

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Forgiveness and Gratitude

By Elder Alvin F. Meredith III
Of the Seventy



Elder Alvin F.
Meredith, III

On February 9, 2007, Chris Williams, a father of four and a bishop in Utah, USA, took his family out for dinner. While driving home on that tragic Friday night, another car traveling at 60 miles per hour and driven by a 17-year-old drunk driver slammed into the Williamses' family car. The impact of the collision sent their car spinning until it crashed into a bridge support under the freeway.

When Bishop Williams came to his senses, he surveyed the scene to find that his wife, Michelle, who was pregnant with their fifth child, was killed, along with their son Benjamin and daughter Anna.

While Bishop Williams waited for emergency vehicles and personnel to arrive on the scene, he said he thought to himself, "Whoever has done this to us, I forgive them. I don't care what the

circumstances were, I forgive them."¹

Learning to forgive others, particularly those that have wronged us, is part of the process of becoming like the Savior. If we are to become like Christ, we must strive to emulate His attributes and His actions. Christ was unjustly accused, unfairly convicted, and brutally beaten. Yet, as He was nailed to the cross He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what

Jesus taught the higher law: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).



*The Savior's Atonement
not only helps us be
forgiven, but it can also
help us forgive others.*

they do" (Luke 23:34). We are also the beneficiaries of the forgiving nature of Jesus Christ. He said, "Whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive" (Mosiah 26:22).

In order to forgive like the Savior forgives, we must learn to love like He loves and see others as He sees them. It is easy to love those who love us. Jesus said even the wicked can do that (see Luke 6:32). But Jesus taught the higher law: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, "The pure love of Christ can remove the scales of resentment and wrath from our eyes, allowing us to see others the way our Heavenly Father sees us: as flawed and imperfect mortals who have potential and worth far beyond our capacity to imagine. Because God

loves us so much, we too must love and forgive each other."²

We "must love and forgive each other." Refusing to forgive others is not only a sin, but it is also a greater sin than that which may have been committed against us. The Lord taught: "Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:9–10).

In order for us to receive mercy, we must be willing to grant it (see Matthew 5:7). In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior taught, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14–15).

Forgiving others should not be mistaken for condoning abuse, hurt, harm, neglect or any other bad behavior. Forgiving others does not mean that justice is not merited for perpetrators of crimes or that individuals should endure mistreatment. Forgiving others, however, allows us to be a victim only once.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), in speaking of forgiveness,

said, "I think it may be the greatest virtue on earth, and certainly the most needed. There is so much of meanness and abuse, of intolerance and hatred. There is so great a need for repentance and forgiveness. It is the great principle emphasized in all of scripture, both ancient and modern."³

The Savior's Atonement not only helps us be forgiven, but it can also help us forgive others. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, when speaking of the calamity that the Williams family endured, said: "Chris Williams drew upon his faith in Jesus Christ to forgive the drunken driver who caused the death of his wife and two of their children. Only two days after the tragedy and still deeply distraught, this forgiving man, then serving as one of our bishops, said, 'As a disciple of Christ, I had no other choice.'"⁴ When we find it difficult to forgive another person, we can ask God to grant us strength to do so. Just as He wants to forgive us, He wants to help us to forgive others. ■

NOTES

1. Chris Williams, in Elaine Jarvik, "Man exercises a year of forgiveness after drunk teen driver kills wife, two children," *Deseret News*, April 8, 2013, deseretnews.com.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Merciful Obtain Mercy," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 76.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Forgiveness," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 81–82.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, "Followers of Christ," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 98.

LOCAL PAGES

General Conference—A Fire to Help You Shine Better

By Nazeera Pathan

Mumbai Branch



As general conference approaches, I believe it is not unusual for most members wanting to hear their favorite leaders. I used to feel that way and thought that my favorite ones gave more effective message than others. However, during the October 2016 general conference, my impression completely changed by the flood

of wonderful talks given by all the leaders. I recalled the words from Doctrine and Covenants 1:38: “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, . . . *whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same*” (emphasis added).

It reminded me that every Church leader, whether it be a member of the

Seventy or the prophet, is a servant of God, and that He speaks to us through them.

Just like other members, I too have major concerns in life: family, Church, service, and employment. I used to worry about them every day. But from that general conference, I have been strengthened by the

messages from each talk. Moreover, I have received much strength from the leaders who were not on my “favorites” list. They really gave me hope, confidence, and comfort. I started applying the principles I learned from them whenever I need and in whichever roles of my life I take over—as a woman, a wife, a mother, a Church member, a servant, and even a professional. I am pleased to share a few of those experiences.

In My Calling . . .

I serve as the Relief Society president in our branch. We have sisters from different countries and distinct cultures, and converts from different faiths who ever speak different languages. They all have diverse platforms of nature and lifestyle. When I was new to the calling, I thought, “I do not have the capacity to put myself in others’ shoes and understand their concerns. This is going to be a huge burden. I am inadequate for this assignment. There are so many other sisters who are older than me in regard to Church membership and in age! Then why me?”

However, when I heard the talk given by Elder J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy, “Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?” I was truly touched by his sayings, “We falsely judge our



Nazeera's husband and children.

self-worth by the *things* we do or don't have and by the *opinions of others*. If we must compare, *let us compare how we were in the past to how we are today—and even to how we want to be in the future. The only opinion of us that matters is what our Heavenly Father thinks of us*” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 33; emphasis added).

Since then, I stopped thinking of myself as unworthy for my present calling and started learning things that can help me strengthen individual sisters and friendships among them. And, I am happy to hear, see, and feel the love they have for each other. I am glad that I could see changes.

With My Family . . .

As a wife and young mother, I always want my family to have a gospel-centered home. I try to learn ways to teach my children. However, arguments in our marriage life disturb us, which in turn trouble our children. I want to be a good example for them, but I fail many times,

which is so painful. But I have found a great counsel for parents from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in his talk “‘Come, Follow Me’ by Practicing Christian Love and Service.”

He said: “The disciples were taught to turn from the ways of the natural man to the loving and caring ways of the Savior by replacing contention with forgiveness, kindness, and compassion. . . .

“As we do, we may not be able to avoid tribulation, affliction, and suffering in the flesh, but we will suffer less spiritually. Even in our trials we can experience joy and peace. . . .

“. . . Parents, you are called to be loving teachers and missionaries to your children and youth. They are your investigators. You bear the responsibility to help them become converted. . . .

“Let us remember, the most important work we do in our families is through the power of the Holy Ghost. Whenever we raise our voices in anger, the Spirit leaves our

companionships and families. When we speak in love, the Spirit can be with us. Let us remember that our children and grandchildren measure our love by how much devoted time we give them. *Above all, don't lose patience and don't give up!*" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 22, 23; emphasis added).

He also shared a wonderful example of a couple having intense love and compassion toward each other. His words deeply penetrated my heart. I have decided to put Elder Hales's counsel into practice, whatever circumstances may arise. Hence, I started loving my husband *more* in predicaments.

I also feel strongly that I do not want to lose my children. So his experience became a great example that I should follow to nurture my children, and above all, that I should be consistent every day.

In My Employment . . .

Hard times in my profession tested my strength, and great depression overcame my potential. I felt like I was left alone. However, in the middle of storms of despair, the messages from general conference reminded me of our Savior's words "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39). I was overwhelmed by the strong feeling that came in my

heart saying, "You are not alone." I could not explain in words simply how great comfort I received!

I realized what I should really worry about!

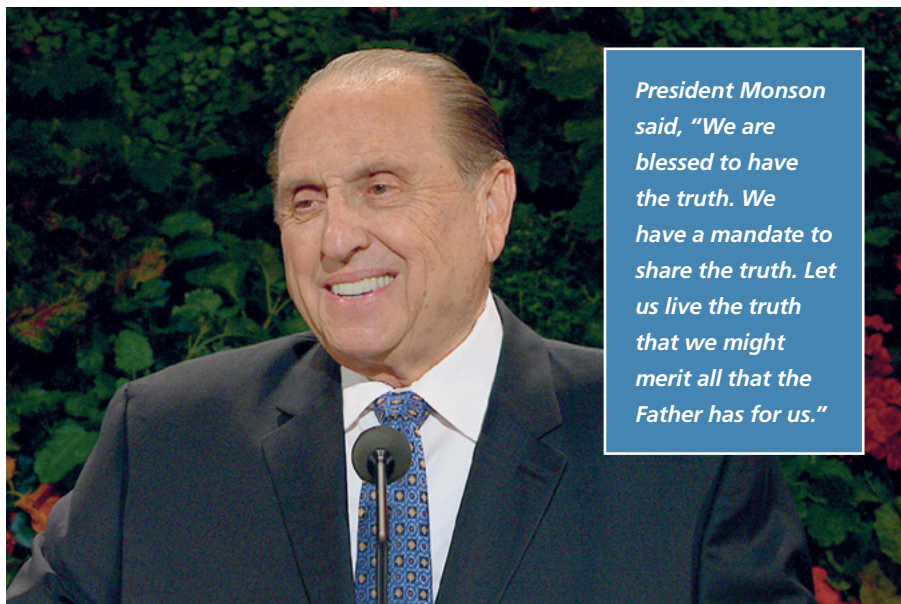
I love the luminescent message from President Thomas S. Monson, who said: "It is not enough, however, merely to believe in Him and His mission. We need to work and learn, search and pray, repent and improve . . . Only by so doing will we obtain true, eternal happiness" ("The Perfect Path to Happiness," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 80–81).

President Monson also said, "We are blessed to *have* the truth. We have a mandate to *share* the truth. Let us *live* the truth that we might merit

all that the Father has for us" ("The Perfect Path to Happiness," 81).

I have determined to prioritize living and sharing the gospel above anything else. And I know with much confidence that God will help me in doing His work.

With deep conviction, I testify that the love of God is everlasting. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of our Heavenly Father. He came to earth to sacrifice Himself for us and created the pathway for us to go back to our Eternal Father. God has given me the great companionship of the Holy Ghost that comforts me in tribulation and directs me in the right way during chaos. In the name of our precious friend, even Jesus Christ, amen. ■



President Monson said, "We are blessed to have the truth. We have a mandate to share the truth. Let us live the truth that we might merit all that the Father has for us."



What I Learned from the General Conference

By **Densil Calvin**
Chennai First Branch

All the talks in the April 2017 general conference were good, but I would like to share the talk that impressed me a lot. It was given by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear” (*Ensign or Liahona*, May 2017, 104–107).

He shared a beautiful experience of a sister coming to him with a complaint, saying that a few members had been sleeping during his talk in the stake meetings. The way President Uchtdorf responded to that sister was the perfect example of the commandment “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). Because a lot of effort goes into preparing a talk, hearing that the response from your listeners was not good might offend you. But President Uchtdorf did not get offended by the remarks of the sister. He took it in a casual and humorous way and moved on. If he would have taken it in an offensive manner, he would not have been able to love the members as before. He also said, “[People] demand compliance with their own arbitrary rules, but when others don’t follow these random rules, they chasten them verbally, emotionally, and sometimes even physically.” People must learn to understand how others feel.

These are some very important things that caused an impression on my mind. ■

My Testimony of General Conference

By **Sophia Prince**
Chennai First Branch

After I had the opportunity to watch the April 2017 general conference, I was assigned to speak on a topic from general conference during sacrament meeting.

I decided to choose a topic from the wonderful talk given by Sister Bonnie H. Cardon, “Trust in the Lord and Lean Not,” where I related my talk to the scripture verses in Proverbs 3:5–6.

I was so inspired and taken aback on how these verses come with two powerful admonitions, along with a warning and a wonderful and glorious promise of God.

Let’s look at the two powerful admonitions: 1) We need to always trust in the Lord with all our heart; 2) we need to have this trust in all the things we do and we need to acknowledge Him.

We also have the Lord’s warning in it: “Lean not unto thine own understanding”—we need to depend on the Lord and not on our own selves.

If we do these things, then the Lord promises us that “He shall direct [our] paths.” The Lord will guide us, just as He safeguarded the people of Israel.

What a wonderful message in these verses where the Lord is direct and straightforward. He asks from us only one thing: to trust in Him from the bottom of our hearts, and He promises that He will guide us wherever we go.

I know that this message will have a deep impact on us as it had on me, and I know that the Lord’s promise is true. I say all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Relief Society 175th Birthday Celebration: March 17th 2017

As usual, I thought this Relief Society birthday would be celebrated by having the sisters cut the cake and having some refreshments, but this was not what happened. Rather than that, we decided to have this celebration amidst the precious children of God. The experience was really wonderful, spending our time with physically challenged children, getting to know about each and every one of them, celebrating together and cutting the cake in the midst of them, which I believe created a lasting bond between us and them. It made us think about our Father in Heaven, who cares for us and always loves us amidst these trials and temptations that every one of us goes through.

Divya Muthu, Chennai First Branch

This Relief Society birthday was celebrated a little bit differently from how we have celebrated



in the past. We had all the Relief Society sisters gather in the chapel and had opening exercises as usual, and then we had some of the sisters bear their testimony. Some of them spoke on the importance of womanhood, which was so inspiring. Even though I was not able to make it, hearing the testimony of other sisters who attended strengthened my testimony. For all the sisters, it was a spiritual experience. ■

Minni Isaac, Chennai Fourth Branch

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor. ■

EMAIL: indiablrces@yahoo.com



Resurrection: A Wonderful Gift to All

By **Florence Jebamani**
Chennai Third Branch

Easter always reminds me of the Resurrection of my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth has given me more hope for my life now and for the life to come.

The Resurrection of my Savior reminds me that all my fears and despairs can be turned into hope and joy for a rewarding life hereafter.

Throughout my life, I have learned that the mortal challenges we face,

whether they be physical, mental, or emotional, can be overcome through the power of the Resurrection. As we experience the power of the Savior's Atonement in our lives, we will better understand that He has not only taken our sins, infirmities, sufferings, heart aches, and pains upon His shoulders through His infinite Atonement, but through His victorious Resurrection, He has

also lifted us from all our griefs, sorrows, and pains, which will not be carried over into the life to come that God hath prepared for His children. He has provided deliverance for all His children, regardless of who we are.

In simple terms, Easter gives me all the hope for my life. Jesus Christ is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. "God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son" ("The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles, *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2). Through Him, resurrection is possible for everyone. ■

"God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son."



Florence Jebamani

