

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

Make the Sacrament a Spiritual Experience

By Elder Andrew O’Riordan

Area Seventy



Elder Andrew O’Riordan

Over the last 12 months our Apostles have urged the leaders in the Church and the worldwide Church membership to increase our observance of the Sabbath day both at church and in our homes.

Exodus 20:8–10 records:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

“But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.”

The purpose of the Apostles’ direction is not only to assist us to obey the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy but also to aid us to qualify to have His Spirit to be with

us. This is a specific promise extended to all who rest from their labours, attend church, and partake of the sacrament with a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

There is a great need for each one of us to fortify ourselves spiritually and draw near to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The



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Sabbath day is the perfect day for us to do that as we have the opportunity to partake of the sacrament and review our thoughts, intents, and actions of the previous week and renew our commitment to follow the Saviour of the world.

Once we have been baptised by one holding proper authority, we are spiritually washed clean through the cleansing blood of the Saviour Jesus Christ's Atonement. We are then, by the laying on of hands, confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extended the gift of the Holy Ghost. The reception of the Holy Ghost has a sanctifying effect as if being cleansed by fire. This is a spiritual purifying-like fire that has the effect of changing our nature from that of a carnal, fallen state that can't comprehend spiritual things to a new state of righteousness, or spiritual rebirth, that enables us to discern the will of God and desire to follow it. This new spiritual understanding will ultimately enable us to have eternal life and dwell with God, all made possible through the love and sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This experience, however, was never designed to be a once-in-a-lifetime event. Partaking of the sacrament each Sunday gives us the opportunity to repeat the cleansing experience of baptism over and over again. As we approach the ordinance of the sacrament with a broken heart

and a contrite spirit, recognising and repenting of our sins and weaknesses, we can feel the cleansing power of the Atonement being applied in our lives as the Holy Ghost purifies our minds and hearts, resulting in hopeful, spiritual renewal. This process enables us to retain the remission of our sins.

President Henry B. Eyring stated the following: "If you have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost during this day, . . . you may take it as evidence that the Atonement is working in your life. For that reason and many others, you would do well to put yourself in places and in tasks that invite the promptings of the Holy Ghost. . . . The reception of the Holy Ghost cleanses us through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."¹

The sacrament meeting is the most important meeting of all the meetings we attend in the Church, and weekly preparation and attendance at this spiritual feast can literally transform our lives and preserve our faith and testimony of Jesus Christ and the restored gospel week in and week out.

In Moroni 6:4–6 we read:

"And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished

by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

"And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

"And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus."

Every year in the Pacific Area thousands are baptised into the Church, and it has been my pleasure to meet and encourage many of these new members. Often, making the changes in their lives that have enabled them to observe the Sabbath day and attend stake conferences and especially sacrament meetings has brought powerful, spiritual conversion experiences that have convinced them of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. I see this as a promised spiritual blessing that has been bestowed for faithful Sabbath day observance.

I testify of the spiritual blessings that await those who observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy by attending sacrament meeting and partaking of the sacrament in remembrance of Him. ■

NOTE

1. Henry B. Eyring, "Gifts of the Spirit for Hard Times" (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Sept. 10, 2006), 4, broadcasts.lds.org.

LOCAL PAGES

A Humble Conversion

By Andrew Humble

All my life the Spirit has been with me, prompting me, trying to get my attention, but I never understood what it was. I went to a Church of England primary school and then a Church of England secondary school, where it was common practice to sing hymns and read the Bible, but I never really considered what it was all about. I even sang in a cathedral choir for several years. Even as a young teenager I knew there was something more out there, but it didn't click for me.

Then when I was 14, my family moved to Australia, and the baptism of fire began. I was enrolled into Scoresby High School, which was incredibly rough, and I found music, drugs, and alcohol, which were part of my life until my early 20s, when a friend's mother invited me to live with them for a while. Honestly, she saved me from myself.

Even though I attended church schools, my family was atheist. I didn't think about Heavenly Father, or Jesus, or care about religion and faith. For years I felt lost and didn't feel the Spirit again.

Not long after I met my wife, Anna, I also met a pastor who reintroduced me to the Bible and prayer. I began to feel the promptings of the Spirit



Anna and Andrew Humble

again. As an adult I recognised what it was but didn't understand what was happening.

Early in our married life we moved to the UK and actively sought out

churches, hoping to find one that we felt we belonged to. One church we attended ticked some boxes, but something was missing. I felt something had been missing my whole life,

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE HUMBLE FAMILY AND USED WITH PERMISSION

and the churches we attended were just not quite right.

When Anna was pregnant with our first twins, we experienced trouble with premature labour. I prayed to Heavenly Father and felt the calming guidance of the Spirit. The situation improved, the twins were born, and things were relatively all right.

In 2013 we had returned to Australia and were living back in Tootgarook. We had been through family, emotional and financial challenges by this point and now had five children, and were expecting twins again!

Enter the Byrnes family . . . Steve and Karen Byrne bought the house next to us in 2013, and from day one there was a connection, we got on so well. Though they were Latter-day Saints, I had never been one to judge, and I engaged in frequent conversations regarding the Book of Mormon and the Latter-day Saint Church with Steve.

One day we looked out the window to see more than 20 people tearing down the side fence and went out to investigate. It was a Mormon army of members and youth out in force helping out the Byrne family get their fence sorted. It was an amazing thing to see, and to be honest it made me chuckle quite a bit.

This was the starting point for me. Soon we were being introduced to the missionaries, learning about the Book of Mormon, receiving weekly

missionary lessons, and attending church occasionally. Our twins had arrived, and I was working away from home a bit. Things were a little tough, especially for Anna at home with the family to look after.

Unfortunately I then got sick and had to stop work for nearly a year. During that time the missionaries visited, helping us with chores around the house, which was amazing and really appreciated.

Up until this point I had managed to get through two years of investigating the Church without making a commitment, and there were many reasons why. Firstly, I felt Anna was not ready to commit, and I didn't want to do this without her. I wasn't ready to give up tea, alcohol, and the occasional cigarette, and I wasn't truly convinced it was worth changing my whole life and my family's lives for a church that had strict covenants to follow.

We continued to have regular visits from the missionaries, became good friends with some of the members and their families, and felt the promptings of the Spirit, but I was still holding out, until one day I made a decision.

I really wanted to know which was the right church. I asked the ward mission leader, Mark Gilbert, to set up a meeting with the missionaries and Alan O'Riordan, whom we had become friends with, and start from the beginning with the lessons. One

of the missionaries, Elder Fermanez, was a quiet-spoken, brand-new elder, just starting out on his mission. We began with a prayer, and then Elder Fermanez started to speak about Joseph Smith and the First Vision.

It was a defining moment of my life. As he spoke it seemed as if he were speaking very loud and very clear, and I wondered why he was shouting. I was so in tune with what he was saying, I didn't notice my surroundings or the other people in the room. I asked the others what they felt, and they said they could hardly hear him speak. It was one of the most intense feelings I have ever had, and that was all I needed to know that Heavenly Father is real, Jesus Christ is our Saviour, the Spirit guides us, and Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and restored the Church to the earth.

From that moment my faith started to build. The missionaries, along with Alan and Mark, came to our house for more lessons, and I began changing things to make sure I could keep my covenants when baptised. I stopped drinking tea and coffee, stopped smoking and drinking alcohol, and started to read my scriptures and pray. Anna was now catching up and had started to feel the Spirit. Our children were also involved in the lessons.

Little moments of prompting from the Spirit, attending church to partake of the sacrament, holding family home evenings, and learning more about

the gospel each week have brought me a sense of belonging, purpose, and peace, knowing that everything will be all right. Even now when things seem to go wrong and we can't cope, a simple prayer gives hope and optimism. It's strange how the Spirit works, but I know how important it is to pray and read our scriptures to get the guidance and answers we need to grow in the right direction.

Anna, Maximus, Oliver and I were all baptized in February this year, which is an event I simply can't put into any other words other than to say, "The gospel is simply beautiful and beautifully simple"—thanks to Steve Byrne for this!

It was an amazing experience, and I am so proud of my family for taking this step, and we are striving to become the best we can be. ■

services feeling I had missed something, and I didn't feel uplifted.

I had many unanswered questions. Why do people suffer and have trials? Is death the end? What is the purpose of my life? I was always scared of dying. Throughout the years of exploring different faiths, I prayed off and on, mainly when something was wrong as a plea for help, or if I was expecting a baby, but never consistently or with real questions.

One day in 2013 my husband was talking to our new neighbours, who are Latter-day Saints. The missionaries were there, and my husband seemed really drawn to them. He invited the missionaries over for a chat. To be honest, when he mentioned they were coming over, I really was not keen. I may have rolled my eyes . . . I had twin babies and five other children, which meant no sleep. I was exhausted, and I couldn't put two words together, never mind have a conversation with a group of people! So it was very slow progress. Andrew wanted to invite them over, and I was reluctant. I felt I didn't know the stories of the Bible; now there was another whole book to read and understand. I had only ever heard negative things about the Mormon faith.

After a few lessons I decided to go with my neighbour to my first sacrament meeting to see what it was like. I spent a lot of the time in the mother's room and felt too tired to really take

Remember, Heavenly Father Loves You

By Anna Humble

As a baby I was christened Church of England, though my family never attended church. In my primary school years, I occasionally went with my friend to her Methodist church, and I enjoyed hearing the stories and colouring the pamphlets they gave out to Sunday school children.

When I was 12, I received my first Bible for secondary school. I remember being excited to get it, and I started to read it at bedtimes, though I struggled to understand it. My secondary school was a Quaker school, and we attended weekly religious meetings. However, I always felt awkward and uncomfortable there. A lot of the time the meetings were just silent and no one spoke. I never felt the Spirit, and I didn't understand their beliefs.

As a teenager I occasionally prayed in bed at night, or if I was upset, or having difficulties. It wasn't till I was in my early 20s and married that I began to think more about the purpose of my life, and I felt a desire to find a church and decide what I really believed. This was not as easy as I thought. Over the next 15 years my husband and I visited different churches, sometimes together, sometimes separately, but nothing quite felt right.

We often found that our friends or acquaintances were Christians, of various denominations. I questioned them about their faith and went to Bible study groups, where I met some lovely people, but still I felt nothing. The churches didn't seem to be able to answer my questions. I left the

anything in. I left it a while before I went back.

However, looking back I think this is when a seed was planted, as I felt the urge to commit to reading the Book of Mormon, and although I didn't always feel up to having the missionaries visit, I began to realise that when they did visit I felt uplifted, refreshed, and happier when they came over and shared a lesson.

After quite a few lessons Andrew went to a member's house and met with the missionaries to try to understand the Book of Mormon better. He had a great experience and came home very excited. I was happy for him, but I wondered why I didn't have a lightning-bolt confirmation from Heavenly Father. What was I doing wrong?

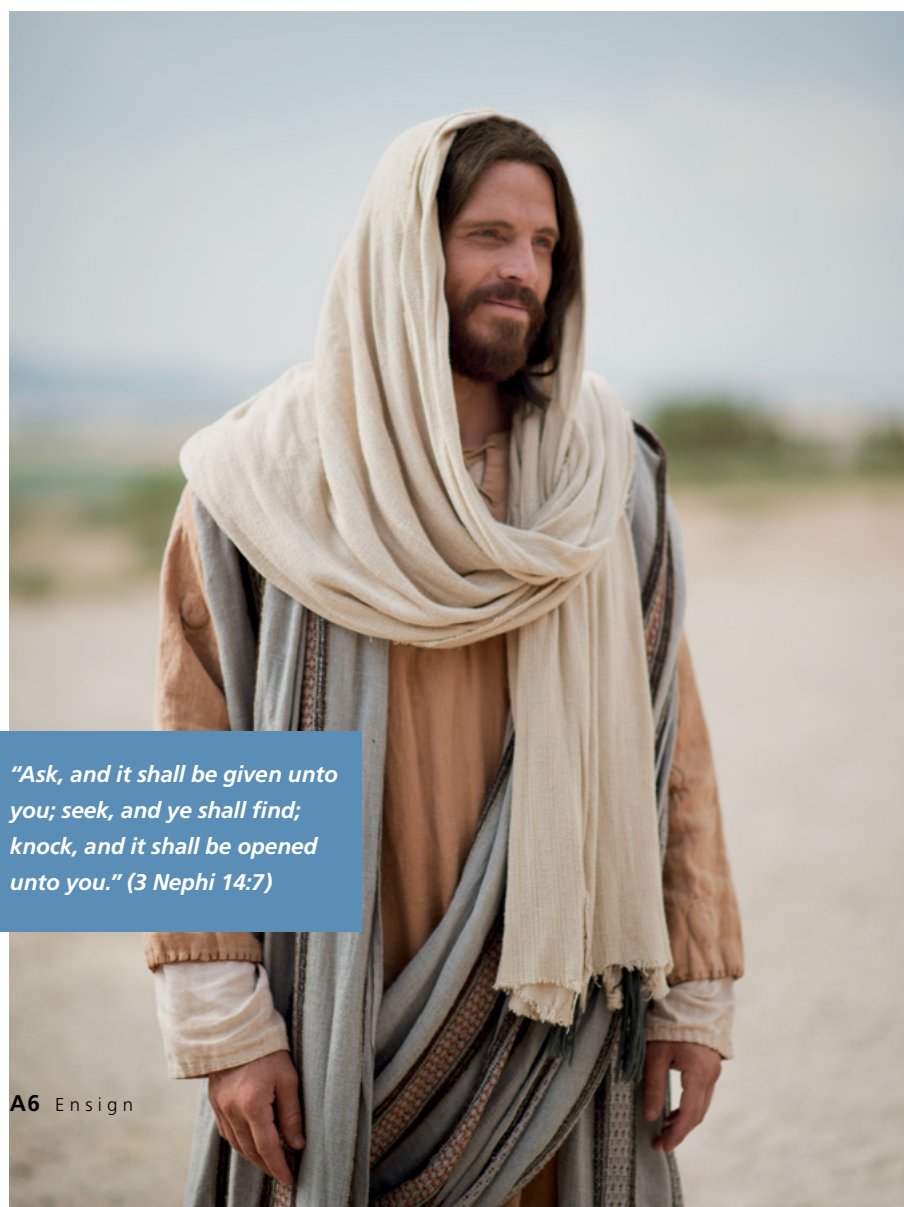
However, I persevered and read *Ensign* magazine articles when I

had a brief moment. I read little bits of scripture when I could. I kept coming across the same quotes or scriptures; then they would be mentioned at sacrament meeting, or in Relief Society, or in conversation with a member. In particular, the following really stuck with me through my searching: "Your faith will grow not by chance, but by choice" (Elder Neil L. Andersen); "Seek, and ye shall find" (3 Nephi 14:7); and "Line upon line" (Isaiah 28:13).

In August 2015 I went to Braeside for a stake meeting, and I heard Elder Kevin W. Pearson speak. I was lucky enough to be able to meet him and ask a few questions. I wanted to find out how I would know it was the Spirit talking to me and not just my own thoughts. He answered that the Spirit communes with a clear message both in your head and your heart (your heart will burn). As I was speaking to Elder Pearson, I felt a subtle, calm, content feeling I had not felt before. I realised this must be the Spirit.

After the meeting I felt I had an answer to one of my questions, and it was the first time I had felt the Spirit. It gave me the desire to continue reading and attending church when I could.

I knew I would have to change some of my favourite things, such as tea and the occasional glass of wine, but it just felt right. The more I read and the more lessons we had, the



"Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (3 Nephi 14:7)

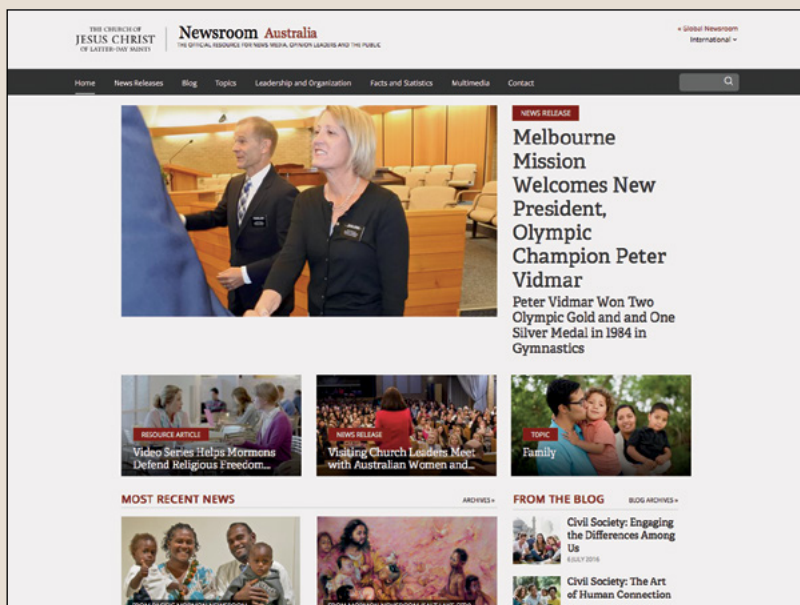
more the information weaved together forming the foundations of the belief I had been searching for.

The questions I had been asking other faiths were answered by the Book of Mormon and the missionaries. I began to realise that the Holy Spirit talks to me subtly through scripture, Church magazines, other people's testimonies, and the prophet.

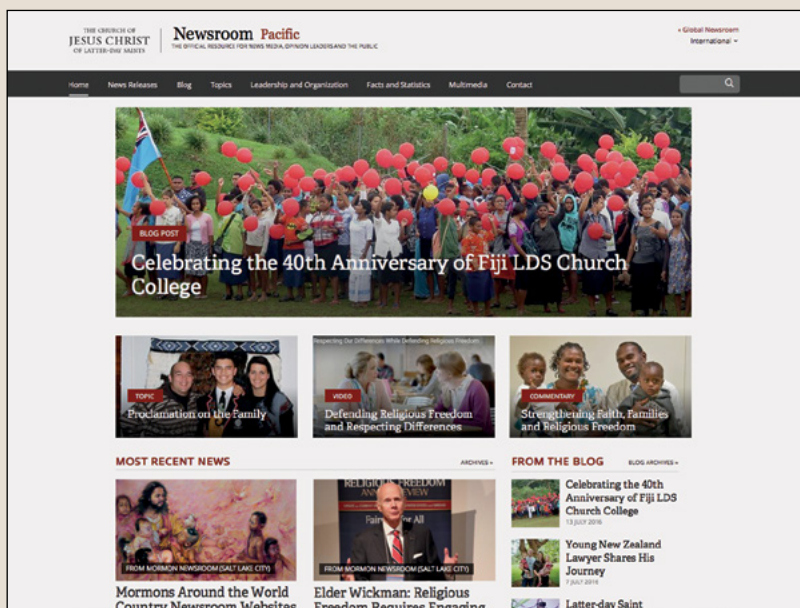
I still struggled with prayer, as I felt nothing back when I prayed. One of the missionaries suggested I pray and ask Heavenly Father if He loved me. He said Heavenly Father would always answer that. During the laying on of hands at my confirmation, I prayed and asked, "Heavenly Father, do you love me?" When we sat back in the congregation, the priesthood holder who had just confirmed me leant over and said, "Just remember, Anna, Heavenly Father loves you." I instantly got goose bumps and felt so happy. I knew I had just made the best decision for myself and my family by being baptized. I now know through all the trials in my life I will always have Heavenly Father to turn to.

I am so very grateful to have found the gospel and met the lovely missionaries and members of the ward. I am really excited to continue to develop and deepen my faith and for my children to be brought up in the Church. I am looking forward to my first visit to the temple. ■

LOCAL WEBSITES



www.mormonnewsroom.org.au



www.mormonnewsroom.org.nz

TIP OF THE MONTH

Use Time Wisely—It Is One of God’s Greatest Gifts

By LDS Family Services

Have you recently experienced these thoughts or feelings?

- Get off Facebook.
- Don’t go online.
- I just wasted the entire morning.
- I intended to do my scripture study, but once again I didn’t.

Living in a privileged technological world where infinite information and communication is available at our fingertips can be a blessing or a curse. We can be easily distracted as we chase that newsfeed, create social media hype, or live vicariously through an undesirable Hollywood

star or anime character. Would you be brave enough today to take a full inventory of how you spent your last 24 hours?

Brigham Young taught that “time is all the capital stock there is on the earth. . . . If properly used, it brings that which will add to your comfort, convenience, and satisfaction. Let us consider this, and no longer sit with hands folded, wasting time”¹—or, we might say, sit with hands mindlessly tapping and swiping electronic devices.

The self-reliance booklet *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits* provides an excellent resource to understand and use time wisely, because time is a gift from God. One family studied the booklet’s chapter on using time wisely (self-reliance principle 2) and often refer to Sister Benkosi, who teaches five important steps in the booklet and in an accompanying video:

List Tasks

Each morning, make a list of tasks to do. Add names of people to serve.

Pray

Pray for guidance. Listen. Commit to do your best.

Set Priorities

Number your top priorities. Put a “1” by the most important task, put a “2” by the next one, and so on.

Set Goals, Act

Listen to the Spirit. Set goals. Work hard. Start with the most important task and work down the list.

Report

Each night, report to Heavenly Father in prayer. Ask questions. Listen. Feel His love. Repent.²

Why is this self-reliance principle 2? Discipline is required to manage time—it is clearly a priority. Counsel with the Lord, with your family, with your spouse, even with a trusted friend. The Lord wants to provide for us, and He wants us to succeed. Let us challenge ourselves in our choices and heed President Thomas S. Monson’s counsel to “choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong,”³ and use time wisely. ■

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in *My Foundation: Principles, Skills, Habits* (self-reliance booklet, 2015), 7.
2. *My Foundation*, 6.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Choices,” *Ensign*, May 2016, 86.

