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ASIA AREA LEADER MESSAGE

The Sabbath Day

By Elder Stanley Wan

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Elder Stanley Wan

The word *sabbath* comes from a Hebrew word meaning “rest.” The Sabbath is not a day merely to rest from work, it is a day to be spent in worship and reverence. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8) was the fourth commandment given to Moses when he led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. In this last dispensation, the Lord rephrased this commandment

in a revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:9–10).

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is not only a commandment but also a blessing to me and my family! As a young child, I liked going to Church meetings with my parents on Sundays because I could meet with many of my friends there. Being a grandfather today, the Sabbath to me is far more important and meaningful than just meeting with friends.

For more than eight decades, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has opened their weekly program with what has become a hallmark—the 1835 hymn, “Gently Raise the Sacred Strain.”¹ William W. Phelps worshipfully describes the true spirit of the Sabbath day in his beautiful lyrics.² It reminds us of some important teachings on the Sabbath that we should always remember:

*Gently raise the sacred strain,
For the Sabbath's come again
That man may rest,
That man may rest,
And return his thanks to God
For his blessings to the blest,
For his blessings to the blest.*

*Holy day, devoid of strife
Let us seek eternal life,
That great reward,
That great reward,
And partake the sacrament
In remembrance of our Lord,
In remembrance of our Lord.*

*Sweetly swells the solemn sound
While we bring our gifts around
Of broken hearts,
Of broken hearts,
As a willing sacrifice,
Showing what his grace imparts,
Showing what his grace imparts.*

*Holy, holy is the Lord.
Precious, precious is his word:
Repent and live,
Repent and live;
Tho your sins be crimson red,
Oh, repent, and he'll forgive.
Oh, repent, and he'll forgive.*

Our behavior on the Sabbath day is a reflection of our commitment to honor and worship God. It is an indication of the depth of our conversion and our willingness to keep sacred covenants. According to Elder Mark E. Petersen (1900–84) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Our observance or nonobservance of the Sabbath is an unerring measure of our attitude toward the Lord personally and toward his suffering in Gethsemane, his death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. It is a sign of whether we are Christians in very deed, or whether our conversion is so shallow that commemoration of his atoning sacrifice means little or nothing to us.”³

The Lord asks us to sanctify the Sabbath day. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught us, “Brothers and sisters, in the latter days the adversary succeeds when we relax our commitment to the Savior, ignore His teachings in the New Testament and other scripture, and cease to follow Him. Parents, now is the time to teach our children to be examples of the believers by

attending sacrament meeting. When Sunday morning arrives, help them to be well rested, properly dressed, and spiritually prepared to partake of the emblems of the sacrament and receive the enlightening, edifying, ennobling power of the Holy Ghost. Let your family be filled with love as you honor the Sabbath all day long and experience its spiritual blessings throughout the week. Invite your sons and daughters to ‘arise and shine forth’ by keeping the Sabbath day holy, that ‘[their] light may be a standard for the nations.’”⁴

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) counseled: “The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. To fail to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side.”⁵

We should consider righteous things we can do on the Sabbath. President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “What is worthy or unworthy on the Sabbath day will have to be judged by each of us by trying to be honest with the Lord. On the Sabbath day we should do what we have to do and what we ought to do in an attitude of worshipfulness and then limit our other activities.”⁶

Latter-day Saints have been urged many times to show love for the Lord by keeping the Sabbath. In 1993, for example, the First Presidency offered the following counsel:

“We sense that many Latter-day Saints have become lax in their observance of the Sabbath day. We should refrain from shopping on the Sabbath

and participating in other commercial and sporting activities that now commonly desecrate the Sabbath.

“We urge all Latter-day Saints to set this holy day apart from activities of the world and consecrate themselves by entering into a spirit of worship, thanksgiving, service, and family-centered activities appropriate to the Sabbath. As Church members endeavor to make their Sabbath activities compatible with the intent and Spirit of the Lord, their lives will be filled with joy and peace.”⁷

In 2003 when SARS hit Hong Kong, although members of the Church could not go to church on Sundays for a certain period of time, we were still advised by the Brethren to partake of the sacrament in our own homes wherever there were priesthood holders to administer it. I still remember the sweet spirit when I said the sacrament prayers and my son passed the sacrament for our family members at our own home. As we followed the Brethren’s counsel to honor the Sabbath, our family indeed was filled with love and peace. We could witness the edifying and enabling power of the Holy Ghost. It was truly a precious moment in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I truly love our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man. If we honor the Sabbath and keep the commandments of God, we may receive great spiritual and temporal blessings, and our eternal happiness is ensured. Of this I humbly bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “History of Music and the Spoken Word,” May 2013, www.mormontabernaclechoir.org/articles/music-broadcasts-to-the-world.
2. See *Hymns*, no. 146.
3. Mark E. Petersen, “The Sabbath Day” in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 72; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 49.
4. L. Tom Perry, “The Sabbath and the Sacrament,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 115:5.
5. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1979), 96–7.
6. James E. Faust, “The Lord’s Day,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 35.
7. “News of the Church: First Presidency Statement on the Sabbath,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1993, 80.

Our Family Visit to the Temple

Last year during the month of July, my husband and I attended the temple preparation class. We had a great desire to go to the temple as soon as possible. But in July my mother-in-law passed away, so we decided to wait for another year to go to temple so we can perform proxy baptism for her also. We started our preparations, both spiritual and temporal.

First, our preparation started with obeying all the commandments, especially the law of tithing. We struggled a lot to pay tithing, but step-by-step we overcame this. We placed God first and started to pay tithing regularly. There was a lot of hindrance in preparing to go to temple, so we fasted and prayed. As the day was nearing for us to leave, all our problems and obstacles were removed. We learned that nothing is more important in going to the temple than the true desires of our heart.

That fine day came, 24 August 2014, and we began our journey to the temple. Brother James Vincent and his family joined us on this temple trip. When we arrived in Hong Kong, the first thing that came to our minds was that we were nearer to God. We had a wonderful experience at the airport. When we were about to exit the airport,

a kind worker there asked us, “Are you Mormons?” It made us very happy.

The next day, we went to the temple early and participated in the temple sessions. We were so happy that we felt God’s love for my family and to all of us.

When we were sealed together as a family, it was a great joy for us to know that we as a family can be together forever. We thought of our two children and earnestly prayed that they would also join us soon. Our children are not yet members. We hope God will guide them. When we performed baptisms

**Saraswathi
Rajendran and
her husband**

for dead for our ancestors, the joy that we felt was inexpressible. We felt we fulfilled the great responsibility of giving them the opportunity to accept the gospel. We loved each and every thing in the temple. We felt the temple workers were like angels who guided us with love. We felt we were Jesus Christ’s guest there. My husband was so happy that his father was also in the celestial room, and his eyes were full of tears.

We conducted family home evening, and we shared our temple experiences with each other. When we were in the temple, there was no sorrow, no hunger; all within us was



SARASWATHI RAJENDRAN

peace of mind and happiness. We earnestly prayed to have a temple in India soon, so we can visit frequently. We are happy as we receive a lot of blessings and revelation.

By attending the temple we felt God's love for each of us, we had a clear view of plan of salvation, and I came to know that our Redeemer lives.

I testify that the temple ordinance are important. The Church is true and the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are called of God. We will be blessed as long as we continue to be obedient in the Lord's way. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Saraswathi Rajendran, III Branch, Coimbatore

Testimony of My Family: How We Came to This True Church

I am very thankful to God to share my testimony. God has given me many blessings, and I would like to share a few of them. I am blessed with a wonderful family: my wife, Vidya Verma, and daughters, Pavitra, Ajita, Aarti and Caron. First, we were non-Christians. Then we started going to a Pentecostal church, but I realized the leader was guiding in his own ways. God has told us what we have to do and what not to do. So why then are people making their own rules? I used to think if the Lord Jesus had established His Church then we should follow His commandments, not man's commandments.

One day a discussion took place between the pastor and me about the gospel. After this

discussion, my family stopped going to church. We would still pray at home and read scriptures together but were not going to any church. We felt that all churches were the same. Which church is true? Which church follows the commandments of the Lord? How will we get to the true church? Which teaches us about love and the truth? These questions remained unanswered.

Four months passed and my family still did not go to any church. One day my wife took my daughter to her friend's house and saw two missionaries (elders) there, teaching about the gospel. My wife's friend introduced her to the elders, and they started sharing the gospel. My wife and daughter wondered from which church were these

two missionaries, for they knew the gospel so well. When my wife asked them, they showed their name tags and said, "We are from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days Saints." My wife and daughter were so happy, and they wanted to know more about this church. My wife invited them to our home to teach us the gospel. The elders made an appointment and came to our home. They taught about the importance of the family and the true Church.

The missionaries started coming to our home regularly to share the gospel. My family was always at home when the missionaries came, except me. Because of my office hours, I was not able to come home early. I used to come home between 9:00 and 9:30 p.m., and by that time, the elders had to be in their apartment. One Saturday I came early from office because I was

Ajit Kumar Verma with his family



AJIT KUMAR VERMA

not feeling well. Fortunately on that same day, the elders came and my family was also home. The elders were very happy to see all of us together as a family. They shared the gospel and invited us to attend church the following day to see how their church works.

We went to church. We felt very nice and peaceful in the church. After attending church on Sunday, the missionaries asked us how we felt and if we would like to come every Sunday. I said, "Okay, fine, we will come Elders, but I am not sure that I will come to church regularly." The reason was that if my office called me to work on Sunday, they payed extra money. I had to take care of my family; I had to pay for my four daughters' studies, our house rent, school fees, food, etc. I had to take care of everything. All the burdens were on my shoulder. Sometimes when I used to have arguments with my wife over expenses, I would smoke and drink because of tension. On one similar occasion, the elders showed me the scripture, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). When they read that scripture and explained it, I felt very peaceful in my heart and felt that whatever they said was true. The elders told me, "Come

to church; you will be filled with peace in your heart and joy in your bosom."

On the first Sunday of June 2009, our family went to church. When I entered the sacrament hall, suddenly, I felt very peaceful in my heart. I felt somebody taking the burdens from my shoulders, and I felt so peaceful and light inside. I forgot everything and I felt that I was in a different place. That day was fast and testimony meeting, and I saw members sharing their testimonies. Some were crying and sharing their testimonies for blessings they received by attending church. From that Sunday on, our whole family started going to church regularly.

After three months of going to church regularly, on 20 September 2009, my family and I were baptized, except my youngest daughter as she was just 6 years old. That same day was my wife's birthday and it was a blessing from our Heavenly Father to make it memorable.

Baptism was the first step taken by our family toward our Heavenly Father in His true Church. My branch president and mission president were very happy. After being baptized in this true Church, we came to know about the kingdom of the God. We came to know about many hidden treasures.

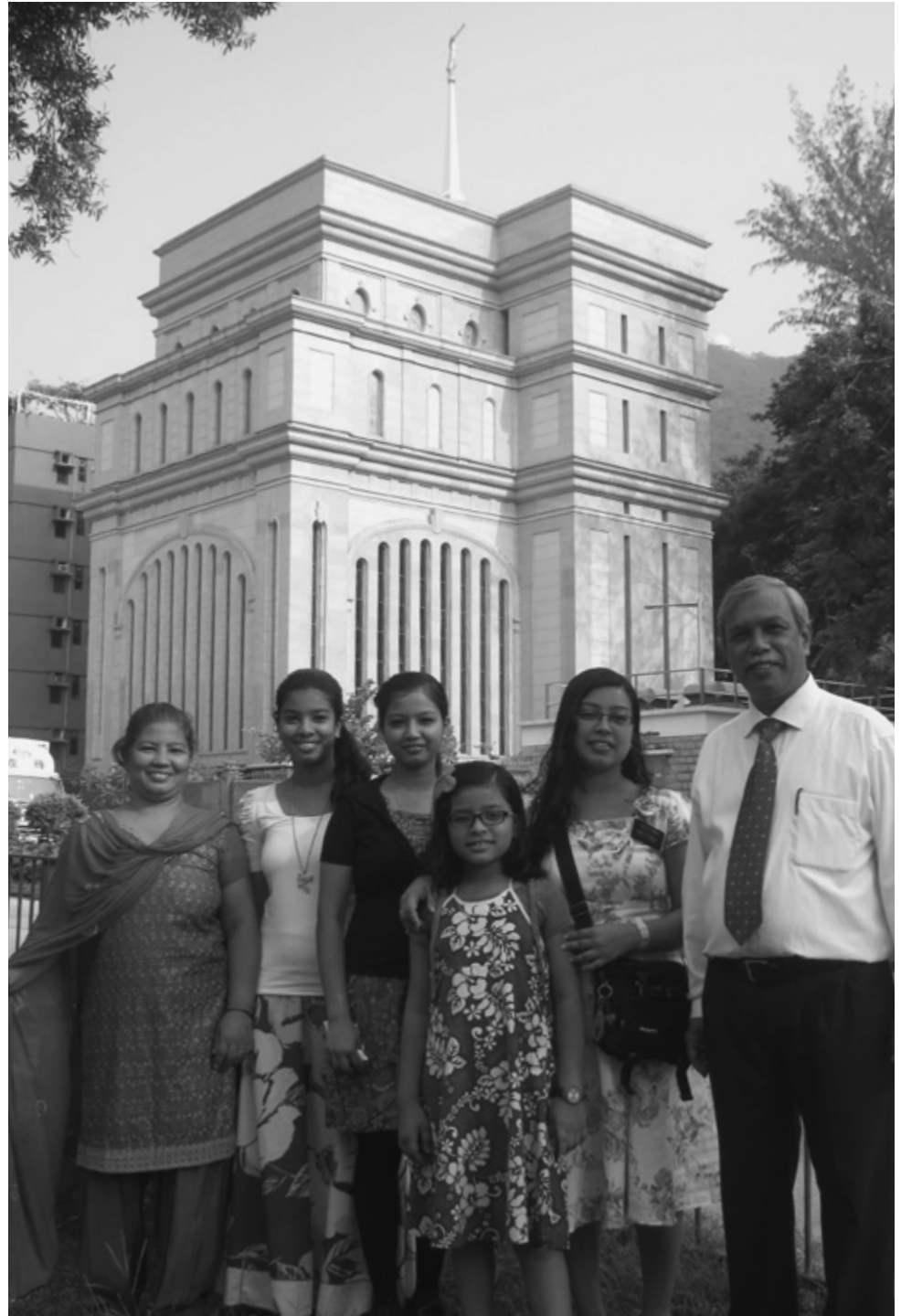
As we grew in the gospel, slowly all my problems were gone. Missionaries and members helped me and my family a lot, encouraging us to be strong and firm in the gospel. They always prayed for me that I would get off on Sundays so I could attend church regularly. They always encouraged and supported my family so we might learn more about the gospel.

After one year my oldest daughter Pavitra had a strong desire to serve God and wanted to go on a mission. She applied for her mission in July 2010, and in October 2010 she received her mission call to serve in the Philippines Manila Mission. It was hard for us to get her passport. When we went to the passport office, the passport officer said to her, "You are going to serve voluntarily? You will not get your passport anyhow." She was scared by what this officer said. She had to leave New Delhi on 20 January for Manila, but as of 18 January, she did not yet have her passport. We had prayed fervently for her, and suddenly on 19 January at 6:00 p.m. she received her passport. She left India on 20 January at 9:00 p.m. to begin her mission. It was a great miracle. She received her passport just one day before her departure. She served the Lord with her all her "heart, might, mind and strength"

(D&C 4:2) for a year and a half. When she began her mission, blessings were poured on us from heaven. My wife got a job, my salary was increased, and my youngest daughter, Caron, was baptized. We also received many more blessings.

One day our mission president (President William King Jackson) called me and asked, "When are you planning to go to the temple of the Lord?" I said, "I do not know. I do not have enough money to take my family to temple. It is very expensive." He told me, "Prepare yourself and your family from now to go to the Hong Kong China Temple." He asked me to start saving money and applying for passports.

My family was very excited to go to the temple. As a family, we knelt down and prayed to God to show us the way and help us prepare to go to the temple so we could be sealed as a family. We started saving money. My youngest daughter, who was just eight years old, was so excited that she did not spend a single rupee from her pocket money but saved it in her small piggy bank. Without any delay, I applied for the passports for my wife and three daughters. It was under process. The mission president called me and said that he has fixed 5 August 2012 for my family to go to the



temple in Hong Kong. Our air tickets were booked. The invitation letter from temple was awaited. Up to 2 August, we had not received the passport of my

youngest daughter. We had lost hope but our mission president encouraged and asked us to pray. He said, "Everything will be fine, just have faith in God

The Verma family at the Hong Kong Temple

and do not cancel or postpone the trip because of the passport. God will take care of everything.” And then the miracle happened. On 3 August 2011, we received her passport. We received the invitation letters from the Hong Kong China Temple. Our couple missionaries, Elder and Sister Steven, helped us a lot in arranging these. I am very thankful to God for sending this wonderful couple to help us, along with our mission president, William King Jackson, and his family.

While we prepared for the temple, my oldest daughter was serving her mission in Manila. She completed her mission and came to Hong Kong China Temple on 7 August 2011. It was a surprise for us that she came directly to Hong Kong by herself. When I saw my daughter after a year and a half, I felt so happy. My eyes were filled with tears. We were all crying and hugging each other inside the temple with joy. I was happy thinking that my whole family was there and would be sealed as a family for eternity.

On 8 August 2011 we were sealed in the Hong Kong China Temple for all time and for eternity. This was the most wonderful blessing for me and my family. I can live with my family together after this life. This makes me feel so happy that I cannot express in my words

because words are very few to show this gratitude which is in my heart.

We were in Hong Kong for five days, and we spent most of the time in the holy temple of the Lord. We did not want to lose this wonderful opportunity to be close to our Heavenly Father. We were engaged in endowment sessions, baptism for the dead, and other ordinances. We did many ordinances for our ancestors. I feel so blessed that we could help our ancestors receive the saving ordinances. This was the most precious and beautiful five days in our Lord’s temple. We are saving money so we can visit temple again and partake of this blessing.

I am grateful to God for making us a part of His wonderful plan. He brought us to this true Church and we were baptized with priesthood authority and power. And now we are sealed as a family for eternity.

On 11 August 2012, we returned home. We received many more blessing. After coming home from the temple, I was called to serve as the branch president of the New Delhi Third Branch. This was the great blessing from God. It was a big responsibility but God had chosen me for this work, and I accepted the calling and tried my best to fulfill my calling with the guidance of the Holy Ghost. After serving for two years, I was



AJIT KUMAR VERMA

released and received a new calling as Young Men president. It is such a great blessing to be a part of God’s work.

The Verma family reunited to be sealed together.

My dear brothers and sisters, the Lord loves each one of us. He wants His children to be saved and blessed. He wants His children to talk with Him and to be with Him forever. He wants us to ask Him in faith (see Mathew 7:7–8). We should always have strong faith in God, obey His commandments, follow the gospel, and read the scriptures daily. As we need food to strengthen our body, we also need spiritual strength; so we should read the scriptures and pray every day. Through prayer we talk to Him, and through scriptures He talks to us. We should always seek guidance from God. He is always there to show us the right way. When you do all these things, you will come closer to God and feel more peace in your heart. You will see the difference in yourself as I can see the

difference in myself. I know the Lord knows each one of us, and He loves us. And He has chosen us to do His work.

We all have friends, and it is our responsibility to tell them about the wonderful plan of God that is the plan of salvation. The fruit that we have partaken of, we should share it with our family and friends. We should show that Light of Christ that we have in us. We have to help our Heavenly Father to grow

His kingdom on earth. We need to be examples in front of our families and friends. I know that whatever I have testified of is true. I know Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ live and love us a lot. He wants us to be like Him so we can live with Him forever. He has sent prophets to earth so they can guide us the right path. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Ajit Kumar Verma, and his family are part of Delhi 3rd Branch.

presence. Many people read the scriptures, but when we truly understand them it becomes clear that all we pass through is part of this heavenly plan to get us where we need and want to be.

My third witness came some years after I joined the Church. My wife contracted cancer and suffered for a long time with its ravaging effects. At the end, this terrible disease had enveloped all parts of her body—even her mouth—and she could no longer speak or take food. The night she passed away, I was unable to sleep and sat with her in the dimly lit room. About 2:00 a.m. she opened her eyes and looked toward the door and said in a clear, strong voice, “Oh, you came—but I don’t want to go.” Even though she could not speak and had not spoken for a very long time, that night I saw and heard her utter those very words. She was talking to someone in the room that I could not see but that she could and was surely there. I gently got up and put her head in my arms when again she spoke and said, “Okay, I will go with you, but you have to sing the hymns in English, not in Hindi.” I asked who she was talking to, and she turned her head so her eyes met mine and whispered for a sip of water. By the time I had lifted the cup to her lips, she had passed from this mortal life into the next.

There is no doubt that the heavenly messenger with whom she spoke that night was sent from a loving Father in Heaven to take her home. The knowledge that we came from the presence of that same loving Father in Heaven as taught by two young missionaries, the reassurance gained through the scriptures of why we are here, and the sacred events of that night that reaffirmed to me life after death are the foundations of my testimony. I know that God lives and that this is all part of His great “plan of happiness” for His children. ■

Raju Massey is a member of the New Delhi Third Branch, New Delhi District, India

My Three Witnesses: The Testimony of Raju Massey

Many years ago, the Mormon missionaries came to our home and taught us, giving the answers to questions that my wife, Rekha, and I had always wondered about. They taught us why we are on this earth, where we came from, and where we will go after we leave our mortal bodies. As we prayed about these things, we came to know these things to be true. This was my undeniable first witness of God’s “plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), and it brought great joy to our lives.

My second witness came through a lifelong study of the scriptures. Through those sacred writings, I have come to know of God’s great love for His children. As a loving parent, He has sent us to this earth to gain a body, to learn, to grow, and to be tested. But He has also prepared a way to bring us safely home to live with Him forever. To help us in this journey, He gave us the scriptures which testify of Him, answer life’s greatest questions, and chart a path back into the safety of His