

AREA LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

The Covenant Path

By Elder Robert J. Dudfield

Area Seventy

As a young man, I was very active in the Scouting program and was grateful to have earned my Queen Scout Award. My final major project to qualify for the award was to lead a group across the Overland Track in the middle of Tasmania over six days. Mixed with rugged and at times challenging terrain, the view from the various peaks along the track was simply majestic and well worth the effort.

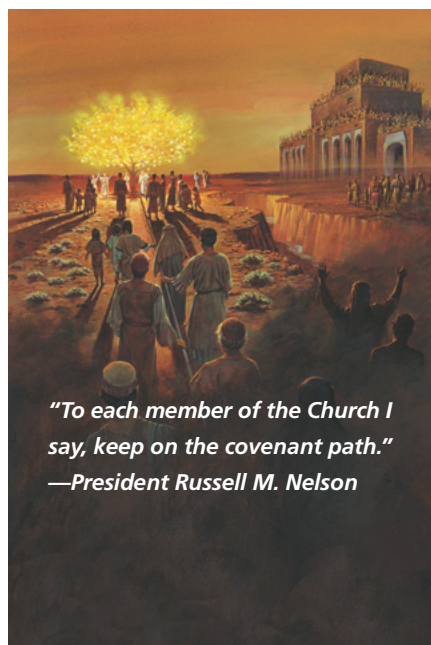
Partway through our journey late one afternoon, it began to rain heavily, and the outlook from the skies warned us that the weather was closing in quickly. As the person leading the group, I reviewed the nearest safe site to walk to, consulted with the team and agreed on our course of action. We left the main path and made our way up to safe ground to camp for the night.

During the night it rained harder than I can ever recall in my life, and by morning everything around us was flooded. Our safe track back out to the main path had washed away, and we were left in a predicament. I recall finding a quiet place, kneeling and praying for guidance from Heavenly Father. The answer was both clear and instructive. I was to prepare a way back to the main path along the ridge through heavy bushes and scrub. If I remained on course and didn't deviate from the

instruction I received, we would eventually make our way back to safety on the main path.

We proceeded with faith. The trek through the bush was tiring, challenging and confronting. After a lot of effort (and a few silent prayers), we made our way out to the opening where we could see the path in the distance. The feeling of gratitude and peace is one that I will never forget.

Our final hurdle was to cross a flooded river that we had previously crossed the afternoon before. There was a log and a thin wire that we could hold on to for balance. It was easy crossing it the day before because the river had not flooded. Making our way back over the flooded river with the log covered with rushing water proved much more challenging.



*"To each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path."
—President Russell M. Nelson*



Robert J. Dudfield

One by one we crossed the river, holding tight to the wire to provide us with the support we needed, coupled by encouragement from each member of the team. Finally we all made it, and were back on the path that led us safely on our way. The "iron rod" that we held tight to delivered us from danger.

Over the years I have reflected on the lessons learned through this experience. There are too many to list; however, here are a few:

- Heavenly Father will never lead us astray, because He hears and answers our prayers.
- As we trust Him, we can be confident that He will guide us.
- The way back to safety may be difficult, but as we trust Him we can make it with His help.
- Holding tight to the iron rod will lead us on the path back to Him.

In his first message to the members of the Church as prophet in January, President Russell M. Nelson made the following petition and promise. He stated: "To each member of the Church I say, keep on the covenant path. Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and

privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.”

He continued:

“The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a house of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in a temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God—that of eternal life. . . .

“Now, if you have stepped off the path, may I invite you with all the hope in my heart to please come back. Whatever your concerns, whatever your challenges, there is a place for you in this, the Lord’s Church. You and generations yet unborn will be blessed by your actions now to return to the covenant path. Our Father in Heaven cherishes His children, and He wants each of us to return home to Him. This is a grand goal of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to help each of us to come back home.”¹

We learn much about the covenant path from the account of Lehi’s dream in the Book of Mormon, in 1 Nephi chapter 8. Here we learn about many significant elements of the dream,² but the iron rod and the fruit-filled tree really stand out to me. The iron rod that Lehi described symbolises the covenant path that President Nelson spoke about.

Elder David A. Bednar observed:

“An individual can obtain the path that leads to the tree and the fruit only by entering through the gate—even the ordinances of baptism . . . and [receiving] the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . .

“Pressing forward to and partaking of the fruit of the tree may represent the receiving of additional ordinances and covenants whereby the Savior’s Atonement can become fully efficacious in our lives.”³

The fruit is symbolic of the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, but to access all the blessings of His Atonement, we need to walk along the covenant path in order to reach the tree. Is it any wonder that only when Lehi reached the tree and partook of the fruit did he gain a glimpse of the eternal nature and blessings for his family? With this insight it became his greatest desire for each of them to partake of the

fruit, or, in other words, to walk the covenant path.

I bear my witness that steady and sustained progress along the covenant path to the tree is the course that is prepared for each of us. It will be filled with trials and challenges. However, as Elder Bednar taught in October 2016 general conference, “Tasting the fruit of the tree and becoming deeply ‘converted unto the Lord’ [Alma 23:6] are the blessings He yearns for us to receive.”⁴ ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “As We Go Forward Together,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2018, 7.
2. See 1 Nephi 8:10–20.
3. David A. Bednar, *One by One* (2017), 92–93.
4. David A. Bednar, “If Ye Had Known Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 104.

LOCAL PAGES

Sister Eubank Talks Faith in Sydney

By Mormon Newsroom

A public conversation is currently under way in Australia as the country’s Parliament considers changes in legislation to protect religious freedom.

Sister Sharon Eubank, director of LDS Charities and First Counsellor in the Relief Society General Presidency, addressed legal scholars and faith leaders at a religious freedom conference at the University of Notre Dame in Sydney earlier this year.

“I was so glad to be invited as a humanitarian actor—even though I’m not a scholar—to be part of this conversation, because it cannot be the right conversation if it doesn’t involve the voices of governments, secular organizations such as universities and religious actors together,” Sister Eubank said.

“This isn’t just something we do because it’s noble or it helps society. It’s something that we must do

Sharon Eubank, First Counsellor in the Relief Society General Presidency, speaks to a ward in Sydney.



because of our deeply held belief that we're all brothers and sisters."

This is the second time a Latter-day Saint leader has spoken on the Sydney campus. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles delivered an address on religious freedom at the law school in May 2015.

During her visit to Australia, Sister Eubank also participated in meetings with Saints in Sydney and Adelaide.

"If I could give any advice to Australians," Sister Eubank said, "it would be stand up, get educated about the issues, find out about religious freedom. This is a part of what we can do, particularly as women in the Church. Stand up and let our voices be heard."

Keith Thompson, associate dean of the law school at the University of Notre Dame Australia, was one of the conference participants who discussed the critical role faith-based groups play in protecting religious freedom. "The same prejudice that would tread on the head of a person of Muslim

Sharon Eubank talks to a local community leader in the Sydney area about refugees who are living in Australia.



Sister Eubank visits with a group of Latter-day Saint women at Sydney Harbour Quay.

background today will tread on a Christian tomorrow," he said, "and so we are all in this together. We must look after their human rights, their right to religious freedom, their entitlement to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience. We

have to look after that as precious as if it was our own."

"There's no real protection of religious freedom in Australia," said Catholic archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart, Tasmania. "We now need to find out how we establish this

as an aspect of law that we recognize religious freedom in particular, but freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and this needs to be enshrined in law in Australia.”

Paul Babie, law professor at the University of Adelaide, also attended

the conference. “My call to action for everyday citizens would not be limited merely to religious freedom but to say that freedoms, fundamental freedoms, fundamental human rights, fundamental civil liberties are issues that matter to everyone.” ■

she sent in an application on a piece of paper from a notebook to the school. To her surprise, she was given the job. Soon thereafter she moved away from the community into the Port Hedland township.

“Since then,” she said, “my life changed. I met two missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who knocked on my door. I gave them a hard time, but they were persistent.”

Adeline joined the Church in 2001. The hardest part for her was to pay tithing.

She said her initial reaction was, “What! I’m a single mum working part-time; I can barely make ends meet, and you want me to pay tithing?” She put her trust in the Lord that He would provide. She said, “Everything seemed to be cheaper or on special when I went to do my grocery shopping. I knew the Lord was on my side and He was going to ensure He would bless me tenfold.”

The school then offered her full-time employment. This surprised her because she is a quiet, shy person who did not believe in herself and her abilities to become self-reliant. Her native language was aboriginal English and she had difficulty speaking standard English at school. At church the branch president, Nathan Page, spoke about his study of engineering. His story impressed her and instilled in her the desire to learn and to improve herself.

Journey to Self-Reliance

By John Millar

Adeline Monaghan lives in Port Hedland in Western Australia. An Australian aboriginal by birth, she lived in an aboriginal community to escape domestic violence but stated that this was like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. In the community there were drugs, alcohol, and more domestic violence, but there were no other options at the time. She lived, along with her five children, in a small tin hut with only two bedrooms. Her home became a “safe house” for

many young mums and their children trying to escape their own abuse. Money was scarce as she tried to live on welfare payments. To make ends meet, she started to teach the ladies of the community how to sew because the community paid for these classes. After a few months the funding for that project was expiring, and so she was worried how she would support herself and her five children.

A part-time teacher assistant position was advertised at the local school, so



In 2015, Adeline received the Western Australia Premier's Primary Teacher of the Year Award and is now studying to become a principal.



She says the following about her journey: "I have continually prayed for guidance, and the Spirit has helped me find peace and joy that I have shared with my family and friends."

Her children say, "Ever since you joined the Church, your whole life has changed. Who would have ever thought you would become a teacher, let alone the Teacher of the Year?"

Prayer, faith, and living gospel principles, along with her persistence and hard work, have helped her become self-reliant in both spiritual and temporal aspects of her life. Self-reliance is believing you are a child of God and that He will help you as long as you do all you can do. Adeline Monaghan is a good example of overcoming obstacles to becoming self-reliant. ■

Stake Patriarch Reflects on Service

By Craig Raeside

Samuel McKim was only 35 years old when Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles ordained him as the patriarch of the Glasgow Scotland Stake.

That was back in September 1968. Now, 50 years later, Brother McKim continues to faithfully serve as a stake patriarch in Adelaide, South Australia.

The northern branches held a conference at Karratha. This meant that she would have to travel 200km to be there with her five children. She worried how she would be able to travel to the conference and how she could cover the cost. Again, she reported, the Lord provided by the branch organizing a bus to travel to the conference, with Church members being billeted with families during the conference. The Lord also provided the Clarke family.

Knowing that she worked in a school, Brother Clarke gave her a book entitled *Teaching, No Greater Call*. She read the book and was then encouraged by President Page and her colleagues at school to embark on study.

She started with a Certificate III in education. She found it very fulfilling and rewarding and so went on to do a Certificate IV and then a Diploma in Education. With each certificate she was given a pay rise, and so she could see the Lord was blessing her. She had gone from working part-time at the school to now full-time. But that was not the end of her journey. She did not have confidence in herself, and with limited English she felt overwhelmed. In fact, up until then she had continued to receive welfare

payments to ensure she had enough to provide for her family.

The deputy principal at the school saw her potential and encouraged her to become a teacher. Putting her faith and trust in the Lord, she started a bachelor of education degree from Notre Dame University. The university gave ongoing assistance on how to study and also provided basic courses on how to speak and read standard English. She was invited to do a cadetship (like a scholarship) that assisted her with her work and study as well as enhanced her financial position. External studies required her to have a computer, which she could not afford. Her children decided that they would help and so washed cars to provide enough money for her to purchase the computer. After four years she graduated with a teaching degree and secured a position as a teacher at the South Hedland Primary School. She has now been teaching at the school for nine years.

In 2015 she received the Western Australia Premier's Primary Teacher of the Year Award. Recently she was asked by the principal if she would be interested in a leadership role within the school. She is now studying to become a principal of a primary school.



Samuel and his wife, Nancy McKim, are both converts to the Church.

Brother McKim wasn't always a member of the Church. In 1959, he met his wife, Nancy, at a local dance hall in Glasgow and decided to "keep a good thing going," and they were soon married. Six children and 17 grandchildren later, they are still going strong, both now in their eighties.

It was Nancy who joined the Church first in 1961. Brother McKim was impressed by Nancy's determination. She had been baptised at 10:00 pm on a cold Scottish night in which the hot-water heating was not working. A few months later, in 1962, at the age of 29, Brother McKim followed her example and was baptised. That year President David O. McKay had created the first stake. Even before Brother McKim's baptism, the ward bishopric had discussed calling him as the ward clerk. Subsequently he was called to the stake high council and then as the ward bishop.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball visited the Glasgow stake for stake conference. On the Saturday night, Bishop McKim was called and informed that he had an appointment with the visiting Apostle the following morning at 6:00 a.m. Elder

Kimball informed Brother McKim that he had been pondering during the night and indicated that the Lord wanted him to extend the call to Brother McKim to serve as stake patriarch. Brother McKim accepted, trusting in the Lord's wisdom.

However, it was not long before Brother McKim was called upon to give his first patriarchal blessing. Immediately after the Sunday morning session of stake conference, following Brother McKim's ordination, a man visiting from Aberdeen requested a blessing. After confirming by telephone with the man's stake president that he had approval to do so, he pronounced the blessing, with nothing to guide him but his own patriarchal blessing and the direction of the Spirit.

Over the next two years Brother McKim gave about 300 patriarchal blessings, before he and his family emigrated to Australia, settling in their new home in Adelaide in 1970. However, only three or four months passed before then-Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited for the stake conference of the Adelaide Stake. The existing stake patriarch was unwell, and

Samuel McKim has been a stake patriarch for over 50 years.



Brother McKim was again called as the patriarch. He has continued in that calling ever since, including after the Adelaide Australia Modbury Stake was created in 1978.

In preparing to give a patriarchal blessing, Brother McKim explains that the most important thing is to be prayerful. He usually sits and chats briefly with the person, young or old, and asks them what they understand about patriarchal blessings and if they have any questions. He then pronounces the blessing. He says that the intent is not to get to know them better, which surprises some people. Rather, regular and faithful scripture study, prayer, sacrament meeting attendance, and temple worship are the main keys to help prepare him to receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost, who directs his words.

Brother McKim recalls a memorable experience when a devoted wife asked him to visit an aged care facility to give a patriarchal blessing to her elderly husband suffering from dementia. As in other cases, if the person has a recommendation from the priesthood leader, then his call is simply to give the blessing.

MISSIONARY MOMENTS

He had only ever met the man once before and found any conversation with him a bit disjointed. Finally, he asked the man, “Do you know who I am?” The response was quick and clear: “You’re Brother McKim, the patriarch.” And then the former conversation resumed. The blessing was given, “and I felt he was still there, even if he could not communicate with me.”

Two or three years ago, Brother McKim was contacted by a man who had served as a young full-time missionary in Adelaide 30 years earlier. As a newly arrived missionary he needed a patriarchal blessing and Brother McKim readily obliged. Now having been sealed in the temple, raised a large family, and served faithfully in the Church, this man told Brother McKim that his patriarchal blessing had been the greatest incentive for him to live a righteous life and that he has continued to read it daily during that time. Many other members have likewise expressed their gratitude for the support a patriarchal blessing has brought into their lives.

As Brother McKim has reflected on his half century of service, he is grateful for the accumulation of experiences he has had that have contributed to the strengthening of his testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work. He is particularly thankful to have been an instrument in the Lord’s hands in providing patriarchal blessings to over 1,300 people. ■

I Came to Know Who Heavenly Father Was

By Trent Hulme

There are commonalities that unite each of us and differences that make life interesting. The commonality between every person who ever has or will walk the earth is our divine heritage. We are all “children of the most High” (Psalm 82:6).

Knowing our divine worth and who we can become, a loving Heavenly Father encourages each of us to stay on the path that leads to eternal life and never-ending happiness. He also allows us the ability to choose whether we want to stay on that path. No matter what path we choose, there will always be ups and downs. But that same loving Father has provided a way for the ups to be even sweeter and the downs to be a little more bearable.

I learned this fundamental truth while serving as a full-time missionary in the Utah Salt Lake City East Mission. In my journal, I wrote the following:

“Today was an emotional and spiritual roller coaster. Though a hard day, it was an unforeseen sacred day. Right from the start of the day, we had lessons cancel. We spent a large portion of our morning diligently trying to find members we could bring along

to our lessons for the evening that didn’t end up happening. Everyone we spoke to was uninterested. I felt like my faith was lacking. I was crying out, as the Saviour once did, ‘Father, why hast thou forsaken me? Why is no one interested?’”

One of the lessons we had set up was with our investigator Kimberly and her daughter, Emily. Our lesson was set up to be at the chapel. After we arrived there and waited for a while, it became apparent to us they had forgotten. We went to their house and knocked on their door. The light in the door’s peephole disappeared (a clear indication they had looked to see who was knocking), but there was no answer.

Feeling defeated, Elder Arocho and I started heading back to the car. We had done everything we could. Our best efforts had been exerted, and it felt like water slipping through our fingers.

We stopped on the path back to the car and decided to sit down before leaving. Not knowing what to expect, we offered a prayer up to Heavenly Father. Our simple but heartfelt prayer went something like, “Dear Heavenly Father, we are doing everything we can. This is Your work. We need Your help. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

As soon as we closed the prayer, a door opened behind us. It was Emily. She was coming out of her friend’s house. Emily came and sat next to us. We knew she had the desire to be



Trent (right) served in the Utah Salt Lake City East Mission from December 2015 to June 2017.

baptised, but we weren't sure why. We asked her, "Emily, why do you want to be baptized?" She responded with a simple faith: "I want to be closer to Jesus, and He can help me when I get bullied at school. I want to know someone understands me."

The gospel and the Atonement of Jesus Christ are so simple and personal. It is no wonder we are commanded to become as a child.

Whether our challenges are self-inflicted or the product of another's mistakes, the source of all healing and comfort in our lives is Jesus Christ. Just as little Emily said, Jesus Christ understands us. He suffered in Gethsemane, was "betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matthew 26:45), suffered and died so He could confidently say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

I learned over the course of my two years as a missionary that there will always be spiritual and emotional roller coasters. Life inevitably throws everyone a curveball. However, we have the doctrinal promise from the Lord Himself: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18).

How grateful I am for that promise. In all situations, God is our loving Father in Heaven. The Saviour of the world is our best friend and atoned

for not only our sins but our pains, afflictions, weaknesses and sicknesses. In short, He understands us and will not leave us comfortless.

Another experience where I saw this to be true was in my last six weeks. I had been moved to a new area with a companion who had been out for six weeks. Everyday we laboured diligently to build up the Lord's kingdom. It got to the point where we felt as if power walking was not enough; we wanted to run from place to place to reach as many people as we could. Waiting at stoplights without talking to the person next to us was, in our minds, a waste of time. We were doing everything we could and still were not seeing the success we desired.

Driving one day, my companion asked me, "What are we doing wrong? Why is nothing happening? We are being obedient; we are working hard. Why is no one interested?" I admit, in my quiet moments, I had asked myself the same questions.

I felt impressed by the Spirit to refer him to *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 6, which is about Christlike attributes. I asked my companion to read a quote by President Ezra Taft Benson in the section on diligence (page 121), which states:

"I have often said one of the greatest secrets of missionary work is work!

If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will teach by the Spirit; and if he teaches by the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people and he will be happy."

As he got to this point, the Spirit in the car was palpable. Tears filled both of our eyes. He continued the quote:

"There will be no homesickness, no worrying about families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. Work, work, work—there is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work."

As we drove and discussed our thoughts, we concluded that though we were not seeing the desired success, the Lord was pleased with our efforts.

Months later, as I look back on this experience with gratitude, the scripture in Doctrine and Covenants 97:8 fills me with a greater appreciation for a merciful Father in Heaven:

"Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me."

I know that the Lord is merciful in all situations. He loves us with an "everlasting kindness" (Isaiah 54:8). Though our efforts seem weak, He is accepting when we put our best foot forward. ■

Trent grew up in Northwest Sydney and served in the Utah Salt Lake City East Mission from December 2015 to June 2017. He is currently in the YSA ward in Takapuna.