

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

What Should We Do When We Can't Do It All?

By Elder Stanley G. Ellis

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Stanley G. Ellis

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) clearly taught us that we can't do it all. "Let me say that there is never enough time to do it all. There is so much more than any of us can single-handedly give attention to" (Worldwide Learning Training Meeting, June 21, 2003, 22). But some of us feel we should be able to! Aren't we striving to be perfect? Won't the Lord help us? We need to remember that the Lord's counsel and promises refer to every *needful* thing (see D&C 109:15) and to that which is *expedient* (see D&C 88:64). The norm President Hinckley implied is that there is always more to do, say, study, be, and share than we can possibly get to.

That is part of the plan. God gave us agency—the ability and privilege to choose. For us to use it, we must have choices. Our need to choose means there are mutually exclusive alternatives. Of all we could do, say, and be, what will we select and which will we let go?

For the faithful, the choices often involve deciding among several good things. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the challenge as picking between good, better, and best (see

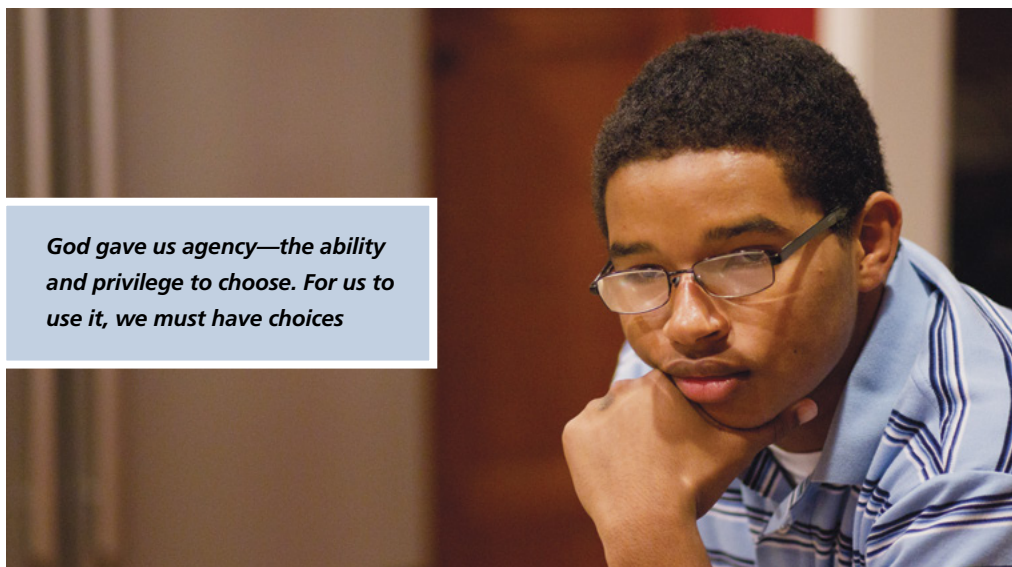
"Good, Better, Best," *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–108).

The short answer to "What should we do when we can't do it all?" is found in the scriptures: "But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do" (D&C 46:7).

Think about it! God knows what would be best for each of us to choose to do at this time. He invites, and even commands, us to ask Him and promises to answer "liberally." When we receive the witness of the Spirit, we can know the right thing to do.

Let me share some examples of how this has worked for me. Often I have received callings that I did not know how to magnify. I reached out to people I trust who had already had those callings and asked for their advice. They generously responded. Of all those pages of counsel, I chose to use that which the Spirit confirmed was important for me in my situation.

We love general conference and have made considerable efforts to attend each one. We have prayed for guidance and tried to be open to the teachings. I used to take good notes and try to do all that was suggested.



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Painting of Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)

Now I focus on those things the Spirit confirms are most important for me to do at this time.

It is also important to recognize how the Spirit communicates to us. One significant aspect is explained in John 16:13: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.”

According to this insight, the Holy Ghost will rarely give us a sermon but usually confirm to us as truth something someone else teaches. Therefore we need to be careful to be where we are supposed to be, when we are supposed to be there.

For example, President Gordon B. Hinckley, as a twelve-year-old boy, received a witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet as he attended a stake priesthood meeting and sang with the congregation “Praise to the Man” (*Hymns*, no. 27). The Spirit confirmed the truth of what he heard.

I experienced this aspect of the Spirit while attending a stake priesthood leadership meeting. A bishop was teaching the model of priesthood leadership found in Doctrine and Covenants 121. As he did so, the Holy Ghost confirmed to me that that is the way the Lord wants us to interact with each other.

The Book of Mormon explains a wonderful role of the Spirit in our lives. Sometimes we know what to do, but not how to do it! Nephi teaches us that the Holy Ghost will show us how: “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we should be “doers of the word” (James 1:22). In fact, as agents we should be “anxiously engaged” in good things (see D&C 58:27–28). Since we can’t do it all, the Lord has blessed us with the gift of the Holy Ghost. As we ask in faith, the Spirit can help us prioritize what is important for us at this time, select which is best of the good alternatives, help us know how to magnify our callings, confirm the truth and applicability of what we learn, and show us how to do what we need to do.

I testify that the Holy Ghost really is a great blessing to us. I joy in “the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:26). My prayer is that we will all choose to use it. ■

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Pray Always

By Elder Khumbulani D. Mdletshe

In the beginning, Adam and Eve learned to communicate in a language that was “pure and undefiled” (Moses 6:6) and they used this language to communicate with God. They also taught their children to read and write (see Moses 6:5–6, 46). Speech and writing facilitate communication between people and allow information to be transferred in a variety of settings. When our forefathers started to manipulate tools, various methods were used to convey information. Native Americans used smoke signals. On our continent of Africa, we used drums. The Persian Empire built roads, and Egyptians used domesticated pigeons to communicate over long distances.¹ Today, we have cell phones and the Internet, which allow easy and frequent communication. In my younger days, letter writing was the common method of communicating, and it took a considerable amount of time for a message to arrive. Now with the Internet it takes a matter of seconds.



Elder Mdletshe

Heavenly Father also expects us to communicate with Him. Prayer is His divinely appointment system for doing so (see Matthew 6:6). The world’s



President Thomas S. Monson

systems of communication have continued to evolve, but God's system has remained the same since the Creation. In the scriptures, the Lord is clear in His instruction to "pray always" (see Luke 21:36; 2 Nephi 32:9; D&C 10:5; 75:11).

Prayer has been a very important part of my life, whether making important decisions such as who to marry or which field of study I should focus on. As a father, it has been wonderful to gather my family together and pray. It has been heart-warming to see my children ask for a blessing. That tells me they have learned the importance of prayer and are seeing its role in their own lives.

The standard works teach us much about the role and importance of

prayer. Heavenly Father permitted Nephi to see Lehi's vision. Nephi's brothers wanted to also understand the things he had seen (see 1 Nephi 15:7). As his brothers asked him questions, Nephi responded with his own: "Have ye inquired of the Lord?" (1 Nephi 15:8). In other words: Have you prayed? He was trying to teach them a process of problem-solving. Confusion and indecision can be solved by praying to the Lord. He will assist us in finding answers and providing clarity.

The story of the Restoration of the gospel began with prayer. After reading James 1:5, Joseph Smith went to a nearby forest to offer a humble prayer. You and I have been blessed by the answer he received on that

day. An answer to a simple and sincere prayer can have a lasting impact. The story of the First Vision is one powerful example.

On the day my wife was to deliver our first child, she was in labor from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. At 4:30, the nurse who was in a room with us, without saying a word, quickly left. Within seconds she was back with the doctor. The doctor took a look at the monitor and said, "Quickly, let us go, we need to operate." Seeing



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their concern, I knew something was wrong. I asked the doctor if I could have a second with my wife. Even though time was critical, he agreed. I offered one of the shortest prayers I have ever given in my life. But it was sincere. In less than 10 minutes, which seemed like a lifetime, our daughter arrived. The color of her skin had

turned gray, but she was breathing and declared healthy. Later I learned how close we had come to losing her. I learned from this experience that God has no strict formula for prayer as long as we are sincere. He also does not care where we give the prayer, as long as we acknowledge Him. He will hear us and respond in His own time and

way. I also learned that sometimes our prayers are immediately answered.

Earlier I mentioned the use of the Internet and the cell phone. At the airport or in any public transportation system, it is interesting to notice how many people are caught up on their phones or tablets. As soon as an airplane lands, most passengers turn on their phones and continue conversing from where they left off. Most want to be in touch with their loved ones. We need to remember that communicating with our Heavenly Father is even more critical.

If prayer is so important in our lives, why it is sometimes difficult to pray? The Bible Dictionary provides an answer: “. . . difficulties about prayer arise from forgetting this relationship.” What relationship? “God is our Father, and we are His children.” Once this relationship is acknowledged, “then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part.” President Thomas S. Monson taught, “Men and women of integrity, character, and purpose have ever recognized a power higher than themselves and have sought through prayer to be guided by that power. Such has it ever been. So shall it ever be.”²

The commandment is clear: “Pray always,” and the promise is also profound: “that you may come off conqueror” (D&C 10:5). ■

NOTES

1. See “History of Communication,” historyworld.net.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “The Prayer of Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 20.

LOCAL NEWS

Joy at 5:30 a.m.

As related to Connie Rapoo
from La Reunion

Daily scripture study is a worthwhile investment. Sister Brabant and the Relief Society sisters in her ward in La Reunion testify of this with full conviction. When the sisters shared their concerns about not reading the scriptures due to their busy schedules, Sister Brabant gave them a challenge. She said it is possible to remain obedient to God's commandments despite individual burdens and the demands of family responsibilities. She thus encouraged them to prioritize scripture study in their daily household routines by reading in the early mornings. She herself had a busy schedule, which included commuting to France for her full-time job, sustaining her husband in his calling, and taking care of her family. "I made a conscious decision to get up very early in the morning to read the scriptures before getting to my daily responsibilities. Sometimes I got up at 5:30 a.m. to do that!" Sister Brabant explained enthusiastically. She reiterated the need to deliberately create time for personal scripture study, underlining the blessings that come from righteous obedience.

Her message of encouragement echoed the idea that the need for constant spiritual messages is a crucial component of every family's overall nourishment. With their consolidated



faith, the sisters recalled the verse, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). They decided to exercise their faith by creating the time to read the scriptures and working at the desire to be blessed through constant, daily scripture study.

The results were very positive. The sisters said that their testimonies of scripture reading improved and many blessings came to their homes. It seems that they remembered Paul's

admonition that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead" (see James 2:17). By enlivening their faith, the sisters reaped the rewards of believing and trusting in their ability to obey all of God's commandments. The exercise of faith, the desire for righteous living, and the deliberate choice to obey the Lord strengthened the sisters' testimonies. Clearly, Sister Brabant and the sisters in La Reunion learned through exercising their faith that benefits do indeed accrue from daily scripture study. ■

Charlene's Temple Trip Miracle

Charlene Persence of Milnerton Ward, Bellville Stake, Cape Town South Africa, as told to Thailia Holmes

The first time I prepared to go to the temple to receive my endowments was the most exciting time of my life. I had saved up for months

and was going to make the 1,200-mile (2000 km) round trip from Cape Town to Johannesburg with my ward. I had taken the temple preparation class and



*Charlene
Persence*

had prepared the name of my mother—who died when I was only three years old—for temple work.

Two nights before our planned departure, I went to the store to get snacks for the road and to withdraw the money needed to pay for my transport. However, on my way back home, two men came up behind me and held me by force. One held a knife to my throat while the other grabbed all my things. They took my wallet, my cell phone, and even my snacks. I screamed as loudly as I could, but it felt like no one heard me. And then it was just over.

I called the police, who eventually caught the two robbers. But my heart was broken: not over the phone, the cards I would have to replace, or the snacks they had taken, but the money that was now gone. Without it, I could not go to the temple. I cried and cried with anguish. The following day was a Sunday. I went to church and, with a heavy heart, told everyone I wouldn't be able to go on the trip as I no longer had the money to pay for it. Our wonderful Relief Society sisters prayed with me that I might find peace, and that our Heavenly Father would deliver a miracle.

And He did. I got home that Sunday afternoon and found an envelope with my name written on it. Inside was

exactly the amount of money I needed to go on the trip. Again I cried, but this time it was tears of joy. To this day I don't know who gave me that money.

I went to the temple. There are no words to adequately describe what I felt as I received my own endowment and then did my mother's temple work alongside my ward members. As I walked into the celestial room, I saw a beloved friend with her arms open, smiling at me. For that split second, I felt like I had seen my mother, who had died when she was only 23 years old. I looked around the room and got a glimpse of heaven. Everyone looked like angels in their white robes, and finally everything I had learned made complete sense. It was a day I'll never forget.

Satan will always try everything in his power to prevent us from doing the things that will help us return to our Heavenly Father. But if you trust our Father in Heaven, He will provide a way for us to do the things He has asked of us.

I know the Church is true with all my heart, and I have seen miracle after miracle happen in my life that has only strengthened my testimony about the plan of happiness set out for us. I know the temple is the one place where we can feel closest to our Father in Heaven and receive answers to our questions and prayers. It's the one place I know where families can go to be sealed and to stay together forever. ■

Called to Serve in the Lord's House

When Kenneth and Muriel Armstrong grew up in South Africa in the 1940s and 1950s, the national government and the predominant church were essentially the same, so joining The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was viewed by many as a betrayal of the country. Consequently, the Church was very small and was mostly an American-style church. The branches were usually run by missionaries, the members taught square dancing to raise money for building funds, and the districts held gold-and-green-themed balls.

Brother Armstrong grew up attending Primary and participating in the youth programs. He knew and loved the gospel, so when he found and married Sister Armstrong in 1962, they determined to be sealed in the temple, refusing to buy a house until they had been to the temple first. They saved their money for five years in order to pay for the 10-day journey by ship to



*Muriel and
Kenneth
Armstrong*

the London England Temple, where they and their two children were sealed.

The few members in South Africa worked hard to establish the Church. Besides raising funds to build chapels, the members in Springs, where Brother Armstrong was the first branch president and then bishop, actually built the pews and the podium that are still used today. As Brother Armstrong recalls, people didn't damage the chapels when they had helped build them. Members thought, "I painted that wall, so you'd better not mark it."

When the Springs Chapel was completed, the branch was deeply in debt. President Armstrong and his counselors fasted and prayed to know how to get out of debt. Then he went to his congregation and asked them each to contribute a month's salary to the branch to eliminate the debt. The members accepted the challenge, and within six months, the branch was out of debt.

Brother Armstrong worked in the automotive industry, doing public relations for several major automobile companies. When he retired, he decided to

start his own public relations firm. But just as he was getting started in 1993, then-Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called Brother Armstrong for an interview. He asked Brother Armstrong to serve as president of the Cape Town South Africa Mission. Having never served a mission because of the national laws when he was growing up, Brother Armstrong blurted, "Are you sure?" Elder Monson reassured him that the call was from God.

In 2004, President Armstrong was asked to be president of the South African Missionary Training Center, with no counselors. For four months, the only time the Armstrongs left the MTC was to go to the shop. However, although they were overwhelmed with the needs of the newly called missionaries from all over Africa, they successfully taught them how to represent the Church in their appearance, their behavior, and their knowledge of the gospel.

In November 2010, the Armstrongs were asked to serve as the Johannesburg South Africa

Temple president and matron. Even though they were worried about the heavy responsibility this calling would entail, after their interview with President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, they knew it was the Lord who had called them. After numerous spiritual and sacred experiences in the temple, Brother and Sister Armstrong now declare, "We have learned to know without a doubt that the Lord is in control of His house. . . . We are very grateful for the opportunity to serve in the temple." ■

Excerpted from an interview with Kenneth and Muriel Armstrong

Tithing was the Ticket

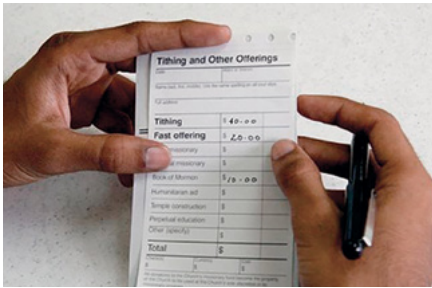
By Elder Alexander B. Morrison,
formerly of the Seventy

We often sing "Praise to the Man" in our congregations (*Hymns*, no. 27), which is about Joseph Smith and contains the memorable line, "Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven." Such sacrifice may take many forms, from the physical hardships suffered by the early members of the Church to modern-day social ostracism or the loss of employment, friends, or even family associations. Sacrifice, though it tugs at our heartstrings and stretches us



JOHANNESBURG SOUTH AFRICA TEMPLE

What blessings have come to you and your family from making temple covenants? The Africa Southeast Area Communications Committee is requesting that local members submit inspirational articles of the personal sacrifices that were made so they could travel to the temple. These articles may include pictures that were taken on that occasion. Please send to: africasecommunications@gmail.com.



almost beyond what we can bear, does indeed bring forth the blessings of heaven, as a protestant minister discovered.

Baende Isukongola had a thriving congregation in Kinshasa, Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo). However, he began to have serious misgivings about his church's teachings. As he searched the scriptures, Baende noted numerous teachings and practices which were missing from his church, including the biblical practice of tithing. He investigated the teachings and practices of other churches, but he found them to be incomplete as well.

One day, a friend mentioned to Baende that a group he knew only as "the Mormons" preached and practiced tithing. The minister enlisted the assistance of the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa for help locating such a church. The Embassy directed him to the Zaire Kinshasa Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Not long afterward, Baende arrived on the doorstep of the mission home, anxious to learn about Church doctrine. Each week, armed with a long list of penetrating questions, he met with the missionaries. His questions were answered as the Spirit bore testimony to him. He asked to be baptized. Somewhat later, his wife and two sons also joined the Church.

Knowing what he now knew, Baende could not remain a protestant minister. He resigned his pulpit, and in so doing, gave up a guaranteed income with lifetime security. He was glad to do so, realizing that he had found a pearl of great price, a splendid treasure in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Still, it took great courage in a country with unemployment rates of over 80 percent. There was no assurance at all that he would ever work again.

Then a miracle occurred. Baende obtained a permanent, secure job with the government. In the midst of all the unemployment in Zaire, he had secured his temporal future. Two weeks later, one of his sons also secured employment. Both recognized the hand of the Lord in their lives and testified often of God's goodness to them. Baende and his family remain faithful members of the Church.

Sacrifice is often defined as what we *give up*. But in the economy of Heaven, we always receive something even better. Brother Baende Isukongola is a living testimony that it is true. ■

Taken from Elder Alexander B. Morrison, "SOS," New Era, Jan. 1990, 7.

The Africa Southeast Area has a website that publishes messages from the Area Presidency as well as inspirational stories from members in Africa. Please visit us at africase.lds.org.



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The Setswane scriptures can be read online here: www.lds.org/scriptures?lang=tsn ■

