

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Increase Faith (and Testimony) through Family History and Temple Work

By Elder Joni L. Koch

Second Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency

“Every time we engage ourselves in family history and temple work, we nourish the seed of the gospel in our hearts.”

In the Book of Mormon, we learn from Alma chapter 32 about nurturing a solid testimony of the gospel. There, Alma compares the word (gospel) unto a seed which must be planted and properly nourished, and then it will grow into a tree from which the fruit of eternal life will be picked.

In verse 28 he explains how we can detect the exact moments in which that seed—and later the emerging plant (symbolizing the construction of a testimony)—is experiencing growth. He says, “It will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, . . . for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”

While one can experience this increase of faith and testimony by doing many different things—such as studying the scriptures, participating in the sacrament, fasting and praying—I would suggest that perhaps one of the most powerful ways to feel these “swelling motions” is to participate

in family history and temple work.

As we faithfully seek information about ancestors with the purpose of performing temple ordinances, we’ll be exposed to events and impressions that will perceptibly show the Lord’s hand in this work. During the 1960s my wife’s grandfather, who served as a branch president in the southernmost part of Brazil, had collected many ancestors’ names, which were all in paper documents as there were



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Elder Joni L. Koch

no computers then. He was afraid that one of his 16 children would damage or lose those precious records, so he decided to keep them in his branch presidency’s office at the local chapel. But one day that meetinghouse caught on fire and he lost all his family history. Years of work vanished in minutes! He and his family were deeply saddened but felt impressed to visit his relatives in Argentina in an attempt to recover some of the lost information. During those visits he was describing what happened and one of his uncles (who was not a member of the Church) asked to be excused for a moment and then came right back from another room with a stack of papers full of names, dates, and documents concerning all those that had been lost in the fire. For years, he said,

“I felt compelled to keep this information without knowing why, but now it all makes sense. You can have all this!”

Not only were all the names recovered but also many new ones were added. This event has caused all in the family to clearly discern that there was direct guidance from the Holy Ghost and that God knows the end from the beginning!

Today we have many tools such as Family Tree Lite—which can be operated from a cell phone—and family history consultants who will help us fulfill the call to do family history and temple work. Fully utilizing these resources will certainly assist us in this work and cause us to go through occasions in which we’ll distinctly

notice the seed of faith and conviction growing in our hearts.

Following the submission of our ancestors’ names to the temple comes the privilege of receiving sacred ordinance in their name. Performing these ordinances for our dead blesses not only them but also all who serve in the temple with a clear sensation of being a “savior on mount Zion” (see Obadiah 1:21).

Years ago we took our then-teenage daughters to the temple for the first time. My oldest daughter had the privilege of participating in the baptism of her deceased great-grandmother. Days later we held our family home evening and invited the children to bear their testimonies about the experience

in the house of the Lord. As our oldest daughter started to express her feelings, tears came down her face when she mentioned her great-grandmother’s name and tried to describe how and what she felt during the ordinance. We all realized that she was recognizing right then that a “swelling motion” moment was taking place. That strong impression has been an anchor for her testimony and conviction of the gospel.

I bear testimony that every time we engage ourselves in family history and temple work, we nourish the seed of the gospel in our hearts and feel it growing till we reach the point that Alma describes in chapter 32 verse 43: “Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith.” ■

AREA SEVENTY MESSAGE

“A Process of Removing Scratches”

By Elder Jacques A. Van Reenen

Area Seventy

“We see miracles happen in our lives, we see the reflection of the Master’s image in our countenance, and we experience the calmness that can come only from the atoning sacrifice of the Master polisher of souls.”

In the stone industry, granite and marble are smoothed and polished with abrasives. It is during this exacting process that an expert stone master carefully works rough stone to a mirrorlike finish. Through his painstaking efforts

he can turn unappealing stone into a finely polished, highly desirable object.

When the stone master starts the polishing process on a granite surface, he wisely selects the appropriate abrasive tool with the correct coarseness. The

initial rough surface is smoothed with coarse abrasives, and the coarseness of the selected tool is measured to a scale of grit size. This is similar to using sandpaper when smoothing wood—the coarseness of the grit is carefully selected to match the desired finish.

As he purposefully guides the tool across the hard stone surface, he allows the abrasion process to run its course.

Elder Jacques A.
Van Reenen





The initial stages are critical in achieving the desired end result. To deliver a high glossy finish, he ensures that each stage of the polishing process is given the time and effort needed to remove the scuff and scratch marks, a process that cannot be rushed. At the end of each stage, he changes to a smoother grit, using the finer abrasive particles—and consequently the smoother the stone surface becomes. In practice, the polishing stage of stone is the most time-consuming part of the manufacturing process and often causes frustration to those who are impatient.

The stone master carefully monitors and controls the temperature caused by the constant abrasion, by allowing water to keep the process cool enough to avoid damage to the stone. This constant abrasive process delivers the desired result. As time passes, the finer abrasive tool causes the stone surface to slowly become a little brighter, until finally the stone surface has a high gloss finish. With some polishing techniques, a final buffing stage is used where the constant friction raises the temperature to “burn” the shine onto the stone surface. It is at this stage when the stone master can see his image as a reflection on the surface.

Many examples of polished stone surfaces can be seen all around us in this modern architectural era. My favourite place to view such magnificent polished stone surfaces is the Johannesburg Temple, where the

floors and countertops are clad with beautifully polished stone.

As we consider the painstaking process of polishing stone, we can relate it to our own life-changing and defining experiences. How the Master shaper of lives carefully and patiently polishes us to perfection—if we have the humility and grit to deliver the desired result. For many years I have observed faithful brothers and sisters go through the process of being polished and honed to take off the rough edges and remove the deep scratches from their lives caused by stony hearts and hard-headed characters. Such has been the experience also in my own life.

The Saviour’s invitation to one and all who suffer from hardened hearts, prideful minds, and strong-willed spirits is simple and clear, loving and kind—“be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

He also invites us to deny ourselves of ungodliness: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

When we humble ourselves without being compelled to be humble, we claim the blessings of a loving and kind Father in Heaven who wants to bless us through His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ (see Alma 32:14–16).

The Master polisher of lives is there to help us remove the deep scratches

and work on smoothing out rough edges. When we do, we see miracles happen in our lives, we see the reflection of the Master’s image in our countenance, and we experience the calmness that can come only from the atoning sacrifice of the Master polisher of souls.

As Alma, Saul, Peter, and Jonah experienced, we too may enjoy the smoothing effects of the Atonement of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, and claim the blessings of everlasting joy, sharing in the celestial glory with a Father in Heaven who wants us to return to Him as eternal families.

Sometimes we find ourselves out in the wilderness, even adrift in a sea of doubt, tossed to and fro with no rock to cling to, strangers to the familiar voice of a beckoning call, “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” and that “ye shall have eternal life” (3 Nephi 9:13–14).

As we strive to live our lives in harmony with the Master’s teachings and allow Him to remove the scratches in our hearts and polish our lives, we become shining examples of what true discipleship is—and demonstrate how faith in Christ can change even the hardest heart. Wonderful things happen when we exercise our faith in

Jesus and walk uprightly and say, “Yea, Lord, here am I, show me what I must do to live with Thee again.”

I testify of the living Christ, the Saviour of the world—that He lives and loves us, that our Heavenly Father loves us. I testify that faith is a verb and can only have an effect in the life of the doer of the word. I pray for peace

in your homes and your hearts and for love and prosperity as you walk in faith. ■

Elder Jacques A. Van Reenen was sustained as an Area Seventy in 2013. He studied electrical engineering and runs his own business, supplying tools to the stone and construction industries. He and his wife, Christine, are the parents of three children. Elder and Sister Van Reenen reside in Benoni, South Africa.

My Impressions and Testimony of the Coming of the Prophet

By Trymore Chimbunde

Domboshawa First Branch, Harare Zimbabwe Stake

“As he concluded and blessed the nation of Zimbabwe and its Church members, I felt my burdens being lifted and my soul was comforted.”

The coming of the prophet to Africa was one of the most historic events to ever happen in my life and to ever happen to the people of Zimbabwe. (The last time the prophet visited here was in the 1990s.)

I was so delighted with his visit, and this was one of the best and most inspiring events that I have experienced after my mission. As President Nelson entered in the conference hall, I felt through my heart that the servant of the Lord had just arrived.

His being accompanied by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was just another added blessing. The two spoke as one—having authority—and the whole conference was filled with the richness of the Holy Ghost. At the end of his comments, when he blessed the children, President Nelson made me remember the Savior when He said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them

TESTIMONIES OF THE PROPHET IN AFRICA



President Nelson visited Saints in Zimbabwe and Kenya.



Latter-day Saints in Harare, Zimbabwe, were excited to hear the teachings of their prophet.



not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). And I thought of the prophet Amos, who recorded, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). As he concluded and blessed the nation of Zimbabwe and its Church members, I felt my burdens being lifted and my soul was comforted.

I know that President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s prophet, seer, and revelator. I know Joseph Smith was a true prophet of this last dispensation. I know that this Church has the same blueprint as it had in the time of Jesus Christ. ■

My Impressions and Testimony about the Prophet’s Visit to Africa

By **Vimbai Zuze**

Domboshawa First Branch, Harare Zimbabwe Stake

“What I felt as President Russell M. Nelson entered the auditorium is unexplainable.”

My branch president always advised us to pray for the Holy Spirit such that when the prophet came, we would have spiritual ears to hear and that we would act upon his words. I followed his advice and I prayed about this. When the prophet came, I surely heard the voice of God. My soul and my testimony were strengthened. Today I can strongly say

that I know that the prophets we have in this Church are called of God. What I felt as President Russell M. Nelson entered the auditorium is unexplainable. Not only was I impressed by the authority of God that was clothing him, but I was also mesmerized and eventually became speechless. That man is truly a servant of our Heavenly Father.

I am also grateful for Elder Holland who had accompanied our dear prophet. He was like John the Baptist when he spoke, paving the way for our prophet to speak to every heart, mind, and soul. The prophet encouraged people to become educated and that parents should strive to help their children attain a better education. He closed by giving the people a blessing of which I was very delighted to receive.

I know that the Book of Mormon is indeed another testament of Jesus Christ. I know that this Church is true and indeed Joseph Smith was a true prophet of the Restoration. ■

My Impressions and Testimony about the Prophet's Visit to Africa

By **St Naomi Chabikwa**

Young Women president, Harare Branch, Harare Zimbabwe Stake

“God loves making the IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE”

In the Church we sure do get more than we bargain for. (We heard Elder Jeffrey R. Holland tell us that.) I got way more this past conference with President Nelson. For a month my husband, Alex, and I had questions weighing that we had no answers to. We even asked our home teachers, but they too had no specific answers. You have no idea how I felt—and

worse, when I saw Alex with tears in his eyes as well.

YES, big men cry too when they feel the Spirit. OUR QUESTIONS were answered.

The prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, spoke and told us that with God, nothing is impossible. He loves making the IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE. President Nelson went on to talk about the Jaredites and so did Elder Holland. And guess what, it was as if they both knew that every day for a month, Alex and I had been going on and on—questioning about the Jaredites and the brother of Jared.

Right there we knew that Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. These powerful men of God answered our QUESTIONS.

Sister Holland, thank you for your wise words when you said, “Those who see angels do because they want to.” Thank you for blessing my life with a portion of your spirit and inspiration. Someday I’ll thank you all personally for strengthening our testimonies in such a miraculous way. We still are all smiles and await your next visit for more questions to be answered. ■



President Russell M. Nelson and his wife, Wendy, meet a young Latter-day Saint from Nairobi, Kenya.

My Testimony

By **Kimberly Latoya M.**

Harare Branch, Harare Zimbabwe Stake

“As he placed his hand on my shoulder, I was filled with such warmth in my heart, I will forever cherish that moment.”

As soon as we sang, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” with the rest of the congregation, I was filled with the Holy Spirit—and at that moment, I knew a true man called of God was in our presence.

When the Prophet was giving his talk, I felt happy and excited to be very close to him—as I was seated in the choir. He then asked all primary children to rise and sing, “I Am a Child of God”. I stood up and hoped he would notice the little girl in the choir! To my surprise, he turned back, and called to me, and asked me to lead the other children. I have never felt the way I did in all my life, it was such a special moment for me and one that I am sure will remain in my heart forever.

As he placed his hand on my shoulder, I was filled with such warmth in my heart, I will forever cherish that moment.

I know without a doubt that President Russell M. Nelson is called of God and that if I continue to search the scriptures as he instructed, I will be blessed. ■



President Russell M. Nelson and apostle Elder Jeffrey R. Holland encouraged parents to teach their children about Jesus Christ and to be good citizens.



My Impressions and Testimony about the Prophet’s Visit to Africa

Jimmy James Mhondera

“I knew right there, without a shadow of doubt, that he was indeed a man of God.”

When I think of the prophet’s visit, I still remember the excitement of wanting to see him in person, which I did. As he was walking through those

doors, I could feel warmth, joy, and peace—as if there was a mild wind in the conference center. I knew right there, without a shadow of doubt,

that he was indeed a man of God. A prophet in our day. Our very own Moses. Sent to deliver us a message.

I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true—and is led by a true and living prophet.

I testify I saw with my own eyes, and I felt of the power he carries as he was waving to us when he was leaving. Tears of joy slipped down my cheeks in gratitude of this chosen man of God. ■

My Testimony (the Prophet's Visit to Africa)

By **Joshua Kioko**

Elders quorum president, Athi River Ward, Nairobi Kenya West Stake

“The prophet talked about problems facing Kenya—and Africa as a whole—and gave us solutions to solve them.”

My name is Joshua Kioko. My wife is Penina Mueni. We are the parents of three children: Joseph (16), Angel (7), and Mercy (5). My family and I had a wonderful experience which I will share with you.

First, when the prophet stood to speak, he was speaking in a small voice—like a whisper—yet it was clear in my ears and I could easily understand his words. I felt like the Nephites when Heavenly Father was introducing His Beloved Son to them in a small voice, which pierced into their bodies (see 3 Nephi 11:3). Brothers and sisters, I don't need more witness to know that President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord's prophet on earth and His spokesman—for he spoke like Him. In Doctrine and Covenants 1:38 we learn that whether it

is Heavenly Father's voice or the voice of His servants, it is the same.

The prophet talked about problems facing Kenya—and Africa as a whole—and gave us solutions to solve them. I will share a few:

1. We will get out of poverty if we pay tithing.
2. Paying dowry or lobola is not the Lord's way.
3. The Lord's way is to get married in the temple.
4. We should not be beating our children or giving corporal punishment to them.

Since then my lovely wife Penina and I vowed never to beat our children and to look for other means of disciplining our children—and to



Joshua Kioko

afterwards show love toward them.

We also vowed that when our two daughters grow up, we will not ask for dowry from those blessed young men. We will give our daughters freely. The only sacrifice they have to pay in order to earn that blessing is to be temple worthy in order to marry our daughters in the Lord's temple.

After we left the venue, I could see the love and joy my daughter, Angel, had towards President Nelson—and she asked me what the prophet had said to me. I told her, “The prophet loves you children. He said we, your parents, should love you and not give corporal punishment. But you also need to be obedient so we, your parents, will be able to obey the prophet!” ■