesthood and asked him to hold meetings in his home. Then he left Brother Ratcliff and his family on their own again.

In the *Cumoram Monthly Bulletin* of August 1927, President Martin reported, “I feel that my first visit to the Karibib was under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord and that July 24, 1927, will denominate another ‘Pioneer Day’ in the valley of the Karibib mountains, South West Africa, with which the name of Ratcliff will always be lovingly associated by having been called to conduct the work of the Lord in those parts.”

In his 1928 quarterly report to the mission, Brother Ratcliff recorded the baptism



“Water is so incredibly scarce in this country that we have great difficulty finding a place to baptize. In this case, the well

turned out to be a failure because there was only a little water in it. It looks as though the Lord had provided just enough water

for Brother Lang’s baptism.”
(Quarterly Report, 1928:35). ■

*Excerpted from a history collected by
Clive Nicholls.*

The Last Wish

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

Mpikayivuswa Mathe spent most of his life preaching of Christ and His teachings. The Lord blessed him, and he prospered in Durban, South Africa. When he became old and ill, he was admitted to the hospital. One night he heard a voice in his sleep, telling him, “There is only one true church on the whole face of the earth. It is called by the Savior’s name only.”

Nervously, he asked, “What am I supposed to do now, and where can I find the Church of Jesus Christ?”

The voice continued, “There is nothing that you can do now. Your days are numbered. The only thing you can do to help yourself is to tell your family members to look for the Church.”

When the voice stopped, he woke up shocked and trembling. He then asked the Lord to be merciful to him and send just one family member to the hospital so that he could relate what had been revealed to him before he died.

One of his sons, Griffiths Mathe, worked far away from home as a police officer. He was inspired to go visit his father. When he arrived at the hospital, his father cried and thanked Heavenly Father for answering his prayers. He related to his son everything that had been revealed to him in his dream. Finally, he gave Griffiths a charge to look for the Church of Jesus Christ and never rest until he found it.



**The Name of
His Church**

After a few days, Mpikayivuswa passed away.

For Griffiths and his family, the long search began. His wife, Duduzile, recounts, “We were in and out of many churches looking for one that was called by the name of the Savior, but we could not find it. I remember very well writing down a long list of all the churches that we knew of. Unfortunately, nothing was right. We were disappointed and discouraged. At last we decided to abandon the search, but my husband was dismayed at his failure to fulfil his father’s last wish.

“Prayerfully, we waited patiently until one day the missionaries came knocking on our door and said, ‘We are from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.’ We could not believe what we heard. Oh what a relief! At last we had found people

who knew the Savior’s Church!”

After being taught the eternal truths of the gospel, Griffiths and Duduzile Mathe were baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sister Mathe remarked, “It was the happiest day of our lives. We are very grateful to our Heavenly Father, who answered our prayers and sent those two missionaries. Because of the true teachings of the Church, we have now been sealed for time and all eternity. Even better, we have done the work of Griffith’s father in the House of the Lord.” ■

*From original account of Sister Duduzile Anna Mathe,
Mpumalanga Branch, Hillcrest Stake, KwaZulu Natal,
South Africa.*