

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Pure Religion and the Remarkable Influence of Righteous Women

By Elder S. Mark Palmer

Second Counsellor, Africa Southeast Area

Recently I met with a wonderful sister in our area who is full of faith but described how difficult it is being a single adult in the Church today. She experienced the loss of a husband some years ago and expressed how sometimes in this very family-centered Church she feels shunned and even forgotten about. I was so touched as she then described how every Sunday she will look for anyone who might be sitting alone and invite them to sit with her. She also shared how thankful she was for a faithful Church leader who every month spends meaningful time with her son. While we visited, I thought of the definition of pure religion given by James:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction . . . (James 1:27).

The sisters of this Church are quite remarkable. As I have visited wards and branches in Africa over the past

few months, I have been deeply impressed by the beautiful testimonies of sisters as they have taught pure doctrine from well-worn scriptures both at the pulpit and in the classroom. Sadly, sometimes our sisters feel less important or valued than their brethren, but we simply need to look at the example of the Saviour to know that is not true. How He loved Mary and Martha and took comfort from His visits with them. And in an act of great symbolic importance, the resurrected Lord appeared first, not to His Apostles, but to Mary Magdalene

and also (according to the Gospel of Matthew) to Mary, the mother of James (see Matthew 28:1–9). When He appeared to the Nephites, He invited *all*—sisters, brothers, and children—to come to Him so He could minister to them one by one (see 3 Nephi 11:14–15).

As I marvel at the faithful sisters in this Church, I think of my 89-year-old mother living in New Zealand, who has been a widow for nearly 30 years. When I was called to be a General Authority Seventy last year, I visited her with the unexpected news of our



S. Mark Palmer



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“WOMAN HOEING GARDEN,” BY MARGARET BLAKE



"We also invite priesthood leaders to listen well and heed the inspired counsel of your wife at home, as well as the sisters in your councils."

assignment to Africa and nervously shared that I did not know when I would be able to see her again. With tears in her eyes she simply said, "Mark, the Lord needs you more than I do . . . and it would be selfish of me to want it any other way." Such is the faith of a righteous woman who has been a great example all my life. I am deeply thankful for home teachers,

visiting teachers, ward members, and other loving Saints who regularly visit my mother and in so doing demonstrate pure religion.

I pay tribute to the wonderful sisters in this area of the Church. Thank you, dear mothers of our missionaries and future missionaries, for how you are teaching and raising your children. Because of you, they will be as the

Sons of Helaman, who "had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (see Alma 56:47). Thank you dear single mothers and widows, for your great faith and commitment as you come to church each Sunday, even while feeling exhausted or alone. You bless us all by your examples and testimonies. Thank you, dear single adults and young single adult sisters, who stay strong and true to the standards of the gospel and serve so faithfully in many important callings in your wards and stakes. Thank you, dear sisters who support your husbands in their priesthood callings and encourage them even when they may doubt themselves and even when it means you spend many Sundays sitting alone in the pews taking care of the children.

Last year my wife and I were blessed to participate in a YSA fireside in Luanda, Angola. The branch president who conducted that fireside was an outstanding returned missionary, recently married in the temple, who afterwards introduced me to his mother, Sister Paulina Lassaete Gonçalves. Since that time, I have learned more of this remarkable sister

Sister Paulina Lassaete Gonçalves with her small five children



"YOUNG WOMAN WITH FRUIT ON SHOULDER," BY MARGARET BLAKE



who is a loved pioneer in the Church in Angola and who raised five children by herself from when they were very young. So far three of these children have served or are serving missions. President Maer de Carvalho writes:

“My brother and I enjoyed listening to Book of Mormon stories which my mother shared with us when we were little. She used to put Book of Mormon pictures on the walls of our room and we loved them. We had a little box where we put our money for our missions when we grow up. We had family prayers every day, and my mother read the scriptures to us. . . . We prayed, sang, and listened to stories that Mom read to us.”¹

Such is the influence of a righteous and faithful sister in the gospel.

We invite all, and especially those called as shepherds in Israel, to visit the fatherless and the widows and to pay special attention to our single mothers and single sisters, that we can help ease their burdens. We also invite priesthood leaders to listen well and heed the inspired counsel of your wife at home, as well as the sisters in your councils.

Speaking to the sisters, President Russell M. Nelson said: “My dear sisters, whatever your calling, whatever your circumstances, we need your impressions, your insights, and your inspiration. We need you to speak up and speak out in ward and stake councils. We need each married sister to speak as ‘a *contributing* and

full partner’ as you unite with your husband in governing your family. Married or single, you sisters possess distinctive capabilities and special intuition you have received as gifts from God. We brethren cannot duplicate your unique influence. . . .

“In 1979 President Spencer W. Kimball made a profound prophecy about the impact that covenant-keeping women would have on the future of the Lord’s Church. He prophesied: ‘Much of the major growth that is coming to the Church in the last days will come because many of the good women of the world . . . will be drawn to the Church in large numbers. This will happen to the degree that the women of the Church reflect righteousness . . . in their lives and to the degree that

the women of the Church are seen as distinct and different—in happy ways—from the women of the world.’”² We are now seeing this prophecy fulfilled here in Africa in a profound way.

Finally, to any of our sisters who may feel neglected or unloved, I testify that Heavenly Father knows and loves you. After all, you are His precious daughter. We too, who have been called as special witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, declare His love for you and our abiding love and gratitude for your righteous influence. ■

NOTES

1. Maer Emanuel Gonçalves de Carvalho, “I Chose to Serve,” *africaselds.org/i-chose-to-serve*.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Liahona*, November 2015, 95; President Nelson’s talk also includes a quote from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 222–23.

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

The Fruits of the Spirit are Peace and Happiness

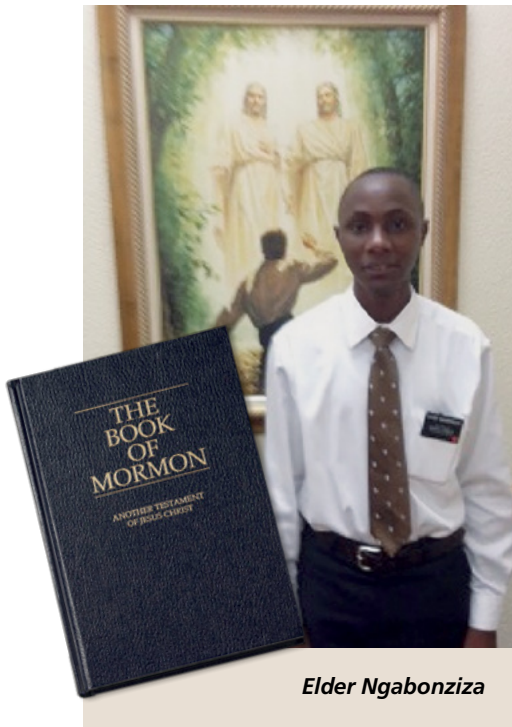
By Reid Robison

Former Ghana MTC President

An elder who had lost his luggage and had not brought any carry-on luggage—not even a change of clothes, arrived at the MTC. Do you know what his only request was? He wanted a Book of Mormon, so that he would not miss any time studying the

scriptures. Who is this missionary, you might ask? His name is Elder Christian Ngabonziza and he is from Rwanda.

Christian was born in 1992, at a time of great racism between fellow countrymen, many of whom fled to different countries. This difficulty



Elder Ngabonziza

continued until 1994, when the genocide occurred. More than one million people died in that year, including Christian's mother. She was killed by rebels who were against the government. At age 4, Christian remembers being carried on the shoulders of his father as his father and mother ran away from the violence. His mother did not make it. Three years later his father and two brothers died of diseases that spread rapidly when there was war and so much killing. The surviving children went to various family members, and life was difficult.

In 2003, the surviving children were able to reunite in spite of this difficulty and together they cultivated crops in order to earn school fees. Christian's oldest sister had to leave school and care for her siblings. Together the children continued to eke out meagre funds until he finished high school. (Christian was considered the youngest child because the child younger than him had passed away.)

In 2012, about four months after he graduated from high school, Christian's aunt told him about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Unfortunately, shortly after learning about the LDS Church, Christian had to leave for a faraway province to work. However, three months later, he resigned the job because it was filled with temptations and so he returned to live with his aunt.

Christian started listening to the missionaries but found the doctrine difficult to believe at first. The elders repeatedly challenged him to read, ponder, pray, and ask the Lord if the message was true. Christian did this more than 10 times. After a month, he started feeling peace and happiness without knowing where these feelings came from. The missionaries explained that "the fruits of the Spirit are peace, happiness, and a clear conscience."

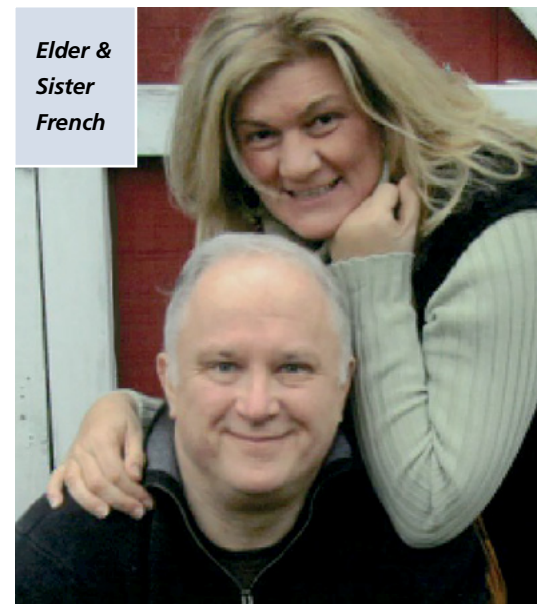
Christian was baptized in 2014 as a member of the Church and has a firm testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel, promptings of the Spirit, and answers to prayer. He knows that the Church is led today by a prophet and that Joseph Smith was one of the greatest prophets, just like Moses and Noah. He enjoys his life with his fellow missionaries from different parts of the world and testifies that there is no other place where you can find joy, peace, happiness, and the greatest of all gifts—eternal life. ■

LOCAL PAGES

Preparing to Serve a Senior Couple's Mission

By Amanda Holmes

When Sister Marcia French, who currently serves as the Africa Southeast Area Mental Health Specialist, was asked how LDS couples who have a desire to serve the Lord as senior missionaries could ready themselves, she replied, "Number one on the 'To Do' list for senior couple missionary preparation is to become each other's very best friend." She laughingly refers to her husband, Elder Jeff French, as "my other brain". "If we are not tapped into the needs of our spouse, we will have conflict on a mission," she



Elder & Sister French

says. “Learn to figure out how you are going to serve together and learn to enjoy that companionship. There are no six-week transfers for couple missionaries.”

Sister French explained that the desire to serve a couple mission started very early in their married life. “When we were young and newly married, we would go down as soon as church was over, and we would look at the bulletin board. There was this green piece of paper, and it had all the different kinds of missions you could go on, and we would read them and say, ‘Oh this would be a fun one to go on,’ and ‘Oh, look they have one here’. So we started to make a wish list of all the different kinds of missions we would like to serve when were older and retired.”

Elder French went on to add, “I think that was the genesis, perhaps, as we are both converts to the Church and didn’t serve missions when we were young. So that was our focus. We prepared our children; we told them as soon as they had all left the home we would be going to serve a mission. We had to prepare financially in some manner or another. The first two missions we served were service missions, so we were able to live at home and we continued to work in our jobs.”

Serving together wherever possible is a really good way to prepare



Couples should start their marriage with a goal to always have companionship scripture study, companionship prayer, and companionship inventory.



to serve a full-time mission as a couple. There are many opportunities to serve together, for example, in the temple or in the family history centre. Couples should start their marriage with a goal

to always have companionship scripture study, companionship prayer, and companionship inventory. These good habits form

a firm foundation for serving together as a couple in the mission field.

Sister French feels very strongly that couples should learn to have fun together, date often, and work on a balanced marriage relationship. Unbalanced couples burn out; balanced couples serve multiple missions together.

Finances are often the reason why many couples are hesitant to serve a full-time mission but Elder French counsels, "Pay a full tithe and a generous fast offering, have a desire to serve, and allow the Lord to let miracles happen in your life."

Both Elder and Sister French agree on the importance of learning the doctrine of the Church and working on building an unshakable testimony of the Saviour and His gospel.

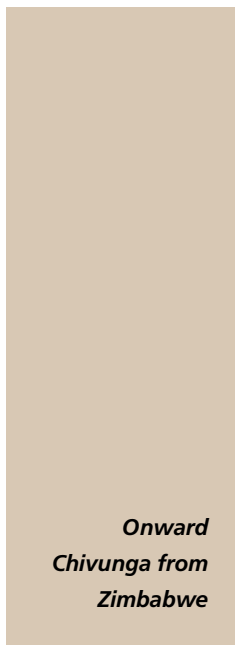
Many couples also hesitate to leave behind their children and grandchildren, but Elder and Sister French bear testimony of the blessings that come into the lives of children and grandchildren who have parents and grandparents serving as a full-time missionary couple.

In addition to their current mission in the Africa Southeast Area, Elder and Sister French have served two service missions and one full-time mission to the Philippines. They are not yet retired and extol the merits of being a "young senior missionary couple". Their recommendation is "The younger, the better!" ■

From Rags to the Manager

By **Taunia Lombardi**

Church History Senior Missionary



Things were extremely tough in Zimbabwe. There was no food on the store shelves, no petrol for transportation, and no jobs, so Onward Chivunga thought his only choice was to try to find a job elsewhere. He got to the point where he made a decision to go to South Africa to look for a job so that he could care for his family. He would have to leave his wife and two children in Zimbabwe.

For four months in South Africa he searched daily for work, but was unsuccessful. Every Sunday he attended Church, even though he had to walk an hour to get there.

When he would phone home, his children would cry and beg him to come back. "I used to pray and fast frequently that I would find a job, but it seemed as if it was in vain," he said.

"One day I remembered that my mission president had taught me that sometimes we have to ask God what He would have us do, instead of us telling Him what we want Him to do for us. I then fasted, asking what He would have me do. During my prayer I had a powerful feeling that I was needed back home in Zimbabwe. The feeling was so strong I found myself in tears." He said. "I then asked the Lord

if He would give me a job to raise money for transportation to go back home. The next Sunday the Young Women's president approached me and asked what I did for a living. I told her that I was unemployed. Without me knowing, she made a poster advertising my profession. I got many jobs and in no time I raised enough money to go back home."

After returning home, things weren't immediately easy for them. They continued to struggle financially, but they were together as a family and that is where the Lord wanted him to be. Onward was called to be Bishop. He expressed doubts about accepting the calling, saying that he didn't have a job, didn't own a suit and his only white shirt was fraying around the collar. But he humbly accepted the calling. Within a few months he was offered a good job in a management position. He said that he went from rags to manager! He found that the Lord could bless him when his path became the same as the path that Heavenly Father wanted him to take.

There are times when we may not understand why our plans for the future are altered, but God in His wisdom gives us exactly what we need. He has an eternal perspective. If we ask for His guidance we can trust that He will direct our paths because He knows what is best for each of us. ■

The Johannesburg Temple: Three Photos, Three Miracles

By Reed J. Webster

In 1989, the Johannesburg Temple had been serving people for four years, yet there had never been an official picture taken that showed its real beauty. The front view was blocked by trees, while aerial photos showed only the roof.

After many frustrating attempts to capture an appropriate picture of the temple, President Canfield decided to use a professional. A very talented young Jewish photographer named Trevor Simon just happened to have one of only two specially designed cameras in South Africa that could handle the challenge, which required three pictures: one at midday, one at dusk, and one at night with the temple lights shining.

Since this was before panoramic cameras, in order to get the entire temple in one shot, they had to build a special platform twenty feet high on the neighbour's property just over the back wall. The day arrived for the actual shooting.

This was also before Photoshop, so Trevor's comment to President Canfield seemed impossible: "The only thing that could improve this scene would be to have a few clouds in the sky behind the temple." The sky was completely clear and had been



JOHANNESBURG TEMPLE

for almost two months, yet President Canfield remarked, "If the Lord wants clouds in the picture of His house, they will be there."

Trevor shrugged and made some final adjustments on his camera. Then, as he looked through the range finder, everything was perfect, including the appearance of a few soft clouds in the sky. "What a stroke of luck! Clouds are there!" Trevor exclaimed. President

Canfield didn't say a word, and Trevor didn't notice the smile on his face.



The next shots were to be taken just before sundown to capture the glow of the sky against the structure of the Temple. Trevor was on the platform making final adjustments, and the sun was beginning to sink in the west. There were still a few clouds in the sky, and Trevor mentioned, "The only thing that would improve this shot would be no clouds. Then I could pick up the total reflection of the sun on the dust particles in the sky." President Canfield responded, "If the Lord doesn't want clouds in this picture of His house, they won't be there." This time Trevor didn't laugh, but he smiled as he continued his final adjustments on the camera.

As he looked through the range finder, the picture was coming together



perfectly—the special lighting in the garden, the glow behind the arches on the side of the temple, and all the other details an artist sees. Then President Canfield turned to Trevor, "Look, Trevor, no clouds." Trevor didn't say a word. He was creating a photographic masterpiece, and he knew it.

The final pictures were to be taken after dark with the spotlights reflecting off the spires into a black sky. Trevor began checking all the details. The lights on the Angel Moroni were fine-tuned. The lighting on the gardens even brought out the green color of the grass and the glow of the natural rock.



Trevor marvelled that the light on the temple seemed to be coming from above rather than from below, and President Canfield smiled, "Trevor, you wanted clouds, and the Lord gave you clouds. You wanted a clear sky, and the Lord gave you a clear sky. The light *is* shining down on this temple. How many signs do you need?" ■

Original account by Reed J Webster, Second Counselor in the Johannesburg Temple Presidency, 1992; excerpted by Marnae Wilson

EDITOR'S NOTE

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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