

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

What Will the Church Do for Me?

By Elder S. Mark Palmer

Second Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area



Elder S. Mark Palmer

As we meet with members throughout Africa, one of the wonderful experiences is having question and answer sessions. Sometimes we hear the question “What will the Church do for me?”

Variations of the question include:

- I have served a mission for the Church. Now how is the Church going to help me get a job?
- How will the Church help me get an education?
- I am struggling with my testimony. How will the Church help strengthen my faith?
- How will the Church help me find someone to marry?
- Some of my family are no longer active. What will the Church do to reactivate them?
- We are poor. What will the Church do to help us become self-reliant?

These questions are usually well intentioned, but they show a misunderstanding of the principles of spiritual and temporal self-reliance.

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told of receiving a phone call from a bishop in the United States whose son was in an Army basic training center. The father said, “He’s been there for three weeks and has

not been to church yet; is there something you can do to help?” President Packer investigated the circumstances. He then shared: “Can you picture the following: In the barracks a few feet from [the young man’s] bunk was a bulletin board. On it was [a] . . . bulletin with a picture of the Salt Lake Temple on it and a listing of the meeting times at the base chapel. . . . He’d been told [at orientation] that if he wanted to know about church services to talk to the sergeant on duty, or he could contact any chaplain’s office and that information would readily be given him.

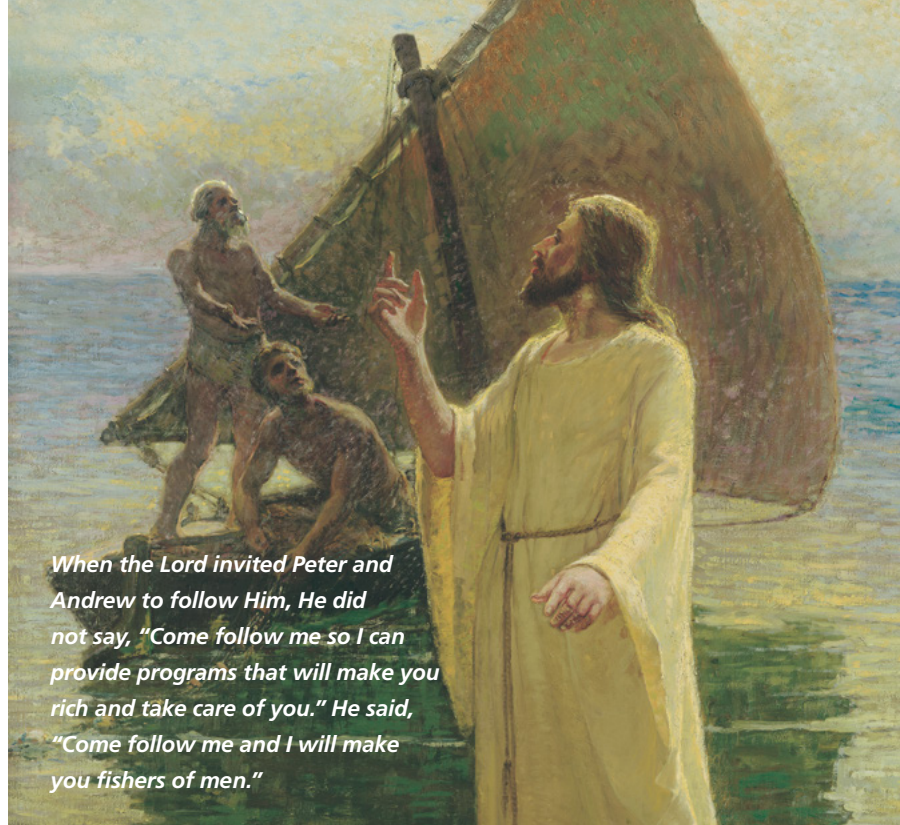
“He, however, had been told before he left home that the Church had a wonderful program to help young men in military service. He was assured that the Church was doing everything to take care of our men and that we would find them and look after them and bring the full Church program to them. He had, therefore, laid back on his bunk, propped up his feet, put his head on the pillow, and waited for the Church to do everything for him. He waited for three weeks and was disappointed enough that he called his father, the bishop, to say that the Church had failed him.

“Now, this was not malicious. It was just that he had been brought up with the idea that the whole effort and

duty of the Church was to look after him. *(He had missed the very point that the whole effort of the Church is to give him the opportunity to serve someone else.) . . . He had been weakened by a dole system and was now in mortal spiritual jeopardy because he would not act for himself*” (Boyd K. Packer, “Self-Reliance” [Brigham Young University devotional, Mar. 2, 1975], 4–5, speeches.byu.edu; emphasis added).

When the Lord invited Peter and Andrew to follow Him, He did not say, “Come follow me so I can provide programs that will make you rich and take care of you.” He said, “Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (see Mark 1:17). When He was asked the two great commandments, He did not talk of Church programs, He instead told us what we need to do: love God and love our neighbors (see Mark 12:29–31). As we read in the Gospels, He teaches us the importance of serving others, finding the lost sheep, as well as taking our talents and magnifying them.

Although we have wonderful programs in the Church and dedicated and faithful leaders who minister to us, “Church members are responsible for their own spiritual and temporal well-being. Blessed with the gift of agency,



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they have the privilege and duty to set their own course, solve their own problems, and strive to become self-reliant" (*Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [2010], 6.1.1). And as stated in the 2017 area plan, our objective is to take personal responsibility to work to improve our lives.

Recently Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came to our area. While meeting with the Area Presidency, we discussed together how to help our many members who desire and are trying to become temporally self-reliant. He then taught this powerful concept: Self-reliance has a purpose—to help us be able to serve. We need to teach that self-reliance is not the end goal but is a means to the goal of service.

May we each take personal responsibility for our temporal and spiritual welfare and not be like the young man President Packer described. Here are a few suggestions:

- Teach our children that a mission is not something the Church provides for us but is an opportunity to serve others. Help them take financial responsibility by saving from a very young age. Help them prepare spiritually by reading the Book of Mormon daily.
- Take responsibility together for the spiritual welfare of our families by counseling together with your children about how you can better honor the Sabbath, read scriptures, and pray together.
- Look for those in your ward or branch you can love and serve rather than wondering why more people are not reaching out to you.
- Determine that you will act in faith rather than be acted on. Pray as if everything depends on the Lord and then get up off your knees and go to work as if everything depends on you.
- Make use of all the wonderful resources available through the Church to help us become self-reliant

but always with the motivation that we can serve and bless others.

Consider these oft quoted scriptures:

- "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).
- "Before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:18–19).
- "Succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Instead of asking "What will the Church do for me?" how much better to ask "What can I do for the Church and to strengthen my brothers and sisters?"

I am thankful for the faith and goodness of the Saints in this part of the world and know that the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the answers to all our problems. Jesus Christ has established His Church on earth once again that we can receive the saving ordinances, including the marvelous blessings only available in the holy temple, needed to return back to our heavenly home. As we use our agency to *act* in faith, Heavenly Father will bless and guide us on our path to becoming spiritually and temporally self-reliant. ■

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Fundamental Principles of the Law of the Fast

By Elder Christophe Kawayia



Elder Christophe
Kawayia

The Lord has given us something that we each can do. . . . It is a commandment with a wonderful promise for those in need and for us.

“It is the law of the fast.”¹

This reminder from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, is one of the pillars of the Africa Southeast Area plan. It includes helping members become spiritually and temporally self-reliant by fasting and giving generous fast offerings.

Observing the law of the fast is an opportunity and a blessing for all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to improve individual and family Sabbath day worship and sacrament meetings.

Heavenly Father’s purpose in giving us the law of the fast is to make each of us happy, help us gain increased spiritual strength, and lay a foundation of faith that can serve as a support for future generations and the rapid growth of the Church.

Therefore, the Lord has commanded the Saints to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer” (D&C 38:35). In this regard, President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Remember the principle of the true fast. Is it not to

deal our bread to the hungry, to bring to our own house the poor who are outcast, to clothe the naked, to hide not ourself from our own flesh?”²

To encourage members of the Church to observe the law of the fast and to receive God’s promises, prophetic and apostolic priorities require that we teach the fundamental principles of the law of the fast.

These prophetic and apostolic priorities are for us a sure foundation by which we can sincerely love and serve one another by building our spiritual and temporal self-reliance. It is, in some way, a demonstration of the establishment of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our hearts and the Church on a sure foundation.

The fundamental principles of the law of the fast include:

- Abstaining from food and drink for two consecutive meals in a 24-hour period
- Attending fast and testimony meeting
- Giving a generous fast offering to help care for those in need.³

1. Abstaining from food and drink in a 24-hour period

To draw closer to God on the fast day and ask Him for His promises, the Lord asks us to abstain from eating

and drinking for two consecutive meals in a 24-hour period.

In addition, we must pray to understand God’s will and gain greater spiritual strength. Obedience to the commandments of the Lord our God will strengthen us.

Fasting thus becomes a means by which we manifest our burning desire and commitment to draw closer to God.

2. Attending fast and testimony meeting

In the Church, the first Sunday of the month is a day set aside and devoted to fasting. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord has declared that “verily



this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:10).

For this day to be sanctified, the Lord asks us to offer our oblations and our sacraments unto Him so that we can draw closer to the Lord and prove that our heart is edified by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Also, the Lord added that on this day we shall do none other thing, only to “let [our] food be prepared with singleness of heart that [our] fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that [our] joy may be full (D&C 59:13). This joy is to realize that as we draw nearer to God, we can ask Him for His promises without doubting and testify from the heart by sharing our faith-building experiences.

3. Giving a generous fast offering

“When members fast, they are asked to give to the Church a fast offering at least equal to the value of the food they would have eaten. If possible, they should be generous and give more.”⁴

When we do not live the law of the fast, we deliberately rob our Heavenly Father and are not eligible to draw closer to Him and ask Him for His promised blessings.⁵

May we be diligent in fasting properly so that we can enjoy the Lord’s blessings. If our fast is insincere, it will not benefit us spiritually or temporally.⁶ The Lord has declared that if a man offereth a gift with no real intention, it profiteth him nothing.

We can ask the Lord to bless us with the ability we need to perform a true fast in the Savior’s way. It is after properly and sincerely fasting that we can call and cry unto God, and He shall answer us and say, “Here I am” (Isaiah 58:9).

I know that the law of the fast is a means by which we can draw closer to God and ask Him for His promises. It is a symbol of our Church membership and a commitment to God our Eternal Father.

My deepest conviction prompts me to testify that when we sincerely observe the law of the fast by living it, we draw nearer to the Lord, can ask Him for His promises, and gain an increased spiritual strength that can help us resist Satan’s temptations, improve our temporal well-being,

develop greater compassion, and strengthen our desire to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

We sincerely fast when we fully obey the fundamental principles of the law of the fast by yielding our heart to the Lord. By observing the law of the fast, we gain the ability to be humble in keeping God’s commandments, being firm in the faith in Christ to the point that our hearts will be purified and sanctified. In the most sacred name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “‘Is Not This the Fast That I Have Chosen?’” *Liahona*, May 2015, 22.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 4.
3. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 21.1.17.
4. *Handbook 2*, 6.1.2.
5. See Malachi 3:8; Doctrine and Covenants 130:19–21.
6. See Isaiah 58:2–5.

LOCAL NEWS

Happy Birthday, Relief Society!

By Desiree van Schalkwyk

Sandton Ward, Johannesburg Stake

As women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are reflecting on their role against the background of women’s rights activism, what, I ask myself, is my role in the Church and how has my membership changed over the 37 years that I have been a member?

Looking back to the early women leaders and others in the Church. . .

They were grandmothers, mothers, wives, sisters, and aunts, all making time to add their talents to improving the lives of those they were assigned to watch over. Strong women, intelligent women, creative women, hardworking



As another Relief Society birthday approaches, we give thanks for this wonderful organization of women that enables us to be “at home” anywhere.

women filled with the Spirit. Their place in the Church was one of leadership and discipleship. Whether they would minister or be ministered to depended on their needs.

They bore children, nurtured them, and taught them the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ—principles of honor, learning, honesty, industry, neighborliness, and charity. They taught their children how to pray, read the scriptures, and worship the Lord.

I look around me at the sisters of my own ward in this modern time and I still see those same principles at

work. I see all types of women from all walks of life who are joined in the sisterhood of Relief Society. It is a privilege to join hands with these women who give so much of their time and resources to teach and minister.

I remember moving overseas for a while and the feeling of being so cut off from our home, family, and the familiar. I was so aware of the attention my accent drew and was loathe to participate in Sunday School. I dreaded going to Relief Society and being the stranger there too. I crept into the back row and my heart ached

as I longed for my home ward and the sisters I knew so well.

It wasn't long before a member of the Relief Society presidency spotted me and came over to introduce herself. She asked me a few questions about myself, making me feel very welcome, and asked for my contact details. Before long the meeting opened with the familiar songs of the Church, with sisters singing confidently and in different parts so that I felt I was singing with a choir. The meeting progressed with the usual announcements and then we went

into lesson time and I felt the presence of the Spirit as I listened to the teacher who had prepared the beautiful lesson. The sisters around me responded eagerly and I was caught up in their participation. Instead of a sea of strange faces, I got to see individual women expressing the feelings of their hearts and speaking about problems which we all face.

At that moment, I remembered that I was part of a worldwide sisterhood. That each woman in the room was a friend I was yet to meet.

I won't say that everything just melted away and that I immediately moved on with my life. Being a little shy, I still felt a little awkward amongst

so many strangers and struggled to remember names. However, I had regular visits from my visiting teachers, the neighbors had welcomed us, and I was given a calling in the Primary auxiliary where I got to know the children in my class and by extension, their parents. I had become an integral member of the ward family and over time became involved in the various programs offered by the Church.

As another Relief Society birthday approaches, we give thanks for this wonderful organization of women that enables us to be "at home" anywhere, and say happy birthday, Relief Society, and may you have many more! ■

Preparing, Not Waiting, to Serve a Mission

By Tarryn Lee Boreham

Cape Town, Bellville Ward, Bellville Stake

Why wouldn't I want to serve the Lord? What was stopping me from praying about serving a mission? FEAR. Thoughts of *I will miss my family a lot. My niece will be three when I get back. What about my dog?* and *I will have to wait to write my third book*, occupied my mind until one day I realized something. There was a lot of me, me, me going on and not a whole lot of "Thy will be done." I remembered that "God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). I got down on my knees and I prayed humbly and earnestly to do His will. I fasted, and as a result, the fear left and I received my answer loud and clear: to serve as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

My papers have been in for five weeks now and I've come to understand that the term "waiting for my call" is perhaps incorrect because I'm not waiting for my call—I'm preparing for it. I'm serving now. I'm teaching now. I'm a disciple of Christ whether a missionary or not. Everything I do and say is a reflection of my commitment to the Lord. So,



while I wait for my call, I prepare—preparation is one of the keys to overcoming fear. I study the missionary materials, I never cease studying my scriptures and getting down on my knees in humble prayer. I speak to returned missionaries, I speak to missionaries—learning of and from their experiences.

In all aspects of the gospel, we keep growing through our efforts, and so it is for a mission. We only stop growing if we stop studying, so I keep studying and in return I get to have the greatest companion, the Holy Ghost, to guide me. And I really need the Holy Ghost because once I decided to serve and started working on my mission papers, temptation increased in all different ways.

I've felt it in the temptation to be idle: *I don't need to prepare right now. Why not watch a movie or spend a little more time on my phone?* Why not? Because that's exactly what Satan wants! Once I even found myself thinking, *I can prepare and be diligent while I'm on my mission.* I'm not saying I can't watch a movie or chat with my friends on the phone, but now that I have committed to serving my Savior Jesus Christ by teaching His people, I don't want to waste a moment allowing those things to take preference over preparing and studying for my mission.

I feel that the person I am leading up to my mission makes it easier to be the missionary I want



I choose the Lord as I prepare for my call. I choose to do His will.

be. That's not to say a person can't change—that's exactly why Jesus Christ performed the Atonement for us—but learning to be diligent now, in this preparing stage, will set me right for my mission. It really comes down to a choice: who I put first in my life, the Lord or the world?

I choose the Lord as I prepare for my call. I choose to do His will.

I choose to work each day to overcome my weaknesses. I choose to serve the Lord with all I have and can give. So there's no waiting for my call, there's only preparing. And I'm extremely grateful for this preparing stage. ■

Since writing this article, Tarryn has received her mission call to serve in the Idaho Pocatello Mission in the USA.

Mormon Bike Rider Makes History, Conquers Dakar Rally

For years, Joey Evans, a South African bike rider and member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, dreamed of racing in the Dakar Rally, a 9,000-km off-road race that takes place over 12 days, and made it his goal to compete one day. This dream was shattered when



at the Heidelberg Harescramble in 2007, Joey was involved in a serious crash near the start. He smashed 12 teeth and was unconscious with head trauma, several broken ribs, and a broken back that damaged his spinal cord, leaving him completely paralyzed from just below his chest. Later he was given about a 10% chance to walk again and if he did, he would walk badly with crutches.

Life was very difficult for a long time, but Joey came to terms with his

injury and worked toward the best recovery possible. Walking seemed like an unattainable dream now, let alone The Dakar. But as the months passed he went from learning to stand, to barely walking with parallel bars and back slabs on his legs, then onto crutches, until finally walking unaided. He still dreamed of The Dakar, and it motivated him to still work toward that goal.

Within a few years he started riding again and then racing again. He worked toward his Dakar dream, racing the Botswana Toyota Kalahari 1000 Desert Race, the Amageza Rally, and then the Merzouga rally in Morocco, earning his place on the start line of the Dakar Rally in January 2017.

Joey still has numerous complications from the spinal injury that he deals with on a daily basis, but despite this Joey not only completed The Dakar 2017 but was the only South African bike rider to do so.

Joey, 41, returned to Johannesburg from Argentina to a hero's welcome by his family, friends, and biking enthusiasts.

In his youth, Joey served as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for two years in Durban. He is married to Meredith Evans, and they have four daughters, Kayla, Jenna, Tyra, and Shawna. ■

Joey Evans at one of his races.

