

NEW ZEALAND LOCAL PAGES

LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

The Gospel of Jesus Christ— Providing Landmarks for Families

By **Bishop Gérald Caussé**

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Recently I watched a television program about the migration of wild geese. Each year, wild geese fly long distances in order to spend the winter in areas with more moderate climates. Their migratory flights are perfectly organized. Generally, members of the same family migrate together. The father and mother fly at the head of the flock and guide their offspring over vast distances to their new destination.

The remarkable sense of direction that these birds have has always fascinated me. They fly thousands of kilometres without maps or a GPS. The parents are able to guide their families by using landmarks such as the sun, rivers, mountain ranges, and occasionally man-made structures such as bridges or roads. The young geese have not yet developed these migratory senses. They acquire this knowledge by following the route shown by their parents. Along their perilous journey, the parents constantly watch over each of their offspring to make sure that none

of them get lost or stray from the correct path. The young birds eventually learn the migratory routes from their parents, and these routes are passed on from generation to generation.

This annual migration of the wild geese would not be successful if the parents did not pay close attention to the unchanging landmarks and without their care in teaching their offspring to recognize these landmarks.

A landmark is something that serves as a point of reference to help determine location, direction, or distance. It is a fixed, reliable, and recognizable point that indicates the path to follow and helps to prevent us from straying or getting lost. It is something or someone that indicates where we are, the direction from which we have come, and most importantly, where we need to go.

Mother's Day is celebrated in many countries throughout the world. It is a time each year for families to gather in a spirit of gratitude and celebration. Last year our oldest daughter, Valentine,



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was invited to give a talk in her ward on this special day.

She emotionally testified how her own mother's example has served as a landmark for her in her current role as a young mother. She stated: "My mother influenced me a great deal by her example. Today, each time I have a decision to make regarding my own children, I think back to what my mother would do. When I remember what a happy nature my mother always had—and continues to have today—I quite simply want to be just like her. Her example has given me the desire to create a happy home environment like she did and to be a leader like she was. I delight in raising my children because she always told me how much

she loved being a mother. Every Sunday, I have a desire to attend church with my family because she passed on to me the joy she felt at taking us to church. I have a desire to serve others and to fulfil the responsibilities of my Church callings because I saw the patience and love with which she served others.”

More than ever before in our tumultuous society, the landmarks passed on by parents serve as protective beacons, especially for the younger generation. A recent study showed that teenagers are particularly influenced by their parents. When asked the following question, “Who in your circle of friends and family has had the most influence on helping you to become an adult?” 92% answered, “My mother.” Fathers came next at 74%. Then in descending order came friends, siblings, grandmothers, and much further down the list were teachers.

Unfortunately, we live in a time that is incredibly difficult and trying for families. As President Thomas S. Monson said: “We live in a world where moral values have, in great measure, been tossed aside, where sin is flagrantly on display, and where temptations to stray

from the strait and narrow path surround us. We are faced with persistent pressures and insidious influences tearing down what is decent and attempting to substitute the shallow philosophies and practices of a secular society.”¹

Essential landmarks, which since the foundation of the world have guided so many families, have been forgotten, disregarded, and even denounced as being outdated and intolerant by a growing portion of our society.

This general loss of vital landmarks was prophesied long ago as being one of the signs of the last days. In speaking of our day, the prophet Nephi said, “They have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.”²

Contrary to the precepts of men—which by nature change because of cultural and social shifts—the laws of God establish landmarks and points of reference that never change. In Proverbs, we read this short but important verse: “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”³

The ancient peoples of the Middle East used stone markers to indicate the limits of their property to separate it from the property of their neighbours. If someone moved one of these markers, it was considered to be a serious violation of the law because it indicated that they were trying to steal someone else’s property.

By extension, these landmarks can also represent the moral or spiritual limits established by God since the foundation of the world. The Lord asks us not to move these essential points of reference because they are the foundation not only of our society but also of the plan He has prepared for our eternal salvation.

The family plays a central and essential role in God’s plan for His children. It is “the most important unit in time and in eternity.”⁴ Within the family, powerful influences help guide us during our mortal voyage. In the family unit, we have experiences that motivate us and prepare us for our eternal destiny, which is to return one day to live in the presence of Heavenly Father.

I recently asked my children the following question: “What is your principal source of



motivation in life?" They came to the conclusion that the thing that motivated them the most was the ability to feel loved and to love others. Above all else, they said their greatest source of happiness was to feel the love of God through the Holy Ghost.

The love of God is the purest and most marvellous feeling we can receive in this life. Once we have experienced it, we want to feel it again and again. We are ready to make all sacrifices required to one day have the right to live in His presence. There is no other place in this world where God's love can be felt more abundantly than within the family circle. Sister Bonnie D. Parkin said: "Think of a mother with her newborn baby. The warmth, safety, cherishing, and

peace of a mother's embrace can help us understand what it feels like to be encircled in the arms of [God's] love."⁵

There is a very popular ice-cream store in a medieval city in Italy where our family loves to go on vacation. During the summer months, around thirty different flavours are on display, each as appealing as the next. Unfortunately, an ice-cream cone can only hold three scoops at the maximum, and the choice is always difficult to make, especially for young children. Often the ice-cream vendor will distribute plastic mini-spoons with samples so that customers can try as many flavours as they wish. So, children will take these little samples of ice cream and taste them

one by one until finally they cry out, "That's the one I want!"

If you establish your home and family life on the teachings of Jesus Christ and surround your children with pure love, they will receive a pre-taste or "sample" of what eternal happiness is like. It is very probable that one day they will say, "That's the one I want!" And they will find the strength and motivation necessary to remain on the strait and narrow path. Even if they stray for a time, one day they will have the desire to return to the source of genuine love.

My brothers and sisters, whether we want to or not or whether we are aware of it or not, we have a decisive influence on our posterity. Some adults might say, "I can do whatever I

want. I am free to direct my life as I see fit.” But in reality we influence others, perhaps hundreds or even thousands of our Heavenly Father’s children, by the choices we make and through our personal examples. We are never free from the consequences our lifestyles have upon those around us—those who love us and who put their trust in us.

President Henry B. Eyring put it this way:

“Whoever you are and wherever you may be, you hold in your hands the happiness of more people than you can now imagine. . . .

“ . . . When you choose whether to make or keep a covenant with God, you choose whether you will leave an inheritance of hope to those who might follow your example.”⁶

Unfortunately, there are fathers and mothers who are unaware of the blessings that the restored gospel can bring to their families. Often unintentionally, they hamper their loved ones in obtaining these marvelous promises. I remember a story told by two missionaries. One day they visited a family in their ward. This family had been members for many years, except for the father. Although

the father had first heard the missionaries some 25 years earlier and had read the Book of Mormon, he never felt that he needed to be baptized himself. Our good missionaries felt inspired to ask this man, “Why don’t you love your family? Why would you hold them back from progressing along the path that is so important to them?” This good man just stared at them. His response was, “I know that you are right. I am holding them back. I am going to get baptized into the Church in two weeks.” Everyone in the room was stunned! For the past 25 years, for some reason this father had never connected the dots between the family and the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can imagine how the climate in the home totally changed as they became united in the gospel and began preparing to go to the temple.

We have much to offer those who believe with all of their hearts in the importance of the family. We can testify to them that in the restored gospel, they will find the essential and reliable landmarks they need to guide and protect their families in a troubling and dangerous world.

The fundamental principles of family have been reaffirmed

by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in the document entitled, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” Although it was first published almost 20 years ago, this solemn proclamation has never been as pertinent as it is today. It proclaims without ambiguity that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” It reaffirms the principles that create happy families in this life and enable them to achieve their highest potential in the eternities. The proclamation specifically addresses vital issues of our day, such as the importance of gender, the sacred nature of the powers of procreation, the importance of love and fidelity among husband and wife, the sacred roles of the father and mother in the home, and the eternal nature of family relationships through the sealing ordinances of the temple. It notes that “successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities.”⁷

My brothers and sisters, I invite you to read and re-read this proclamation and to study it point by point in your families and in your Church quorums and classes. Discuss and reflect together on how the principles taught apply to your family and

to the society in which you live.

When faced with a world that is losing its fundamental landmarks and principles, we can choose to exercise a positive and lasting influence by standing with courage for the values in which we believe. As President

Thomas S. Monson stated:

“Decisions are constantly before us which can determine our destiny. In order for us to make the correct decisions, courage is needed—the courage to say no when we should, the courage to say yes when that is appropriate, the courage to do the right thing because it is right.”⁸

I testify that the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are reliable and immovable landmarks for families throughout the world. The message of the Restoration leads families to the glorious blessings of exaltation and eternal life.

I pray that we will follow ourselves and pass on to our children the vital landmarks we all need to guide us on our eternal journey. May we do it because we love our children and desire happiness for our family in this life and for all eternity. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Be Strong and of a Good Courage,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 66.
2. 2 Nephi 28:14.
3. Proverbs 22:28.
4. Quentin L. Cook, “The Doctrine of the Father,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2012, 33.
5. Bonnie D. Parkin, “Eternally Encircled in His Love,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 108–9.
6. Henry B. Eyring, “A Priceless Heritage of Hope,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 22.
7. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Be Strong and of a Good Courage,” 66.

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

*W*E, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. “Children are an heritage of the Lord”

(Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. 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. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Benefits of Seminary

By James E. Kerns

Sister Delila Lekupe is a 23-year-old sister missionary from Papua New Guinea. Through her grandfather's influence, she began attending the Church when she was 12 years old. Her parents were very much against it. She decided to be baptized but was told that it wouldn't be possible unless her parents gave their permission. When she told them of her desire, her mother was furious. Her father, the acting chief inspector of the police department, was just a little less upset than her mother. But seeing how determined she was to be baptized, he relented and gave his permission.

He surprised his daughter by attending her baptism. When he returned home, his wife confronted him and asked what he was going to do about the terrible thing he had allowed their daughter to do. His answer was one that would change their lives

forever. He told his wife that he had been impressed with the baptismal service and that he had invited the missionaries to teach his family. In a short time the whole family was baptized.

Delila became old enough for seminary. To insure that her daughter was properly taught, her mother became the seminary teacher. She held the daily classes at her home. The class consisted of just Delila and another local young girl, Rhoda Torea.

At the time Delila was baptized, she was rated second from the bottom of her class at school. As she attended seminary, she began to excel in her schoolwork and graduated at the very top of her large class.

All the seminary classes from the area were to gather for a scripture mastery competition. Delila was worried that she would be embarrassed in front of all the large classes. She begged her mother to ignore it, but her mother collected Rhoda, and the three of them went to the activity. Both girls



Sister Rhoda Torea (second from left) and Sister Delila Lekupe (far right) with investigators at the Luganville Chapel



knew all 100 of the scripture mastery scriptures by heart. The tiny seminary class went home with the trophy. The trophy is still in that branch because no other class has ever been able to match that performance.

Delila entered the University of South Pacific, majoring in the physics of electronics. She especially enjoyed her physics and math classes and continued to excel in her studies. While still keeping up with her difficult courses, she became interested in a flight instruction course that was being offered off campus. Her uncle paid for the tuition.

She got her student's license and her pilot's license. The instructor was thrilled with her abilities and with her quickness to learn. Without her knowledge he submitted her name applying for a scholarship to Florida, U.S.A., where she could obtain her commercial pilot's license. They were both thrilled when she won the scholarship—the first person ever from Papua New Guinea.

There was a decision to be made, however. Delila had already submitted her application to serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of

**Sister Rhoda
Torea and Sister
Delila Lekupe**

Latter-day Saints. Her flight instructor flatly told her to forget about the mission. The scholarship she had won was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Sister Lekupe told her father about her dilemma, and he went with her to talk to the flight instructor.

“She’s going to Florida, and that’s final,” the instructor said.

“Well, I’m not so sure,” her father said. “Some things are more important.”

Sister Lekupe was called to serve in the Vanuatu Port Vila Mission. So was her best friend, Rhoda. They spent several months together as companions.

While on her mission, Delila was asked to be the keynote speaker for a seminary activity at the Banban Branch. There were six students in that seminary class. Sister Lekupe’s talk was exactly what the seminary supervisors hoped for. Not six, but sixty young people had shown up, and all listened attentively as Sister Lekupe extolled the virtues of the Church, and the benefits and blessings of attending seminary. ■

Church Partners with Samoan and Australian Governments to Assist Disabled Persons

Apia, Samoa

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has partnered with Samoa’s Ministry of Health, AUSAID and Motivation Australia to support Samoans with mobility challenges.

In a ceremony in Pesega, Samoa, the Church handed over to the Ministry of Health a shipping container of mobility equipment, including walkers, canes, crutches and 300 wheelchairs.



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Latter-day Saint leader Elder Meliula Fata (right) hands over 300 wheelchairs to the Hon. Minister of Health, Afioga Hon. Tuitama, in October 2014 in Pesega, Samoa.

Late last year, Latter-day Saint leader Elder Meliula Fata made the presentation to the Hon. Minister of Health, Afioga Hon. Tuitama.

Public affairs representative Tupuola George Hunt said, “40% of the population, mainly adults, are affected by high blood pressure and diabetes. As a result, many of them have lost limbs, either arms or legs, and therefore require wheelchairs, walkers, walking sticks, or crutches.”

The Samoan Government in partnership with the Australian Government and the Church are contributing to a new unit for prosthetics and orthotics at the

National Hospital. The donation of 300 wheelchairs and other mobility items was given to the Ministry of Health to assist with that project.

The donated items will be used by the unit, and Motivation Australia and AUSAID will assist



Tupuola George Hunt

in training those who will be using them. The recipients will be trained how to use the mobility devices, take care of them, and repair them as required.

Brother Hunt shared a story about a young man who had fallen out of a coconut tree earlier in his life and lost the use of his legs. He said, “That young man is in a wheelchair himself, and is now in Cambodia, where the Church is paying for his training to learn how to make prosthetic limbs. He will be the main technician in the new unit at the National Hospital, working to serve others in need.” ■