

# *No Other Talent Exceeds Spirituality*

VAUGHN J. FEATHERSTONE

On the way over here I thought of a fellow up in Idaho who moved into a ward. He had a wooden leg from the knee down. No one ever found out how he got this wooden leg or what happened to his own leg. The Saints talked about it a lot, but never to him. Finally, after about three weeks, two or three of the sisters were talking together, and one of them said, “My curiosity just won’t let me rest. I’ve got to ask him how he got his wooden leg. I’m just going to go over and ask him.”

So when he came through the door in the foyer, she walked up and said, “Do you mind if I ask you a question?”

And he said, “No, if you promise to ask only one.”

She said, “Very well, then. How did you lose your leg?”

And he said, “It was chewed off.” Life is full of surprising answers.

Some time back, a fellow who collected chime clocks happened to pick up one to go along with the rest of his collection. He had many chime clocks that were distributed throughout his house. Each night after he got a new clock he would put it in the bedroom, and then he would listen to the chimes going off during the night. After he and his wife had settled down and the clock began to chime, he remembered counting up to ten, eleven,

twelve, thirteen, fourteen. He shook his wife and said, “Wake up, Ma, it’s later than I’ve ever known it to be.”

I think I would like to talk to you about a subject that is relative to “it’s later than I’ve ever known it to be.”

I attended a conference with Elder Bruce McConkie up in Grace, Idaho, in 1967, where I had the privilege of speaking. As I finished speaking, he stood up and took the remainder of the time. He said something like this—and I’m not exactly sure of the words, but the thought is the same—“No other talent exceeds spirituality.” So I’d like to talk to you and use that as my theme this evening: No other talent exceeds spirituality.

## **Daily Thoughts about Spirituality**

Now, if that is true, how then do we gain spirituality? Tonight we heard this lovely soloist and the accompanist. It takes talent to produce the kind of music that they rendered. We hear great orators, we view tremendous paintings, and we see great productions—all

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demanding great talent. And yet, no other talent exceeds spirituality. How do you gain spirituality?

During the past almost nine years since I heard that statement, there has hardly been a day go by that I haven't thought of the talent of spirituality. There are several subjects I believe I think of every single day. One is purity of heart. Another one came in the form of a question from President Romney, who said to me at a conference one time: "Brother Featherstone, do you think the brethren of the priesthood will ever come to understand that they were born to serve their fellowmen?" And the other thought I think of daily is that no other talent exceeds spirituality. I believe that hardly a day goes by that I don't think of these three statements.

### **Service with Humility**

I have several suggestions for gaining spirituality. I'd like to start first with service. I believe if you really want to be spiritual, you must first make a commitment and a decision to serve the Lord's children. If you cannot make that commitment, I don't believe you will be able to gain the level of spirituality that is necessary in this life to achieve all that we want to achieve. I attended a conference over in Hawaii, and after the conference several young people came up to shake hands. One young man came up to me and asked, "Bishop Featherstone, would you tell me how I can gain humility?" Well, you know, we take an entire life studying about humility. How do you gain humility?

I said, "Well, I have some ideas on it. But it would take longer than we've got here. But maybe in a sentence or two, I could say this: When you think you've got it, you've lost it." Then I said, "Think of the most humble person on the face of the earth. Who is that?"

He said, "I suppose it's President Kimball."

And I said, "I think you're right. What do you think he does more than any other person on the face of the earth?"

He thought for a minute, then said, "I don't know."

Then I said, "I believe it's service. I believe President Kimball is totally committed to service. If you want to be humble, you serve with every particle of your being."

I believe humility and spirituality go hand in hand, and I believe service has to be part of it. While I served in Boise, Idaho, on the high council, I was called to be a home teacher to a man by the name of Archie; so we went to see Archie. He was a member of the Church, but I doubt he had been in the Church since he was baptized. His wife wasn't a member of the Church. My son Scott, who had not been a home teacher before, went with me to his home. I remember knocking on the door. The man came to the door with a can of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, and he said, "Yes? Can I help you?"

I said, "We're your new home teachers. My name is Vaughn Featherstone, and this is my son, Scott."

And he said, "Yes?"

And I said, "We realize it is inopportune to come at this time without an appointment, but we just wanted to visit long enough to make an appointment, and we'll try not to overstay our welcome. We'll be courteous and considerate of your time. But have you got a few minutes?"

And he said, "Come in."

And so we went inside, but he didn't invite us to sit down. So we stood there for about five or ten minutes, and I said, "We'd like to visit you at least once a month and see how everything is going. Then, if you need anything, we'll give you our phone number so you can call us." So I left that instruction for him, and I said, "What would be a good night to come?"

He said, "Normally, Thursdays I'm home. I don't have union meetings or other things on

Thursday, so I'd normally be home if you want to come."

I said, "We'll plan on coming the first Thursday of each month."

He said, "Very good, then."

So we shook hands and we left. When we got outside, I said to Scott, "I hope you got a chance to look around the house while you were in there to see if he had any hobbies or anything from which we might gain a common ground of interest."

Scott said, "Dad, I didn't even dare look."

I said, "All right, we'll be back on the first Thursday, and when we go in I'll give a little discussion and you be looking around the house."

So, on the first Thursday of the month, we prepared, we had a prayer, and then we drove down and parked in front of his home. We knocked on the door. Just before we had come to the door, I said, "Now, Scott, you look around, and if you see something which might be a hobby, give me a signal with your eyes and I'll know that you've seen something. I'll look in that direction to see what his hobby is." So we got inside and sat down, and the television was behind me. He had me sit with my back to the television and he sat facing it. He could look over my shoulder at the television. He didn't turn it down very much—just one-nineteenth of a turn, and so the sound was still pretty loud. Finally his wife got up and walked over and turned it down. I could see that he was just a little annoyed. I gave a little discussion that I didn't think would be offensive, then I looked over at Scott to see if he could give me a signal that he had seen some indication of a hobby. He just shrugged his shoulders. So I got the signal that Scott could not get a clue as to whether he had a hobby or not.

I said, "Well, fine, Archie, we'll be back to see you and your wife again on the first Thursday—unless you need me, and then give

me a call. I'll tell the bishop everything is all right at your home."

We got up to leave, and when we got to the door, right by the door was a big picture of a sheriff's posse. As we walked out I said, "Archie, are you a member of that sheriff's posse?"

And he said, "No, I'm not a member of that posse. If you'll look closely, you'll see that that's the Ada County Junior Sheriff's Posse. They're all teenagers."

And I looked closely.

"In fact," he said, "this little gal here, Sandy Thompson, is in your seminary class."

I said, "She certainly is."

And we looked at the picture and talked for a minute. I said, "How did you know that I taught seminary?"

He said, "I was down to the arena where we do our training with the horses and they do their routines. I happened to mention to a friend that we had a new home teacher from the Mormon church named Featherstone. That's kind of a funny name." Then Archie told us that Sandy Thompson happened to hear it and said, "Did you say Featherstone, Vaughn Featherstone?"

Archie said, "Yes."

"And he's your home teacher now?"

"Yes."

"Well, I think you'll like him. He's my seminary teacher. He teaches early morning seminary, and we like him."

And so I guess that helped the next time to give us a little better footing as we got into Archie's home. Anyway, we'd broken the ice with him. He started to talk about the junior sheriff's posse. He got more and more excited, and after about ten minutes of telling us all about the sheriff's posse, I said, "Archie, we'd love to come watch you do your routines sometime. Where do you do your training?" And he told me. I said, "I'd like to talk to you more about it, but we shouldn't overstay our welcome tonight."

He said, "Hold on, before you leave I want to tell you something. Do you know what we're going to do? We're going to buy black lighting. Can you imagine what it would be like to have all these horseback riders in the posse in iridescent shirts and hats, with the horses' hooves and bridles painted with iridescent paint? Then we will turn off all the lights in the stadium and turn on the black lighting. You won't even see the horses except their hooves. And you won't even see anything of the riders except their shirts or blouses, or a hat. It would really be impressive. It would be the finest thing done in western Idaho!"

You know, I got a little excited just listening to him. I said, "You know, that's a great idea. Have you got your black lighting?"

And his chin dropped an inch. He said, "Not yet, but we're going to get it."

I said, "How much have you saved for it? How much money have you earned?"

He said, after his chin dropped a little bit more, "Well, actually, we haven't earned anything yet, but we're going to earn it."

I said, "How are you going to raise the money?"

And his chin dropped again. I was really hitting him in the right places. He said, "Actually, we don't know. We don't know how to raise the money."

I said, "How much do you have to raise?"

He said, "Twelve hundred dollars is what it will cost."

"You don't know how to raise the money but you have to raise twelve hundred dollars? You want black lighting for next year, and you don't know what to do?"

"No."

I said, "How would you like me to volunteer to be the Ada County Junior Sheriff's Posse finance chairman?"

And he said, "Oh, you don't want to do that, do you?"

I lied and said, "Yes."

He said, "All right. You decide how you want us to help you."

I said, "I'll go home and work out a program and come back. You have all of your committee there, and we'll expose them to a plan to raise the money."

So I went home and sat up late that night. I figured out a way to raise the money. Next Wednesday I called him up and said, "Archie, we've got a plan. Can you have all the committee down there on Thursday night? If they like the plan, we'll raise the money this way."

So Thursday night came, and Scott and I went down. Here were about fifteen people milling around—and I guess we were the only two Mormons except Archie in the entire group. There was a card table with coffee cups, two big urns of coffee, and two glasses of milk. I tell you, Scott and I got there quick in case one of the coffee drinkers might change his mind and decide the milk looked good.

Anyway, we milled around and talked for a minute. Then Archie said, "I have my home teacher from the Mormon church. He's volunteered to be our finance chairman to raise the money for our black lighting. He's got a program here to present to us." Archie turned the time over to me, and I had the plan on large paper cards. I went through my presentation. Then I said, "Well, what do you think?"

He said, "That's great! That's the way we ought to raise the money. But we made a mistake. You know, I told you it was twelve hundred dollars?"

"Yes."

"It isn't twelve hundred dollars. It's actually eighteen hundred dollars. I called Idaho Power, and they said it would cost us about eighteen hundred dollars for the lighting materials we want."

I said, "Well, that doesn't make any difference. It only changes one figure, and we can do that. It won't create any more work. You see, we were going to go to four of the large corporations and ask each one of them for

\$300, and four times \$300 is \$1,200. So we'll just change that \$300 to \$450. But I do have one request that I'll need if we are going to raise the money this way. I'd like Archie to go with me to these four large corporations to help raise the money in case someone asks technical questions that I can't answer."

He said, "I'd be glad to go."

So, having been employed by Albertson's, I thought, "They're a large corporation with their national headquarters in Boise." At that time Bob Bolinder, a member of the Church on the high council in the neighboring stake, was the executive vice-president. I made an appointment with him, and then I called Archie. I put on the best suit I had that morning, and we got ready to go meet with Bob Bolinder at eight o'clock.

At eight o'clock Archie came in, and he had on his painting uniform—he was a painter.

I said, "Archie, let's go."

So we went in, and Bob was very kind. We sat down in his office and went through our presentation. I could see the mental wheels turning. The company normally wouldn't give to this kind of a charity. I could see him trying to figure out how to turn us down.

I said, "Bob, before you make a decision, I just want you to know I home teach this man."

Bob said, "You'll get your money." So we got \$450 there.

Then we went to Boise Cascade and made an appointment with Robert Hansburger, at that time the chief executive officer for Boise Cascade. His office was on the very top floor of the Idaho Bank Building. The office provided a view over the whole north part of the community. We went up, and again I dressed in the best clothing I had, and Archie came in his painting uniform. We went up to the plush executive offices, and in a minute we were welcomed in. We sat down in front of a large black desk; the room was furnished in huge overstuffed black leather chairs and matching furniture. Robert Hansburger said, "You

gentlemen want to make a presentation to me?"

I said, "That's right."

So I went through this presentation, and when we finished, he said, "I want you to know that's an excellent presentation. Go down to our personnel department and ask them for the money. If they won't give it to you, I'll write out a personal check for \$450."

Well, that provided a lot of confidence as we went downstairs to the personnel department. I knew the personnel director. I said, "Mike, we've been asked by Mr. Hansburger to make this presentation to you." When we finished, I said, "Mike, before you make up your mind whether you can give us the money or not, I want you to know Mr. Hansburger said if you wouldn't give us the money he would write us out a personal check."

He said, "You can have your \$450."

Then we went to Morrison Knudsen, and they were very kind. We talked to Mr. Perkins, the president of the company. He gave us \$450.

Then we went to the Jack Simplot Company. Jack was tremendous. I can't tell you what kind of language he used, but he was great. So Jack Simplot gave us the money, and we had eighteen hundred dollars.

A while later the Ada County Junior Sheriff's Posse had a fall banquet at the conclusion of their season. Since I was a member of the committee, I was invited to the banquet. After they finished the dinner, one of the girls, who was chairman of the evening's affair, stood up and said, "We'd like to make a special award tonight." She reached down and grabbed a beautifully wrapped package from underneath the table. She said, "Archie, would you come up here?"

So Archie stood up and went to the podium and stood there by her. She handed him a gift and said, "Would you please unwrap it?"

So he unwrapped it, and there was this beautiful plaque: "To our good friend Archie,

chairman of the Ada County Junior Sheriff's Posse." I saw this hard, crusty Archie begin to weep. Tears streamed down his cheeks. I got a little emotional as I sat there.

Pretty soon someone at the dinner said, "Speech! Speech!"

Well, Archie couldn't have spoken if his life had depended on it. He just came and sat down by me.

So then the emcee said, "Now we've got another award we want to give." She reached down under the pulpit again for a smaller package. She said, "Vaughn Featherstone, would you come up here?" I went over and unwrapped a little shield with a horse's head projecting from it. The shield was inscribed with a thanks for my being chairman of the finance committee. I started to weep. I'd never been given an award for home teaching before.

Then probably the same person called out, "Speech! Speech!" Well, I usually can say something, but that night I was so filled with emotion I couldn't say anything. I just sat down by Archie.

I gained a spiritual experience from serving Archie Turner. I had an experience that I'll never forget in my life. It's as though it happened yesterday. I know how close I felt we had to be as we went to each of those organizations. I prayed, and I prayed fervently that everything would go right. And it seemed to go all right. So I know if you're going to have increased spirituality you must give of yourself through service.

### **Service in the Leper Colony**

Some time back I also had the privilege of touring the Hawaiian Mission. We asked a particular person to make an itinerary for us. As I looked at the itinerary, I said, "Well, you don't have us scheduled to go to Kaulapapa, the leper colony on Molokai."

The person said, "Well, Bishop Featherstone, there are only thirteen members in the leper colony, and we haven't had a General

Authority there for about seven years. Really, we don't have time. The only way you can get down is to walk down a steep three-hour trail—or we can charter a plane."

I said, "I believe if the Savior came to tour this mission, the first place he would go would be to the leper colony. You get us into the leper colony."

He said, "I'll do my best."

I said, "No, not your best. Just do it. We want to go."

So he made the arrangements, and on Friday morning the mission president, President Ruth Funk and her husband, and I met out at the airport. The mission had chartered a little plane. I remember climbing aboard the airplane, and, as I recall, there were no seats in it. We sat on duffel bags in the back. I think they wired the door closed. Of course, there was no concern on our part; we were on the Lord's errand. The plane lifted off, and we flew across the ocean to the island of Molokai. We came around the Kaulapapa peninsula. We landed on a little dirt landing field where the weeds had grown high. As we taxied in, all thirteen lepers who were members of the Church were standing there waiting to meet us. I guess it was one of the most humbling experiences I've ever had in my life. We climbed off the plane and went over to them. Most wore large glasses so you couldn't see their faces. Some had the appearance that they had been mutilated where the skin had sloughed away due to the disease. They held their hands back under their arms so we couldn't see them, and they wore heavy coats.

As we walked up to them, we didn't know whether or not the disease was arrested. That really wasn't important to us. I remember reaching out to shake hands; they acted as if they didn't want to shake hands. Maybe they were afraid for us to touch them. But we insisted. Each one of us, Sister Funk and her husband, myself, and the mission president, cupped their little mutilated hands in our

hands, walked down the line, and shook hands with each one of them.

We got to the very end man, and his name was Jack Sing. He's the branch president. He had come to pick us up in his 1951 Cadillac. He had bought it new, it had five thousand miles on it, and it was absolutely immaculate, inside and outside. I guess the only place they drive it is out to the airport once every seven years or so. We climbed in, and he took us to the chapel. On the way I said, "Jack, how long have you been branch president?"

He said, "Well, I've been in the colony fifty-two years. My wife came after I'd been here thirty years. She's been here twenty-two years."

I asked, "What proportion of that time have you served as branch president?"

He thought and he thought, and then said, "I don't remember."

I said, "Think. It's really important to me."

And again he thought. Finally he said, "I just can't remember."

I doubt there are many bishops or branch presidents who wouldn't remember how long they'd been serving.

Anyway, we got to the chapel and climbed out of the car. Here was this little LDS church for the leper colony, a quaint little peaked chapel, very simple. On the grounds it looked as if they'd taken scissors and clipped the edge of the lawn around the cobblestones and the little sidewalk. It looked as if they'd taken the dirt and crumbled it in their hands. Every single flower bed was sweet and fresh. It looked as if they'd even picked the dead leaves off each of the tropical plants. Then we went inside. There was a clean, immaculate chapel with a large row of pews down one side with a pulpit at the front, then a large wide aisle down the middle, and then another row of pews with a pulpit at the back on the other side. The lepers would sit on one side and conduct their services, and those who were not leprous would sit on the other side and conduct services. It was very interesting.

As we entered, I thought about lepers in the Savior's time. I suppose even now in some parts of the world, if one has leprosy, he has to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" Inside my heart something started welling forth, and I thought, "What a travesty of life! Why isn't it that the peddler of pornography, the adulterer, and the fornicator have to cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' instead of some of the sweetest and purest Saints I have ever met in my life?"

We drove back out to the airport and boarded the plane. As we lifted off the landing strip, I believe all thirteen members were there to see us off. It had been a great spiritual experience. But again, I believe it was simple in service, and, I believe, if we want to be spiritual, we'd better learn to serve.

### **Charity**

I think another thing we've got to have if we're going to have spirituality is charity. You remember that "charity covereth a multitude of sins." Over at the Sweden area conference, Elder Howard W. Hunter told a story that impressed me greatly. He said that up in British Columbia the police department had collected many bikes over a period of time. Every six months they had an auction and auctioned off all these bikes. At one of these auctions, the auctioneer started auctioning off the bikes. Have you ever noticed how something all of a sudden starts making a pattern in your mind? Well, the auctioneer noticed that every time they'd bring a bike out and he would say, "Who will start the bidding?" a little boy on the front row would say, "I bid one dollar, sir." And then the bidding would go up beyond that. He noticed that the little boy would be the first one to bid. He'd bid one dollar. He noticed the little boy's eyes would particularly sparkle and all the hope would well up within him when a racer bike would be brought out. He said the bikes were purchased, one by one, and each time the little boy would bid, and each time the bikes were sold for much more.

Finally, the auctioneer looked over at the last racer bike being brought forth. An assistant helped him display the racer bike in front of the group, and then the auctioneer said, "This is the last racer bike we have. How much am I bid?" This little boy's hopes were waning, but he cried out, "I bid one dollar, sir." Then the bidding went to two and three and five and seven-fifty and finally eight-fifty. And the auctioneer said, "Going once, going twice, going, and gone for nine dollars to this little boy over on the front row!" Then he reached in his pocket and he pulled out eight dollars and laid them on the counter. The little boy came up and put his one dollar in nickels and dimes and pennies alongside it, picked up his racer bike, and started out the door. And then he laid the bike down and ran back to the auctioneer and threw his arms around the auctioneer's neck and cried.

My question: There must have been at least a hundred at the auction, probably two or three hundred. Why was it that only one person could see the plight and the need of a little fellow? It really didn't make any difference if one of them didn't get a bike, but it was very vital that this little boy have a bike. He'd earned all he could, and he was there to buy a bike. Only one person had the charity, the pure love of the Savior, and saw the need. Now, my question: What would you have done had you been there? Would you have been aware of the little boy's needs? Are we sometimes so concerned about our own needs that we forget just how vital charity is?

I brought along a letter that I'm almost embarrassed to share with you, but I think it is essential to make a point. In the Saturday afternoon session of every stake conference that I go to, I talk about families and the relationship between husbands and wives and their children: the need for a father, particularly, to understand the needs of his sons and daughters in the home. When that session of a particular conference was over, a father came up to

me and said, "I'm going to write to you and tell you something that I'm not very proud of." So he wrote this letter:

*Dear Bishop Featherstone:*

*You probably don't recall the brief conversation we had on the stand at the stake center last Saturday night. I told you I had a seventeen-year-old son to whom I hadn't spoken a kind word in nine years. I was going home to tell him how much I love him. He has caused his mother and me many hours of heartbreak, especially in the last two years. He and I haven't had a father-son relationship in over half his life. Isn't that a frightening thought? The little unhappiness he has caused us is nothing compared to the lonely hours he must have spent because of me all those years—the many nights he went to bed feeling so unloved and unwanted by me, his father. I used to react so violently to the slightest misstep. I had reached the point where he could do nothing right even when he tried. I have even uttered the words, "I detest you." Can you imagine? When he got home Saturday night I sat him on the couch and told him how sorry I was, that I loved him dearly, because he is my son and not for the kind of person he may be, that someday he will discover the value of the precious gift of the priesthood, and I will ordain him an elder with love and pride. Wherever he may go, whatever he may do, though his actions cost me what little I have in worldly goods, all I will be able to say to him now is, "I love you, my precious son." For nine years I have never said one kind thing to my son.*

There is more in the letter, but I think that makes the point. I believe, finally, in a moment, this father discovered what charity is.

### **Understanding**

I believe you have to have understanding. Understanding is critical if you're going to have spirituality.

I picked up something I'd like to share with you that I think is very outstanding. Marv Abrams, who works in the grocery business in



Boise, had a large frame with a message inside hanging on his office wall. I stood in his office and read it and asked, "Can I get a copy of that?" He sent it to me, and this is what is in it. It's called "A Legacy." (I guess President Dallin Oaks might be familiar with it.)

In the pocket of a ragged old coat belonging to one of the insane patients of the Chicago poorhouse, a will was found after the man's death. According to Barbara Boyd of the *Washington Law Reporter*, the man had been a lawyer. Written in a firm hand on a few scraps of paper, the will was so unusual that it was sent to another attorney, who was so impressed with its contents that he read it before the Chicago Bar Association. (That's why I mentioned that President Oaks might be familiar with it.) A resolution was passed ordering the will probated, and it is now on the records of Cook County, Illinois.

#### *My Last Will and Testament*

*I, Charles Lownsberry, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, do hereby make and publish this, my last will and testament, in order as justly may be to distribute any interest in the world among succeeding men that part of my interest which is known in law and recognized in the sheepbound volumes. As my property being inconsiderable and of none account, I make no disposition of in my will. My right to live, being but a life estate, is not at my disposal. But these things excepted, all else in the world I now proceed to devise and bequeath.*

*Item: I give to good fathers and mothers in trust for their children all good little words of praise and encouragement and all quaint pet names and endearments, and I charge said parents to use them justly but generously as the deeds of their children shall require.*

*Item: I leave to children, inclusively, but only for the term of their childhood, all and every the flowers, the fields, and the blossoms and the woods, with the right to play among them freely according*

*to the customs of children, warning them at the same time against thistles and thorns. And I devise to children the banks of the brooks, and the golden sands beneath the waters thereof, and the odors of the willows that dip therein, and the white clouds that float high over the giant trees. And I leave the children the long, long days to be merry in a thousand ways and the night and the train of the Milky Way to wonder at—but subject, nevertheless, to the right hereinafter given to lovers.*

*Item: I devise to boys jointly all the useful idle fields and commons where ball may be played, all pleasant waters where one may swim, all snow-clad hills where one may coast, and all streams and ponds where one may fish or where, when grim winter comes, one may escape—to hold the same for the period of their boyhood—and all meadows with the clover blossoms and butterflies thereof, the woods with their appurtenances, the squirrels and the birds and echoes and strange noises and all distant places which may be visited together with the adventure there found. And I give to said boys each his own place at the fireside at night with all pictures that may be seen in the burning wood and to enjoy without let or hindrance or without any encumbrance or care.*

*Item: To lovers I devise their imaginary world with whatever they may need as the stars of the sky, the red roses by the wall, the bloom of the hawthorn, the sweet strains of music, and all else they may desire to figure to each other the lastingness and beauty of their love.*

*Item: To young men jointly I devise and bequeath all the boisterous, inspiring sports of rivalry, and I give to them the disdain of weakness and undaunted confidence in their own strength. Though they are rude, I leave to them the power to make lasting friendships and possessing companions, and to them exclusively, I give all merry songs and grave choruses to sing with lusty voices.*

*Item: And to those who are no longer children or youths or lovers I leave memory and bequeath to them the volumes of the poems of Burns and Shakespeare and of other poets, if there be others,*

*to the end that they may live the old days over again freely and fully without tittle or diminution.*

*Item: To our loved ones with snowy crowns, I bequeath the happiness of old age, the love and gratitude of their children until they fall asleep.*

Finally, someone said about this man, "After all, was he so poor and insane? If that was the world in which he lived, was he not richer than are some who go about freely and who have money in the bank? At any rate, to each of us he bequeathed something. Let us not fail to get our legacy."

Yes, I think understanding is very critical, and as you can see from this article, this man had great understanding.

I once had an experience in Denver when I heard a great man, John Sloan, a vice-president of the Boy Scouts of America, tell about Bobby and his birthday. Bobby lived in a community much like the television show *The Waltons*. It was a backwoods kind of place where things weren't going too well for the entire community.

Little Bobby came down from his bedroom early on his birthday and burst into the kitchen. His mother had to immediately tell him, "Bobby, we haven't bought you a birthday gift this year. It's not that we don't have the money for it. We've been saving money, but we put the money away. We're going to give it to you now. We want you to learn a lesson. Instead of us buying something we think you'd like, we've saved the money, and we're going to let you take it and buy something you would like." So with this she reached up on the shelf and pulled down a pint bottle with money in it. She poured the contents out on the table, and then she let Bobby count it. He quickly pulled aside the dollar, the quarters, and dimes. He had a total of four dollars and eighty cents. As he scooped this up and put it into his pocket, she said, "Now remember, Bobby, you can buy something that will seem glamorous and it will just fade as a bubble in an instant and be gone, or you can buy

something that will have lasting value to you. It's your decision to make, but make it wisely." With this instruction, Bobby burst through the open front door and down the sidewalk. Then he ran down the road about two and a half blocks as fast as his legs would carry him. He came to a large two-story house, and the sign was still out on the front lawn: "Purebred puppies for sale." He walked up to the door and knocked on it. In a moment a handsome, middle-aged woman came to the door. She looked around and couldn't see anyone. Then she looked down, and there was Bobby. She said, "Yes, young man, can I help you?"

He said, "You have purebred puppies for sale?"

She said, "We do."

"I'd like to see them, please."

The woman looked at him, and she looked at his meager clothing and thought, "Well, he surely can't afford one of *my* puppies." She was about to turn him away, but Bobby stared at her with a steel-gray glare. So she let him in. He sat down in the hallway, and she went downstairs and brought one of the puppies up. She laid it on the floor in front of Bobby. You know how puppies are at that age. He jumped up into Bobby's lap and was kissing and bouncing all around.

Bobby was trying to hold him still, and he said, "How much is this puppy?"

The woman said, "They are twenty-five dollars apiece."

He said, "That's a lot more than \$4.80, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's quite a lot more, Bobby."

"Do you have any other puppies for sale?"

"Well, yes, we have one other puppy, but he is not for sale. We promised the veterinarian that we'd have him put away."

Bobby said, "Can I please see him?"

"No, Bobby, he's not for sale. We promised the vet we'd have him put away."

Then Bobby stared at her with his steel-gray glare a second time and said, "I want to see the other puppy."

The woman buckled under the pressure, went downstairs, and got the second puppy. She put the first one back and brought the second one up. When she brought it up and laid it in front of Bobby, he saw it had two crippled front legs. Bobby picked the puppy up, held it close to him, and said, "Please sell me this puppy. I want this puppy more than I've ever wanted a puppy in my life. I want this one more than any other puppy in the whole world. Please sell him to me."

But the woman said, "I'm very sorry, Bobby. He's not for sale."

Bobby said, "If you sell him to me, I promise to give him more understanding than anyone in the whole world could."

Then he put the puppy down on the floor and stood up and lifted up his pant legs and showed her the metal braces on his crippled legs. If we're going to be spiritual, we need to have understanding. Bobby had understanding.

### **Repentance**

Repentance is also vital. I think if we're going to be spiritual, or pure in heart, or if we're going to have humility, we need to repent. Repentance ought to be part of our lives every single day. Major things ought to be taken care of, of course, but also other minor things. Repentance ought to be just part of us and part of our being.

I recently had a sweet couple come to my office. They'd driven sixteen hours all the way from a distant city. As they came to my office, they wanted a half-hour appointment; then they were going to turn around and drive the sixteen hours home without doing one other bit of business. So I said to my secretary, "Work them in. Whatever it takes, you work them in." So she pushed back the schedule and worked this couple in.

The man came in first and said, "You came to our stake conference, and you talked about repentance. After you left, on Monday night, my wife and I were sitting together in our family home evening. All of our children are raised, and my wife said, 'I think you're thinking what I am.' And I said, 'I think I am. We need to go see Bishop Featherstone, don't we?' She said, 'Yes, that's what I've been thinking. We'd better go see him.'" So they drove all those hours to see me.

Well, let me stop right here and say that they didn't need to do that. They have local ecclesiastical leaders, a bishop and a stake president who can handle transgression confessions. I suppose they wanted to see me because I had been the one who had triggered some thoughts about repentance in their minds.

The man came in and said, "Bishop, forty-three years ago, the week before my wife and I got married, we had sexual relations—once. We went to get our temple recommends from the bishop. He wasn't there, and he had just left them lying on the credenza. His wife handed them to us. There was no question, nothing; he had already signed them. We went to the stake president and, seeing the bishop's signature, he didn't bother to question us. He just signed them and handed them to us. We went to the temple unworthily. While we were on our honeymoon we decided we would make that up to the Lord. We both felt so bad about it. We came back from our honeymoon, and we always paid more than a 10-percent tithing. We paid more than our share of building fund and budget and welfare and have through all these years. We've accepted every assignment that has come to us in the Church. But for forty-three years we've carried a transgression burden on our hearts. We've prayed about it and worried about it. We feel we've been forgiven, but we realize now that every major transgression must be confessed. We've known it all along, I guess. We just

haven't had enough courage before, and so now we want to confess. Now I want my wife to come in because she needs to tell you the same thing. She has the right to confess." So his wife came in and confessed the same thing.

Well, we, as General Authorities, are common judges to a degree. We interview bishops and stake presidents, and we interview missionaries before they go out in the mission field to determine worthiness. I guess I was thinking that we would normally send this couple back to their bishop or to the stake president, but I couldn't bear the thought of having this lovely couple have to carry that burden one more step in this life. So I said, "I think I'll call President Kimball and see how he'd respond. If he feels all right, I can close this for you." So I called President Kimball on the phone and said, "President, I've got this lovely couple in my office. They've driven sixteen hours to get here. They have a half-hour appointment, and they're leaving and going back home. Do I have the right in this case, as a common judge, to close this matter for them?"

He said, "Are they in your office?"

I said, "Yes."

"Have them come up."

I said, "All right." I hung up the phone, turned to this couple, and said, "President Kimball would like to see you." Their faces went white. I took them out in the lobby. We took the elevator up to the twenty-fifth floor and back into Arthur Haycock's office. When President Kimball heard our voices, he got up and came over to the door. I introduced him to this couple.

I said, "Now, President, I'll just turn them over to you and I'll see you later."

I started leaving, and he said, "Bishop, I'd like you to come in, too."

"Yes, sir."

So I went in and we sat down beside his desk. Now here is this man with stacks and stacks of work, I guess, that only the prophet can do: sealing cancellation approvals, cases

concerning those who have committed other kinds of transgressions, etc., work he himself must do to make a determination as to the disposition of the case. But you would have thought that he didn't have one other care in the world except this couple. He said to this couple, "You don't have to tell me the problem because Bishop Featherstone explained it on the phone. But I have a couple of questions to ask. Have you suffered equal to the transgression? It was a major transgression. Have you suffered equal to the transgression?"

The man started to cry, and he said, "President, we've suffered many times more than the transgression."

President Kimball said, "Have you prayed for forgiveness?"

Together, tears streamed down their cheeks, and they said, "We haven't offered a prayer since we've been married that we haven't asked for forgiveness."

Then he asked them some other questions in the tenderest, sweetest way, and then he said, "Do you mind if I come over and kneel and have a prayer with you?" He came out from behind his desk and knelt down with us.

I should stop here and tell you this: Do you know that General Authorities and bishops and stake presidents have the right to forgive on behalf of the Church, but only one man on the face of the earth has the right to forgive on behalf of the Lord?

President Kimball said, "I use that right very carefully and sparingly and only when I have absolute certainty and absolute knowledge as to what I should do." Anyway, he knelt down, and we all knelt around him. Then he said these words, and I'll never forget the feeling I had. I wish I could in some way give you the spiritual experience I had in that instant.

He said, "Heavenly Father, we love thee." I've said that to the Lord, but I have never felt the same influence. I felt he really was saying it in a way I'd never heard it expressed before.

The tears came to my eyes and streamed down my cheeks. During the rest of the prayer he pleaded on behalf of this couple.

In section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants the scripture teaches about the Savior, his being our advocate with the Father. I know now even more clearly than I ever have before what an advocate is. President Kimball pleaded on behalf of this couple. Finally, as he finished his prayer and we stood up, he walked over and he put his arm through my arm and pulled me close and asked me a question. Do you know, I don't even remember the question. I didn't answer it. I just remember turning to him, and I said, "President Kimball, I love you." I was deeply touched. It was about all I could say. I couldn't have said anything else. Then he let go of my arm and walked over to this man. The man put his arms around President Kimball and laid his head down on President Kimball's shoulder and sobbed. President Kimball embraced him for a moment and then went to the woman. The woman reached out, took hold of President Kimball's hands, and then tenderly reached up and kissed him on the cheek.

Then President Kimball said this to the man, "I want you to forgive yourself, and I want you to forgive your wife. I don't ever want you to mention it again. It's closed."

Then he said to the wife, "I want you to forgive yourself, and I want you to forgive your husband. I don't want you to ever mention this again. It's closed."

As we left President Kimball's office, I was filled with a compassionate spirit as though the Savior had been there in President Kimball's place. The woman was overcome. We literally had to hold her up. We got out in the hallway and she said, "Please, can you take me somewhere where I can sit down?" We took her and sat her down on one of the large couches up in that area and she regained her strength. In 3 Nephi we read that the Saints were overcome. What a precious experience,

and what a purging, uplifting experience repentance is. I believe we have to have repentance to be spiritual.

### **Sacrifice**

I believe it's going to take some kind of sacrifice on your part if you really want to have spirituality. In the mid-1830s this great man, Joseph the Prophet, sent two missionaries back to Massachusetts. When they arrived there, they started preaching, and they came across a man by the name of Orson Spencer. Orson was converted and believed. His fiancée believed, and so they went to her parents to tell them that they were going to be baptized in the Church before they got married. (By the way, she came from one of the fine families in Massachusetts.) As their petite, delicate little daughter and her fiancé explained what was going to take place, the father said to her, "If you choose to marry Orson, and if you join this Church, you are no longer welcome in our home, we never want to see you again, we disown you, and we disinherit you." That was about the summary of the total conversation.

Orson and his fiancée left together. The young couple went outside, and she said, "Well, Orson, I know only one thing. I know I want to marry you, and so we'll do whatever you say." So they joined the Church, they were married, and they had five children back in Massachusetts.

She was a frail little soul, and I guess having five children fairly close together was just too much for her. She became somewhat ill. They decided they would go westward where the Saints were. So they made their trek westward to Nauvoo, where the Saints had gathered. As they got to Nauvoo, the frontier life was just too much for little Kathryn Spencer. She became progressively worse. Finally, Brigham Young announced they were going farther westward.

As they prepared to go, Orson feared for his wife's life. He wrote back to her parents

and said, "Please let Kathryn come home and nurse her back to health. She's been sick. I despair for her life. I don't believe she'll make it across the plains, and we're going to leave soon. Please let me know." He also said this, "I'll do anything you ask." Then he sent the letter off.

Weeks passed and a month more, and still no word. It was time to move westward. They prepared the covered wagons, and they took this frail little soul, put her on a stretcher, and lifted her up into Orson's wagon. Then they rolled westward. As you recall, during those bitter cold winter months the plains would freeze as hard as granite at night, and the wagons could easily roll across the plains in the morning. Then the midmorning sun would come out and thaw the earth, turning it into a giant sea of mud. The wheels would sink in up to their axles, and they would make only a few yards every hour.

Finally, eighteen days out, they made an encirclement for the night. Orson was outside doing a few chores just before retiring. Orrin Porter Rockwell rode into the camp with mail and distributed it around the camp. He came to Orson and handed him a letter from his wife's parents. He quickly read, "Yes, we would love to have our daughter home. We'd love to see her again, but only on the condition that she'll leave you and leave her newfound church. Then we'll nurse her back to health. We'd love to see her again, but only on those conditions. If not, we never want to see her again, we disown her, we disinherit her, and she's not welcome in our home."

Orson felt terrible. He climbed up into the wagon, and he told his wife what he had done—that he'd written to her parents. She had not known until this very moment. He said, "I told them I would do anything, and this is their answer."

He handed her the letter, and she read it. Then she put it down and said, "Orson, would you hand me the Bible?"

He reached over and handed her the Bible, and she opened it up to a particular scripture and said, "Now would you read that to me, Orson?"

In the little covered wagon, as the evening shadows were fleeting across the sky, he read to her, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

"No, Orson, I won't leave you." He sat by her at the head of the bed, and they had a very tender moment. They talked, and then her eyes closed. He touched her pallid face, but her eyes never again opened in this life. The next morning they had a brief graveside service by a shallow grave. The only music was the lowing of the cattle. Then Orson Spencer climbed up on the covered wagon and prepared to roll westward. His oldest daughter climbed up on the seat next to him. Who was the oldest daughter? Aurelia Spencer Rogers, the founder of the Primary. I'll love Aurelia Spencer Rogers as long as I live because she's influenced my life, my children's lives, and my children's children's lives. I'll love her for the great contribution she made to our family. But even more than Aurelia Spencer Rogers, I'll love this Kathryn, who sacrificed and raised up an Aurelia Spencer Rogers. We must have sacrifice to be spiritual.

### **Practicality**

We lived in Garden Grove, California, for a period of time, and I remember there was a sister in our ward I heard about. She was somewhat considering joining the Jehovah's Witnesses, so the bishop asked if I would go visit with the family to see if I couldn't give them a spiritual experience and tie them back to the foundation of the gospel. I went over to visit them, and I learned this story on my very first visit.

They had lost a little baby, and it had happened in the neighbor's swimming pool. The little baby, under two, had crawled out through the backyard and somehow had made its way through an open gate into the pool area and had fallen into the pool. The mother in just a moment missed her child. She ran into her backyard, and, of course, the first place you always go when you have children that age is to the most treacherous area—either to the street or to the pool. She ran immediately to the pool and saw her baby lying on the bottom. She couldn't swim. She plunged in, and her husband explained to me, "She would not come up. She didn't know how to get to the bottom of the pool to get her baby, and she would not come up without the baby."

Someone inside the neighbor's home heard the splashing and went outside. Two people had to pull her out of the pool physically or she would have drowned trying to get her baby off of the bottom of the pool. Someone else dove in and retrieved the baby, but the baby was drowned.

Now, I believe, as I've thought about this, that there is a practicality to having spirituality. Why didn't someone many, many years back teach a little girl how to swim? We never know what might take place later. The mother would have given anything to have known how to swim—in fact, she almost gave her life. If only someone had taught her how to swim.

I don't know all the obstacles you'll have in your life, but be practical as you gain spirituality. Don't be afraid to get out into the business world and learn all that you can. Be practical.

Of course, you also have to have faith if you're going to have the kind of spiritual experience we're talking about. Dr. Gustav Eckstein, one of the world's most renowned ornithologists, for twenty-five years had made an intense study of birds. He had hybrids and had crossbred birds that no other human being had ever produced. He had also kept

meticulous records on the birds. For twenty-five years, each day, as per habit, he would walk into his laboratory and down the two or three steps over to the stereo. He would turn the classical music on very loud, the birds would begin to sing, and he would hum along. Then he would do his work during the eight-hour day. At 5:30 or so he'd walk over, turn the stereo off, walk out of his laboratory, and that was his day.

One day, after twenty-five years, he hired a new custodian. The custodian watched Dr. Eckstein leave. He thought the laboratory needed to be aired out, so he lifted all the windows, and during the night the birds all flew out through the windows. The next morning when Dr. Eckstein came, he walked into his laboratory and there wasn't one single bird there. He saw the open windows and felt devastated and heartsick. Out of habit he walked over to the stereo and turned the music up very loud—classical music. He went and sat down on the steps, put his head down in his hands, and wept.

"Twenty-five years, my lifetime's work. Must I start over again?" All of these thoughts were going through his mind as tears streamed down his cheeks.

All of a sudden he heard a fluttering of wings. Dr. Eckstein looked up. The birds were flying back through the windows! The music had gone out through the open windows and through the trees and down the street, and the birds were coming back. Dr. Eckstein said, "Every bird came back."

I have faith that, if you'll live the kind of life you ought to live, if you have faith and keep the classical music of the gospel of Jesus Christ playing in the ears of those who once were exposed to the gospel, the music will go out through the open windows and down through the streets and the trees, and one day every single one of your parents or brothers or sisters who may be inactive (or someday your children who may be inactive) will come back. You

should have hope and have faith and believe that.

### Scripture Study

In conclusion, you need to study the scriptures. (Of course, there are a hundred other subjects I could have mentioned regarding how to gain spirituality, but these are a few for your consideration.) I believe you need to love the scriptures and study them. One of my very favorite books, just for sheer pleasure reading, is the Pearl of Great Price. I just love to sit down and read it. I feel as if I'm carried away in the spirit with Enoch. I can stand and see Enoch weep and see the heavens weep. I can hear him cry to the Lord,

*How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?*

*And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations. [Moses 7:29–30]*

Then it goes on to tell in those scriptures how the Lord answers Enoch, "Behold these thy brethren," and Enoch then beholds that all of the myriad of beings who would ever live upon the earth "are the workmanship of mine own hands, and . . . in the day I created them . . . gave I unto man his agency" (Moses 7:32). Then he talked about their wickedness and their misery. Enoch saw the wickedness and misery of men. I can see this just as clearly as if I were there: "Enoch . . . stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook" (Moses 7:41). You know, I wouldn't know that any more than if I had been there.

I believe, as you study the scriptures, you'll come to really know, not *of* the Savior, but really know *him*. And you will know our Heavenly Father. Now, God bless you. If we can achieve anything in this life, let us achieve spirituality. There is no greater talent in the world than spirituality, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.