

## ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### The Family

By Elder Leonard Woo

Of the Seventy

“Mother?” I would holler as I walked in the front door every day when returning home from school. Upon hearing her voice, my young heart would feel assured and settled. It was then that I would go about my schoolwork or to play. The simple routine of hearing her voice and knowing she was somewhere in the house had a calming effect on me; it meant that all was well. This daily routine nurtured my confidence and helped me handle the many challenges I would face later in life.

My parents raised 10 children despite my father’s meager income as a carpenter. Every now and then, well-intentioned relatives would question my parents’ wisdom in having so many children, given my father’s limited income. My mother would simply reply, “Tian sheng tian yang.” This Chinese saying means, “Heaven will help feed all the children that one has faith to bear.” That was a profound statement of faith in God coming from a woman who had no formal education and no knowledge of the gospel.

Looking back, despite being raised in a poor family, I had an incredibly rich childhood. Our family of 12 ate dinner together every evening. We

sat around a round wooden table with tiny wooden chairs that were handmade by my father, chatting and laughing as we shared the events of the day. We did not have money to eat in restaurants, but whatever was lacking on the table was made up by the convivial mood around the table. These are cherished memories of my humble but happy family.

“Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.”<sup>1</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley



Elder Leonard Woo

(1910–2008) taught this and many other divine principles as he read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” to the sisters at the general Relief Society meeting in Salt Lake City 20 years ago.

The First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators have the keys, power, and ability to foresee unfolding social trends, particularly those that could hurt marriages and families. They authored this prophetic proclamation to warn of many destructive trends in society—trends that were being insidiously promoted by the adversary to undermine the many essential building blocks of a happy and successful family.

Twenty years ago, anyone following current events would have observed an increasing number of “shafts in the whirlwind” (Helaman 5:12) and “fiery darts of the adversary” (1 Nephi 15:24) attacking the family at all fronts. The list of these “shafts” and “fiery darts” is long—it includes issues related to same-gender attraction, cohabitation before marriage, pornography, divorce, abortion, reluctance of married couples to have

children, spouse and child abuse, infidelity in marriages, neglect of parental responsibilities, and so forth. On such issues and circumstances affecting families, what was difficult 20 years ago is undoubtedly even more challenging now.

The family proclamation was never intended to be merely a document for doctrinal dissertation or discussion. Its compelling objective is to teach, warn, and inspire us to act in ways that will protect our marriages and families. I wish to share just three family habits that, as reiterated by the prophets, can protect families against the increasing “shafts in the whirlwind” and the “fiery darts of the adversary.” As Alma taught his son Helaman that “by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6), these simple habits can help bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of family members:

### **Personal and Family Prayer**

The most valuable gift that parents can bestow upon their children is to teach them to pray. Nothing will protect and bless your child more in his or her life than this single well-developed habit. This vital practice will connect your child to a divine and infinite lifeline. It is of grave concern to the Church that many children are growing to adulthood not having developed this crucial habit. In addition, we should pray as a family. We should



frequently let our children hear us pray in simple language and with faith in God, reflecting our complete trust in Him.

### **Personal and Family Scripture Study**

In Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, no one was able to reach the tree of life to partake of the precious fruit unless they held on to the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8:19). It was revealed to Nephi that the iron rod represented the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25), or the scriptures. Developing a scripture-reading habit is one of the most difficult and challenging endeavors for many individuals and families. But do not give up trying. Remember what the Prophet Joseph Smith said: “He who reads it oftenest will like it best.”<sup>2</sup> Much like playing an instrument, you will only truly enjoy it after you have put in the hours needed to master it. In addition, as family members struggle with personal weaknesses, they would be wise to heed the counsel of President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor

in the First Presidency, who said, “I believe reading the scriptures is the best washing machine for unclean or uncontrolled thoughts.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Family Home Evening**

My wife and I did not achieve successful family home evenings every Monday. But I must give her credit for making most family home evenings enjoyable. Since she had a captive audience for 30 minutes or so each week, she would creatively use the time as a teaching moment to address what she had observed to be amiss in the family during the week. The icing on the cake was of course the long-anticipated delicious refreshment at the end.

We once glimpsed a measure of success when our daughter Valerie remarked to her Primary teacher that her favorite day of the week was Monday—because of family home evening. An unusual answer, as most school-going kids dislike Mondays. We were heartened and encouraged by that remark.

In an April 2002 general conference address, President Hinckley highlighted the importance of succeeding at home: “I am confident that when we stand before the bar of God, there will be little mention of how much wealth we accumulated in life or of any honors which we may have achieved. But there will be searching questions concerning our domestic relations. And I am convinced that only those who have walked

## LOCAL NEWS

through life with love and respect and appreciation for their companions and children will receive from our eternal judge the words, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord’ (Matthew 25:21).<sup>4</sup>

Family is indeed the basic unit of society and “no other success can compensate for failure in the home.”<sup>5</sup> Every ingredient needed for a happy and successful family can be found in this proclamation. The courage of my parents to have many children, my mother’s decision to stay at home, and the habit of the whole family having dinner together every night are some examples of the ingredients mentioned in the proclamation. I testify that great blessings will flow and families will be strengthened and fortified against the adversary if they will study, ponder, and follow the many divine principles in this inspired “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## NOTES

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 66; see also *History of the Church*, 2:14.
3. James E. Faust, “The Power of Self-Mastery,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2000, 44, [lds.org/general-conference/2000/04/the-power-of-self-mastery](http://lds.org/general-conference/2000/04/the-power-of-self-mastery).
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Personal Worthiness to Exercise the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2002, 54.
5. J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; see also [lds.org/media-library/video/2012-05-0907=teachings-of-david-o-mckay-the-importance-of-a-strong-family](http://lds.org/media-library/video/2012-05-0907=teachings-of-david-o-mckay-the-importance-of-a-strong-family).

## The Gospel Is for Families

By Elder Vijay Ravindran

Being a true disciple of Christ has its own spiritual enrichment.

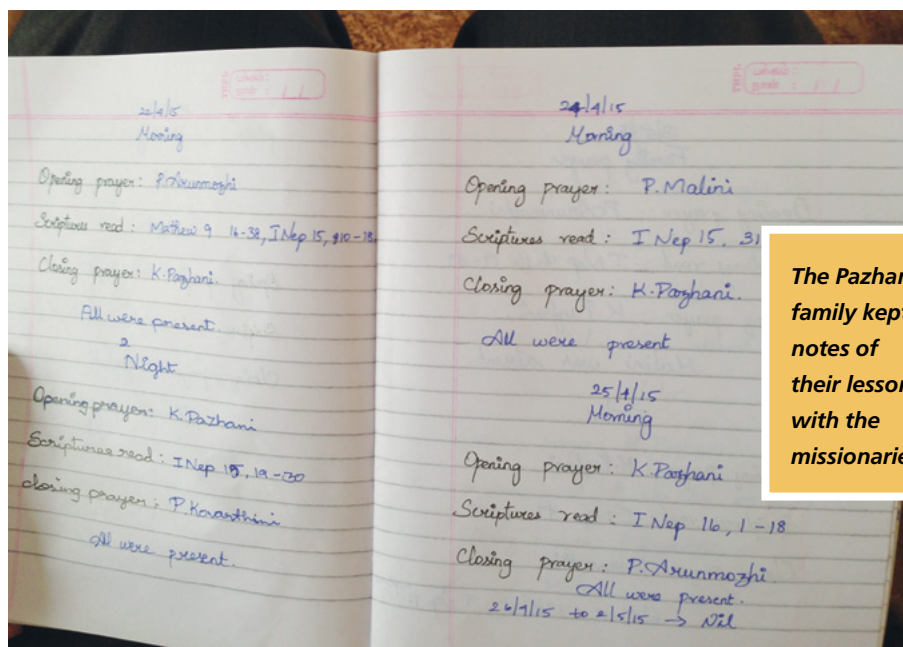
On a scorching day in Chennai, my companion, Elder Peterson, and I, were struggling to get our investigators to come to sacrament meeting. We were teaching a family who brought their wonderful neighbors, the Pazhani family, to see our church.

We were so happy as well as surprised to see them attend sacrament meeting. Soon, they were introduced to us. After sacrament meeting, we took them to the Gospel Principles class. During class Sister Arunmozhi Pazhani read a passage from the class

manual. My companion and I were completely amazed to hear her speak fluent English! Often it is very hard for missionaries in India to find investigating families who can receive the gospel in English.

After the Church meetings were over, we sat with the entire family and taught them their very first missionary lesson, which included an introduction of the Godhead and the Book of Mormon. Eventually, the Pazhani family invited us to their house to teach the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Their first experience of attending church was amazing! They were able



The Pazhani family kept notes of their lessons with the missionaries.





**Elder Vijay Ravindran with the Pazhani Family at their baptism**

to experience a warm welcome from the members.

As we continued to visit this family, we became more acquainted with them. Their family included the oldest daughter, Kovarthini, who had recently written her 10<sup>th</sup> exam; Malini, their second daughter, who was studying in 8<sup>th</sup> standard; the mother, Arunmozhi, who is a housewife; and finally, the father, Pazhani, who works as a carpenter. We were utterly amazed at the desire of this family to learn about Christianity through the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

This family started to progress very well in the lessons that we taught. In



one of the appointments we were teaching about the plan of salvation. Each family member's curiosity was piqued when they heard the three great questions of our life. With the help of our branch mission leader, we were able to teach clearly and

effectively. We expressed our vision for this family, which is to get them sealed in the temple by following the commandments of our Heavenly Father. I even shared my personal ultimate goal in life—to be sealed in the temple with my family for time

and eternity. At the end of this lesson we asked, “Which kingdom in heaven do you want to go?” They happily responded to this question saying, “The celestial kingdom.” At the end of the lesson, Sister Kovarthini gave a heartfelt closing prayer. In her prayer she prayed that my family would one day be sealed in the temple. When the prayer was over, Sister Kovarthini said that whenever she saw me talk about my family being sealed, my eyes were filled with tears. Even she wanted my entire family to become members of the church and to be sealed for time and all eternity.

I will never forget this period of my life. This amazing family began to maintain a book for family prayers and scripture studies. They even began taking attendance on who was present for discussions! The gospel has greatly influenced their lives and standards.

As the days went by, we set a baptism date for them and fasted so they all could be baptized together. Even Sisters Kovarthini and Arunmozhi fasted so that they could all be baptized on the same day. Everyone had received their witness of the Book of Mormon except the head of the house, Brother Pazhani. Just a week before their baptismal date, we met with them and read from the Book of Mormon. We invited Brother Pazhani to pray specifically about his baptism and to call us the following day to

confirm if April 12 was the day for him and his family to make a covenant with the Lord. The following morning brother Pazhani woke up and prayed to God. He felt peace and comfort; he had received his answer. He informed his family that he wanted to be baptized the following Sunday. We immediately received a call from them and were so happy! The joy in our hearts was too immense to be expressed.

On the following Sunday, after watching the first session of Sunday morning general conference, the whole family entered into the waters of baptism and made a covenant with the Lord. The Spirit in the room was strong for all present. Soon, not just this family but many were able to come into the fold of Christ. As time went by, each member started to progress in the gospel. The father received the priesthood, the mother bore her testimony, and the daughters progressed in Young Women.

I’m very grateful to my Heavenly Father and my mission president for giving me the opportunity to serve in this branch and help this family receive the gospel. I testify that anyone, with a strong foundation to start in the gospel, can feel the love of Christ and come unto Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Elder Vijay Ravindran serves in the India Bangalore Mission*

## Like Nephi of Old!

By Joseph Anand

Like the prophet Nephi, I have been born of goodly parents. I was taught somewhat in the knowledge of my father. I have seen many afflictions in the course of my days, but I was favored by the Lord. Just like Nephi of old my life began.

I was grateful to my dad. Every Sunday he used to study scriptures. But he never asked me to study the scriptures; he taught me with actions more than words. I remember every Sunday he used to counsel me on how I could be a better student in the class, my behavior towards others, and what kind of words I should use with others. On the other hand, my mom comes from Hindu background, but she had great faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Sunday she used to go to church for the early-morning mass. She would also wake me and say, “It’s time to go to church.” My response always was, “Mom I will come next week.” In my early age I saw the great faith my mom had in Jesus Christ.

I attended different churches, and I was eagerly looking forward to coming closer to Jesus Christ. Days went by and then the great miracle happened! I met missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day



Joseph Anand  
and his mother

Saints, and they taught me the true restored gospel. I got baptized. I came to know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the restored Church on earth today. I introduced the missionaries to my dad and mom. They became progressing learners of the Church.

My dad found out his mortal life was coming to an end. One day he called me and said, “Anand, in your life you need to magnify three responsibilities.” They were:

1. Love the Lord with all your heart, might, mind, and strength.
2. Seek knowledge by obtaining higher education in your life.
3. Take care of your mom.

He said, “You will face trials, troubles, and challenges to fulfill, but never never give up on these things.”

Soon after telling me these three responsibilities, he left this mortal world. After my dad’s death, mom and I were left alone. As a recent convert at that time, I did not know who to look to or take counsel from. We were tossed here and there. After some time I started to go to the church. My mom came with me and she was baptized.

In the Church, like the other young men, I also had a desire to go on mission. I told my mom my desire, to which she replied,

“Anand, if you go, who is there to take care of me?” Months went by. After much fasting and praying, I asked my mom, “Mom! What can I do for you so that I can go on a mission?” After some prayerful consideration, she said, “Anand, I know right now you are pursuing a master’s degree program. In your exams I want you to get distinction marks and be an outstanding student of your college. Show me this certificate and you can go on a mission. If you are not able to get distinction marks, you still can go on a mission but my heart will not be happy.” I am an average student in my class. Nevertheless, I trusted the Lord and I worked hard to fulfill my mom’s desire. I remember there was not enough food, enough clothing, and enough shelter when I was studying. But the Lord gave me success in this. I fulfilled my mom’s condition of getting distinction marks and was able to go on a mission. My mission taught me many important things. After returning home, I saw that my mom was happy. My branch president said, “Brother Anand, you went as a boy but you came home as a man.” I am so grateful to the Lord for helping me.

After serving my mission I trusted God in each and every doing. In Proverbs, chapter 3, verse 5 and 6 we read, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” I love that verse. In the Book of Mormon, Alma, teaching his sons, said, “whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day” (Alma 36:3). After my mission, branch leaders became a great support to me. I receive counsel from them. My branch president knows what is going on in my life. I am very forthright with them. One such counsel the leaders gave me was for me to pursue a research program in physics. I worked hard. With God’s help I was selected as a Ph D research scholar at the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT).

I am preparing myself to go to the temple and be sealed for eternity. I know when we trust God and are obedient, He will help us. I know the Book of Mormon contains true words of God. I know The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church upon the whole face of the earth. Of these things I testify in the name of the Lord whom we serve and whom we love, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Brother Joseph lives in Vellore, India*



## Same Everywhere!

By Elder Jacob Parks

Over the past year of being a missionary in the India Bangalore Mission, I've come to learn a lot of things: how to eat with my hands, how to be patient during trials. But one of the most important things I've learned came to me as I was doing my Skype call home this last Mother's Day. Towards the end of the call, my dad asked me this question: "How

has serving as a missionary in India strengthened your testimony?" As I was pondering that question, a few thoughts came to my mind. I have learned more about Joseph Smith and have come to love and appreciate him more. I've learned more about the Book of Mormon and of the power it brings. Although these both are important, one of the best things that I have learned/been reminded of is that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the same throughout

the world, no matter where you may be. It doesn't matter if you are in South Jordan, Utah, USA; Jackson, Mississippi, USA; or here in Bangalore, India. Christ's Church is the same wherever you go.

Having lived in Utah my whole life and being born into a LDS family, I always knew that the Church was true. That's what I was taught my whole life. My understanding of that changed on August 12, 2014. That was the day I first arrived here in India. When I walked

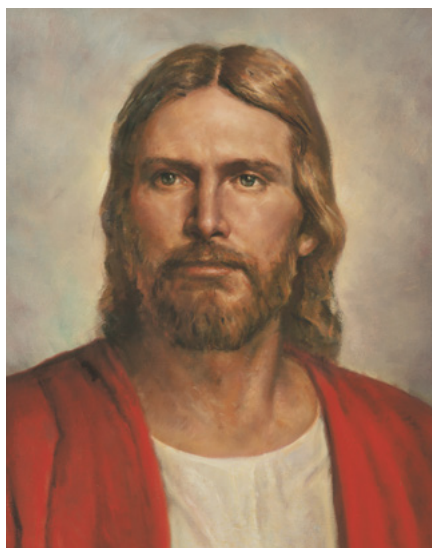


*Elder Parks with a family he helped teach*

out of the airport and got into the car to go to the mission office, my first thought was, “Where am I?” Prior to my mission, I had looked up Bangalore up on the internet. It was nothing like what the pictures had shown. Panic and fear started to sink in. All of that increased later that day when we were invited to go out and do street contacting. As I tried talking to people, I realized that an Indian accent is a lot harder to understand in person than it is on TV shows or movies. I became discouraged. “There is no way I can teach people here. They don’t understand me,” I would think to myself.

The day went on. I survived the Indian traffic. After street contacting, all of us missionaries met again in the mission office. There we had a nice dinner and also a trainers’ meeting. During that meeting I found out that I would be serving in Rajahmundry Second Branch. “Rajahmundry . . . That’s a cool name. It must be an awesome place to serve,” was the thought that I had. I went around talking to some of the elders, asking them about the place where I soon would serve. The responses that I got went something like “You’re going to Rajahmundry? That place is the best!” or “Oh man, that place is a village—have fun.” After hearing those comments, I didn’t know what to think.

The time finally came to where I could see these things for myself.



It wasn’t like anything that anyone had said. It was an actual city, just without the big skyscrapers. The area looked great, and I was certain I had hit the jackpot. But as quickly as my view changed the first time I arrived in India, it changed for the area. No one understood me. The dominate language there is Telugu, and not too many people knew English. I began to again feel dismayed.

I sat and listened to the lessons go on in Telugu, adding in a thought here and there. I hoped and prayed that things would get better. Finally Sunday came around. As I attended sacrament meeting, more thoughts of discouragement came to my mind. Most of the meeting was also in Telugu and I hadn’t quite gotten to the point to where I could understand the Indian accent in English.

As I was sitting there looking around, thinking, I realized something. Everything was the same. We started with a hymn, we had a prayer, announcements, and the sacrament—everything that would happen back at home. There was nothing different about it other than the language that things were presented in. Everyone there was a Latter-day Saint who came together to worship the Savior. In that moment, all my doubts went away. I knew I was doing the same missionary work here as any other place in the world. It wouldn’t matter if I were serving in Africa, Scotland, Brazil, or Australia. The Church is the same. We all believe and know that Jesus Christ died for us. We all know that His Church was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We have the Book of Mormon as a witness of that. I know that the Lord is at the head of His work. I know that the scriptures will be fulfilled and that the gospel will be sounded in every ear across the earth. I am grateful to be one of His representatives in bringing that about.

I know that this is the only true Church. I know as we follow modern-day prophets and apostles, as well as the olden-day ones, we can all return to live with our Heavenly Father again. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

*Elder Parks serves in the India Bangalore Mission*