

AFRICA SOUTHEAST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Hastening the Work of Salvation

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The Old Testament records an account about Nebuchadnezzar, the great king and founder of the Babylonian empire. He had a dream that troubled him. Daniel, the captive Israelite prophet of God and a man of great faith, was called on to interpret the dream. Nebuchadnezzar had seen “a stone was cut out without hands,” destroying an image which represented the kingdoms of the world. The stone “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:34–35).

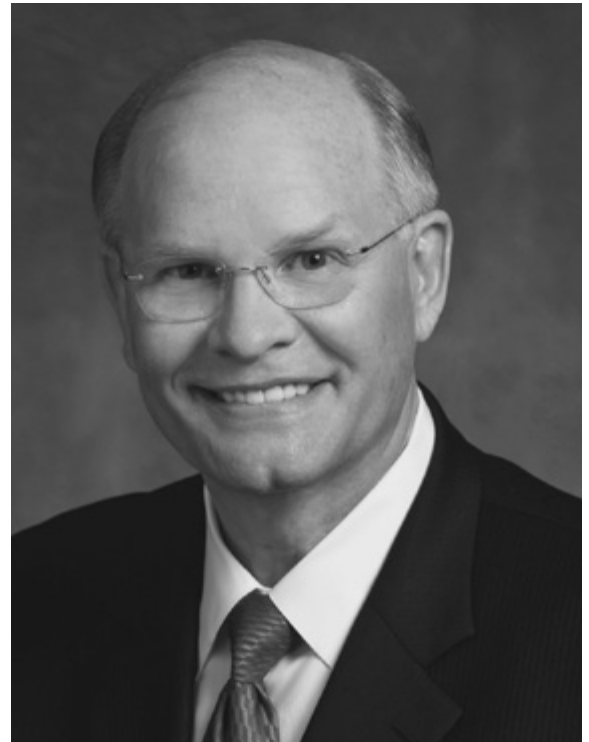
The stone Nebuchadnezzar saw is the kingdom of God on the earth. In fact, it is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That it was cut out without hands is an indication that the work is the Lord’s and not man’s. Since it is the Lord’s work, can anything stop it? According to Joseph Smith, the answer is, “No!” Joseph Smith also declared, “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame,

but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.”¹

If no unhallowed hand can stop the work, why should we participate in hastening the work of salvation when the work will go forward in spite of our efforts? Why do we need to do anything? As we consider those questions, several answers come to mind. As we correctly understand the doctrines that underpin these answers, we will not only understand why we need to participate, but we will want to participate with all our hearts, might, minds, and strength in hastening the work of salvation.

To Keep a Commandment

President Thomas S. Monson said in general conference in October 2013: “The holy scriptures contain no proclamation more relevant, no responsibility more binding, no instruction



Dale G. Renlund, Area President

more direct than the injunction given by the resurrected Lord as He appeared in Galilee to the eleven disciples. Said He, ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’ (Matthew 28:19).

“The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, ‘After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel’ (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 330). . . . To [these] words I add my own. Now is the time for members and missionaries to come together, to work together,

to labor in the Lord's vineyard to bring souls unto Him. He has prepared the means for us to share the gospel in a multitude of ways, and He will assist us in our labors if we will act in faith to fulfill His work."²

To Honor a Covenant

Sometimes we err in thinking of a covenant like a business contract: that if the arrangement becomes unprofitable, we can simply walk away. While the term *covenant* sometimes denotes an agreement between persons, more often it denotes an agreement between God and man. In this latter case, it is important to note that the two parties to the agreement do not stand in the relation of independent and equal contractors. God in His good pleasure fixes the terms, while man accepts those terms. In other words, God gives the conditions for the covenant, and men agree to do what He asks them to do. God then promises men certain blessings for their obedience (See Guide to the Scriptures and Bible Dictionary, "Covenant").

When we are baptized, we make a covenant to serve the Savior and keep His commandments, including standing "as

witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). Through the ordinances of the gospel, we become heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. Being an heir of the Abrahamic covenant does not make one a "chosen person" but does signify that we have chosen the responsibility to carry the gospel to all the peoples of the earth. Abraham's posterity has carried out the missionary activity in all nations since his day (See Bible Dictionary, "Abraham, covenant of").

To Save Our Own Souls

No injunction is as frequently associated with the forgiveness of sins and personal salvation as is missionary work. Doing so in the right way allows us to have our sins forgiven (D&C 31:5; 36:1; 60:7; 62:3; 84:61), stand blameless before God at the last day, bring salvation to our souls (D&C 4:2, 4), and to be made holy (D&C 60:7). Think of it! By joining the Savior in His work, the power of the Atonement is brought to bear on us individually in a focused and magnified way.

To Bring Us Joy

If we align ourselves with the Savior's goals, helping Heavenly

Father's children find their way back to Him, we will find great joy and satisfaction. The Savior said: "And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:15–16).

We will feel joy because of our alignment with the Savior's goals. Just as there is great joy in finding a lost sheep, a silver coin, or the return of a prodigal son, so will there be joy over one sinner that repents. We share in the joy of the robe, the ring, and the fatted calf because that which was dead is alive again; and that which was lost is found (see Luke 15).

To Show Love for the Savior

If we love the Savior, we keep His commandments (see John 14:15). If we love the Savior, we choose to follow Him and be His disciples. While we may wish to serve Him, we are not

hirelings or servants, we are His friends (see John 15:15 and D&C 84:77). Aligning with His goals (see Moses 1:39) comes naturally when we love Him.

To Show Love for Our Brothers and Sisters

The scriptures use the terms “sons and daughters of God” in two ways. The first way teaches that we are all literal spirit children of our Heavenly Father. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, our Heavenly Father. In the second way, we learn that God’s sons and daughters are those who have been born again “through the Atonement of Christ.” This happens “by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:3). In other words, we can be offspring of God but not heirs of His eternal glory. To become a joint-heir with Christ and receive all that Heavenly Father has, we must fulfill our obligations (See Moses 6:53, 62, 64–68; D&C 84:33–40).

When we understand this distinction, we recognize that the only way they can receive all the blessings a kind, loving Heavenly Father has for them is to receive the ordinances of the gospel and make and keep the

associated covenants. We then are motivated to help others.

This desire is manifest by the sons of Mosiah. About them it was said, “Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble” (Mosiah 28:3). Sharing the gospel with others helps us show and develop love for all people.

How Can We Share the Gospel?

As we come to understand why we need to participate in the work of salvation and desire to do so with all our hearts, might, minds, and strength, it is appropriate to ask, “How can I share the gospel?” This question is so important that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have directed that the Saturday adult session of stake and district conferences in 2014 be focused on “hastening the work of salvation through faith, prayers, and efforts of individual members, their families, and full-time missionaries.”

It is actually easy to sit back and think what stake presidents, bishops, ward mission leaders, and ward missionaries should do. But instead, we should be asking, “What can I do, by virtue of my own agency?” That leads us to think of things that are specific and personal to us and our families. That leads us to act in faith. The process of acting in faith begins with prayer, recognizing and being ready for missionary opportunities, and doing something with those opportunities.

Pray for the Opportunity to Introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Heavenly Father’s Children

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in the October 2013 general conference, “Brothers and sisters, fear will be replaced with faith and confidence when members . . . kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to bless them with missionary opportunities.”³ How hard is that? All of us can pray.

Recognize and Be Ready for the Missionary Opportunity When It Comes

Elder Ballard continues: “Then, we must demonstrate our faith and watch for opportunities to introduce the gospel

of Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father's children, and surely those opportunities will come. These opportunities will never require a forced or a contrived response. They will flow as a natural result of our love for our brothers and sisters. Just be positive, and those whom you speak with will feel your love. They will never forget that feeling, though the timing may not be right for them to embrace the gospel. That too may change in the future when their circumstances change."⁴

Do Something, Anything, "It Mattereth Not"

Elder Ballard makes this promise: "It is impossible for us to fail when we do our best when we are on the Lord's errand. . . . You don't have to be an outgoing person or an eloquent, persuasive teacher. If you have an abiding love and hope within you, the Lord has promised if you 'lift up your voices unto this people [and] speak the thoughts that [He] shall put into your hearts, . . . you shall not be confounded before men; [And] it shall be given you . . . in the very moment, what ye shall say' (D&C 100:5–6)."⁵

Many come up with gimmicks or standard patterns or approaches to create a missionary opportunity or react to it when it presents itself. The specific approach one uses is one of those things about which the Lord would say, "it mattereth not unto me," so long as we do it (See, for instance, D&C 61:22; 62:5; and 80:3).

Here are three simple approaches to consider:

1. Accurately report your activities to co-workers and friends. When you go to work or other activities on Monday morning, how often do you respond to the question, "How was your weekend?" with the statement, "Oh, fine," and leave it at that? What would happen if you instead accurately reported on what you experienced? For instance, what would happen if you said, "We had an amazing meeting at our church where all of the congregations came together for a conference. Two young women were called on extemporaneously to share their thoughts. They were outstanding!" Or, "It was great. We had a new missionary from Ghana who is giving his full time for two

years to work in our congregation. He shared his humble circumstances and thoughts and it made a big impression on me." Or, "We had a great activity at our church where we used a pamphlet to record the names and stories of our ancestors. It helped me understand the sacrifices my distant relatives made so that I could be well born."

Responses such as these will act as filters for co-workers and friends. Some will respond with no interest. Others will inquire further. As they do, the dialogue will be natural.

2. Offer an invitation to "come and see." If someone asks anything about the Church, even if it is negative, respond, "Come and see" (John 1:39). If there is a baby blessing, baptism or confirmation, ordination, or any such event occurring in your life or in the life of one of your family members, invite a friend or co-worker to "come and see." If someone asks how you are able to raise your children to be so respectful, invite them to "come and see."
3. Carry Church materials with you. Be observant. Be ready

to obtain contact information for those you meet. Many are the successes of those who carry copies of the Book of Mormon, pass-along cards, and *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets to share. Take down names and contact details of those who express

an interest to give to the full-time missionaries.

Conclusion

Pray for the opportunity to participate in the work of salvation. Then, act in faith. The obligation to do so is ours, as are the blessings. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.
2. Thomas S. Monson, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 4.
3. M. Russell Ballard, "Put Your Trust in the Lord," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 43.
4. M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 43.
5. M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 43.

LOCAL NEWS

The Man in the Chapel

Excerpted by Ted Nielsen

Meetinghouse Facilities Department

Many wards or branches know at least one member who has drifted into inactivity. Bishops, branch presidents, and concerned members wonder what they might do to help bring these lost members back. Thank heavens for bishops who listen to the Spirit and are inspired in our behalf! One such bishop found an unusual way to bring the lost member back.

Thirty years had passed since Ephraim, age 68, had been ordained an elder. Through life challenges, he had fallen into inactivity. He had long been unfriendly toward the Church, yet maintained a solid friendship with his bishop, who visited him frequently. The two had an

*Ephraim alone
in the chapel*

easy, comfortable relationship. Ephraim appreciated that the bishop respected his wishes and refrained from asking him to attend Church. The bishop stated, "Ephraim was on the other end of the spiritual spectrum. He was not interested in becoming involved with the Church."

One Sunday morning the bishop sat in his office, pondering and praying about how to help his members. When his thoughts turned to Ephraim,



he was hopeful there was a way the Spirit might touch that man once again so that he might regain his testimony.

The next time he visited with Ephraim, he felt impressed to ask him to fulfill an assignment: “Brother Ephraim,” the bishop said, “I know you said you wouldn’t come to Church on Sundays, but could you come and help us clean the Church during the week?”

Ephraim reluctantly accepted the call as a personal favor to his good friend, but made it clear that he would *not* be attending Church. He began cleaning the chapel on Monday mornings. However, as time went on, he was cleaning the chapel not only on Mondays, but before any meeting or funeral that took place in the chapel. He found himself interacting with the elders quorum president, the high priests group leader, members of the bishopric, and other ward members. People got to know him and like him.

When everybody had left the building, he would often sit in the chapel and think about his life. He felt the Spirit as he sat there. He later recalled, “The feeling in that chapel blew me away!”

In time, he approached his friend and asked, “Bishop, do you think it might be possible for my wife and me to be sealed in the temple?”

With a smile, the bishop said, “Yes.”

Ephraim said, “You knew this might happen, didn’t you?”

The bishop replied, “I hoped that it would!”

Ephraim and his wife prepared to go to the temple the following February. He told everybody who would listen, with tears in his eyes, “I wouldn’t be going to the temple if I had not been assigned to clean the church!”

Our leaders have long taught about the spiritual

side of caring for our places of worship. Member participation always includes the Lord; He blesses us when we do His work. ■

Excerpted from Matt Christensen from the Manti FM Group. If you have a personal experience with member participation or meetinghouse care, please share it. Send your story directly to the Meetinghouse Facilities Department, nielsento@ldschurch.org.

A Notebook, a Pen, and Funerals

Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson



Church members are often intrigued by family history, but don’t know where to begin searching on their own. Beyond recording information about their own parents and grandparents, for example, gathering names and dates becomes more difficult. Sister Mabahlakoana Jeanett Mapetla faced the same obstacles, but she used her faith and ingenuity to overcome them. She says, “When I first investigated the Church, I enjoyed the [discussions] on the temple and family history most. I started thinking about how I could do my

**Sister
Mabahlakoana
Jeanett Mapetla**

genealogy, but I didn't know where to start."

However, she had learned the lesson on asking for help from our Heavenly Father very well. She says, "I prayed and fasted, and was prompted to take a small booklet and pen with me wherever I went. In family gatherings, at family parties, and mostly at funerals, I would be busy disturbing the old people there, gathering information from them."

As most researchers do, Sister Mapetla found that elderly people are treasure troves of information and were not in any way "disturbed" by questions about their aunts and uncles, cousins and grandparents. In fact, they were delighted to share anecdotes along with the names and dates. With enough stories in hand, Sister Mapetla was able to start "connecting the dots."

"I even got information from neighbors and friends," she reports enthusiastically. "Soon the Lord helped me find what I was looking for. I was prompted to collect [the information on all] the members of the whole family."

Interestingly enough, she did not understand the link between family history and temple work until much later. She says, "I started going to the temple in March of 2002, and it was there that I realized that the collection I had of my family lineage would help me do baptisms for the dead members of my family. I didn't know that I'd be helping them when I collected the information. I only knew that in the teachings of the Church, we were encouraged to collect our genealogy. I first collected about 25 names of my family members, up to the sixth generation. I was even able to find both my grandparents' sides as well as my parents', because I hurried to visit and interview the old people at funerals."

Sister Mapetla found deep satisfaction in the work, stating, "Now I have been blessed to do

the work for them, and after being a member for ten years, I've done more than 70 names and am looking forward to many more."

Just like Nephi in the Book of Mormon, Sister Mapetla believes in listening and doing. She concludes, "I thank the Lord for being so loving as to help me do this marvellous work. I always feel happy when I feel the love of my ancestors." Not only that, but she realizes it requires action as well. That's why she always reaches for her pen and notebook before she heads out to a funeral. ■

*Excerpted from Southeast Area Family History Office,
Submitted December 9, 2011.*

Just a Scrap of Paper

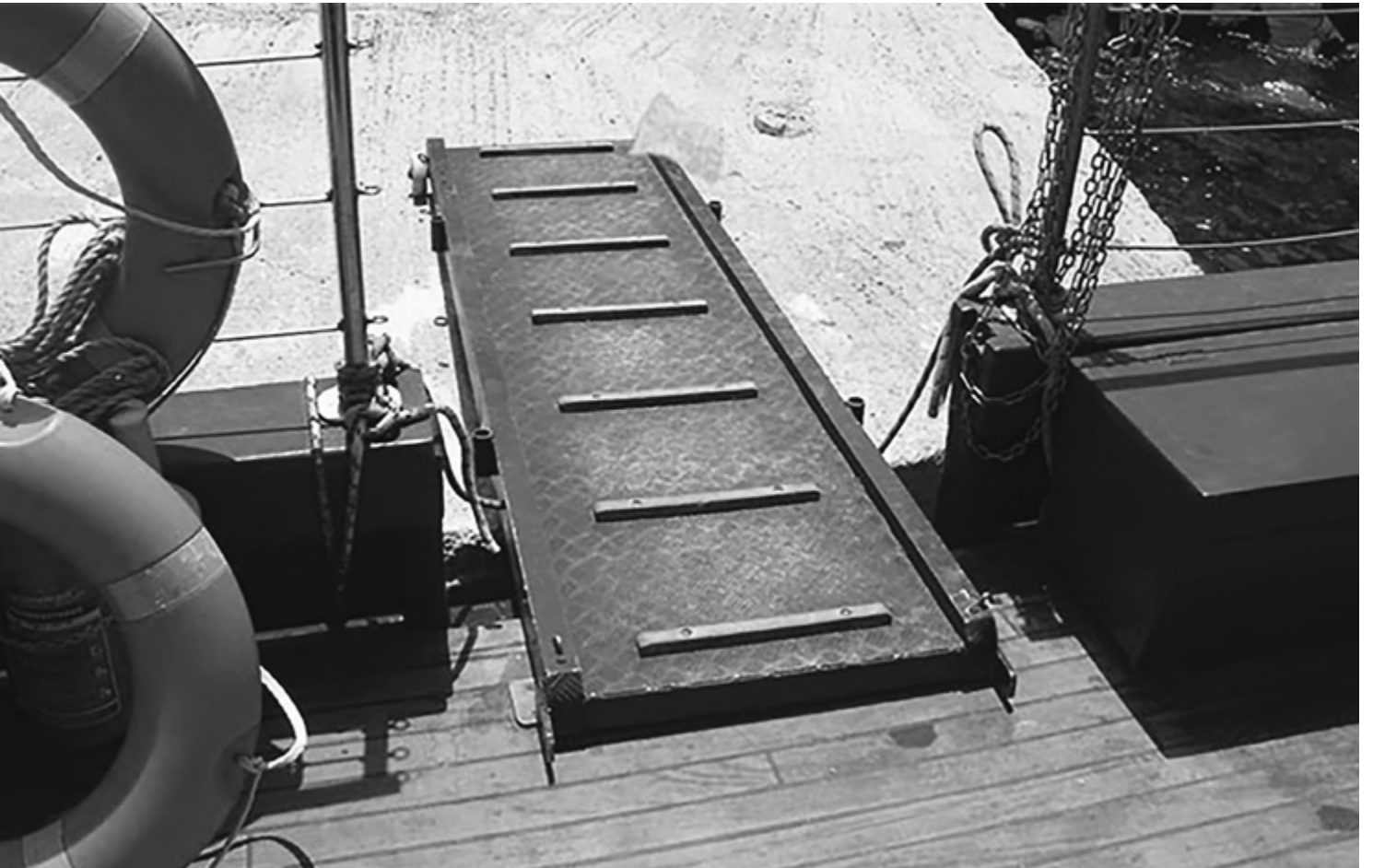
Excerpted by Sister Marnae Wilson

When the Church was first established in South Africa, missionaries had to travel by ship to get to their mission headquarters. The trip was long, difficult, and expensive. Often missionaries travelled alone, with little support, and no way to communicate with their mission president.

One little boat had been tossed by storms for more than six weeks as it made its way slowly from England to South Africa. Aboard was Elder Franklin D. Price, a young Mormon missionary, trying to get to his South African mission.

Each day Elder Price became more worried, for food and money were scarce. According to the law of the Union of South Africa, no one was permitted to enter the country unless he had at least 20 dollars with him. Elder Price did not have the required sum.

When the boat finally docked, the young elder decided that he would board a train and go as far as he possibly could. As he walked off the ship, he noticed a small folded piece of paper lying at the foot of the gangplank. Without thinking, he stooped over, picked it up, and



A scrap of paper at the bottom of the gangplank

automatically slipped the paper into his pocket.

In no time he was on a train, speeding down the tracks toward the Union of South Africa. At the border, immigration officials came aboard to check all entry papers. Elder Price was worried about what would happen to him when the officials discovered that he

had no money. When the men approached, Elder Price almost panicked. Then, without even knowing why, he reached into his pocket and pulled out the piece of paper that he had found earlier. Elder Price handed the paper to one of the officials. The man nodded his head and returned the paper to the astonished young elder. That paper

was an endorsed check in the amount of twenty dollars with the stamp of the Union of South Africa affixed.

As Elder Price told his story at the mission home, tears of gratitude streamed down his cheeks. The Lord truly provides for those who serve Him. ■

Taken from "True Stories from South Africa," Friend, April 1972.