

# *“That Our Children May Know”*

JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

I thought perhaps we’d have four or five people here this morning and we could have a friendly little fireside chat. I would still very much like to do that in spirit, but obviously our numbers will not allow us to get very chummy. We are delighted to have you here, and I say *we* meaning not only the whole university family, but I specifically include my wife Pat, who is here with me. I’d like her to stand and be acknowledged if she would. You’ll feel a lot better about me having met her.

I have to tell you a bit about how this assignment came to me (as I hear the Continuing Education people behind me begin to squirm). Anyone in his right mind, who knew that I had commencement exercises last week, with all the presidential duties that that requires, and our preschool faculty meetings and university conference next week, with all the presidential duties that that requires, and then school starting the week following, with a major address to the student body, might wonder why I would volunteer for the devotional at Campus Education Week. Well that’s what I wondered when I opened the booklet a couple of days ago and read my name printed here just inside the cover, where you’ve probably seen it. I think we saw it at the same time. I contacted my beloved associates in

Continuing Education and said, “I am flattered and thrilled to speak to this group”—(and in fact I am. There’s not a group I would rather address. But I said) “At about what point in the week was I going to be notified about this assignment?”

Then there was, “Well, didn’t you—. Surely you—Well, uh . . .” It turns out that they had certainly agreed that I was going to speak, but the pony express ran into an ambush just outside my office.

## **Henry Ford II**

With that in mind, no story seems quite so appropriate as one told about Henry Ford II. While he was still head of Ford Motor Company a number of years ago, he was approached by a little band of sisters running a convent who, after laboring for years to get a school started, wanted to provide a hospital somewhere in upstate Michigan. It was not to be a big hospital—in fact, it was not a very big community. But that was the very point—it had not had adequate medical facilities, and they wanted to do what they could.

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*Jeffrey R. Holland was BYU president when this devotional address was given on 25 August 1981 during Campus Education Week.*

They needed several thousand dollars. They summoned all the courage they had and made a journey downstate to Mr. Ford. There in his office they approached him for a gift toward their little hospital.

Well, I'm sure Mr. Ford and others like him are used to that kind of thing, and he said, "I'll be glad to help. I do a lot of this around the country and can't do a great deal for any one group, but I'll be glad to help. I'm touched by your sincerity," and he wrote out a check for \$10,000. This was many years ago, and \$10,000 on a first contact was more than these sisters could imagine. They ran home to their little community absolutely delighted, shared it with the local press, which was a little hand-run operation, and the newspaper came out that weekend saying, "Henry Ford II gives \$100,000 to hospital."

Well, you see the problem. These nuns were very embarrassed because they lost both ways. First of all, people thought they had \$90,000 that they didn't have and I can imagine them explaining that. On the other hand, if Mr. Ford saw it and read about it, he would be embarrassed.

They did not know what to do. They worried about it and prayed about it and talked to each other about it and finally and fearfully returned to Mr. Ford, showed him the headlines, and said, "We are deeply apologetic. We will work it out. We'll just go tell the people that you didn't give \$100,000." He sat in silence and then smiled and said, "That probably isn't a good thing for my image." Then he took his checkbook out of his pocket and wrote another check for \$90,000 and handed it to them.

They were stunned. They were emotional and very, very grateful and said, "What can we do? What can we do to thank you?" And he said, "Really nothing, but you'll probably have some dedicatory space in this hospital somewhere. I don't want any personal publicity; I would not like my name associated with it. But somewhere in that hospital on a brick or

a small plaque, just record Matthew 25:35—no message, just the numerals and the citation."

They were a little embarrassed, religious women that they were, that they couldn't quite, without scriptures in hand, identify Matthew 25:35. As they got home, (as you are now doing) they opened the covers of their scriptures and read simply, "I was a stranger and ye took me in."

That's a longer story than you needed, but it will help explain the state I'm in this morning as I speak to you from some notes, knowing full well that the television camera is absolutely unforgiving, not only today but forever and ever and ever. For all of that, I thank you for coming, and I thank our Continuing Education people for inviting me to give these remarks about which I have strong feelings.

#### **Conference Theme**

Your theme is taken from 2 Nephi 25:26, and while I am not anxious that you tear the pages out of the scriptures searching for Matthew 25, you could do worse, if you have them, than to note this passage in your Book of Mormon. I want to say a word or two about this verse, and I assume it will come up all week long one way or another.

If we were to identify general sections of scripture that are absolutely central to the mission of the Book of Mormon, I'm not sure that there are any more important pages in the book than those that start with 2 Nephi 25 and conclude with Nephi's testimony at the end of chapter 33. That's only about fifteen pages, and yet it is a strong, central statement giving significance to the purpose of the Book of Mormon: to declare that Jesus is the Christ. This is Nephi's closing testimony. It is, for all intents and purposes, the end of his life. In verse 19, in declaring who the Messiah is and for whom the Jews should look, Nephi said, "His name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Begin in verses 17 and 18 to see how complete the testimony is.

*And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men.* [These passages from this ancient book are specifically for our time. They are latter-day, dispensation-of-the-fullness-of-times messages. The context is for a marvelous work and a wonder, a gathering in a “second time.”]

*Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them, . . . and they need not look forward any more for a Messiah to come . . . and, . . . his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Then 21 and 22:

*Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down . . . from generation to generation. . . .*

*. . . These things shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they will go according to the will and pleasure of God.*

And then, with that background, the passage from which our theme is taken:

“We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children,” in 23.

In 26,

*We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.*

First line of 27:

*Wherefore, we speak concerning the law, that our children may know.*

### **Our Obligation**

In anticipation of your week’s activity, my brief remarks this morning are devoted to the obligation upon us to have our children know,

to fulfill the promise of the prophets and the obligation put upon us by them to establish these things and to declare them and hand them down from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand.

You’ve chosen to come today to a university which has as its motto a line from the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants which reads, “The glory of God is intelligence.” It could go on to say, “Or in other words light and truth,” and, further, to say that “light and truth forsake that evil one” (D&C 93:36–37). You don’t have to read that very often before you begin to understand why knowledge is important, why intelligence is necessary, why light and truth are tools in forsaking the evil one.

Let me read you a passage first pointed out to me by my colleague Joe Christensen, now serving as president of the Missionary Training Center. It is from the first issue of the first volume of the first periodical published by the Church—the lead editorial of the 1832 *Evening and Morning Star*:

*The disciples should loose [sic] no time in preparing schools for their children, that they may be taught as is pleasing unto the Lord, and brought up in the way of holiness. Those appointed to select and prepare books for the use of schools, will attend to that subject, as soon as more weighty matters are finished. But the parents and guardians in the Church of Christ will not wait—it is all important that children, to become good should be taught so. . . .*

*If it were necessary then to teach their children diligently, how much more necessary is it now, when the Church of Christ is to be an ensign, yea, even a sample [sic] to the world, for good. A word to the wise ought to be sufficient, for children soon enough become men and women. Yes, they are they that must follow us and perform the duties which not only appertain to this world but to the second coming of the Savior, even preparing for the Sabbath of creation and for eternity.*

“The disciples will attend to this subject” (I suppose meaning the Brethren) “as soon as more weighty matters are finished, but the parents and the guardians in the Church of Christ must not wait—it is all important that children, to become good should be taught so.”

I don’t know that these folks had been reading from 2 Nephi 25, but they might have. Great obligations are upon us to continue to teach “that our children may know.”

Brother Christensen said another thing which has impressed me for these many years and which I share with you this morning. It is the simple suggestion—in light of our schools and Education Week and why you’re here and what it means to be a parent or a child in this Church—a simple reminder that this Church is always only one generation away from extinction. That does not change however many decades old we are now. It was true in 1840, it was true in 1891, and is true in 1981. We are always just one generation away from extinction. All we would have to do, I assume, to destroy this work is stop teaching our children for one generation. Just everybody stop, close the books, seal up your heart, keep your mouth shut, and don’t bear a testimony. In one generation it would be 1820 all over again. We could hunt around and find somebody to go out and pray in a grove of trees. With the blessings of the Lord, we could get six people together to organize a church. We could hand Samuel Smith a Book of Mormon and say, “Go knock on the door and see if we can start somewhere.” That could happen. It won’t happen. It mustn’t happen. It won’t happen in 1981 or 1991, but it could if we ceased to accept the obligation upon us, always upon those who have known and believed the truth, to teach it, especially to their children. I am not minimizing other help. We think even BYU can help. But while there are other weighty matters in the kingdom for the disciples, parents and guardians must not wait.

### Doctrinal Importance of Generational Testimony

Let me just suggest doctrinally again how important this has been from the beginning. May I quote from the second Lecture on Faith. These are the concluding lines of the second lecture, and I’d just share them with you. They deal with generational testimony.

*We have now [for 55 paragraphs of this lecture] clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings. [The question has been for this entire lecture, “Why do people ever believe in God in the first place? How did it start? And that’s not a bad question if you’re addressing a young family with young children] We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings; and also, upon what foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and the diligent search of the ancient saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God; and we have seen [please note] that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers [and, I would add, their mothers], this testimony having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God; the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty. [Doctrine and Covenants, 1891]*

How did it start in the first place? With human testimony. How does it start in our first place? With human testimony. How does it start in the life of your child? Nowhere more clearly, more emphatically, more importantly than with your human testimony. The will, indeed, along the way, have experiences of their own. They must. But in the beginning it was human testimony—yours and mine and the ancients’—which excited the inquiry

and brought the diligent search that ends “in glorious discoveries and eternal certainty.”

Well, “we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children . . . to believe in Christ. . . . we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, . . . we prophesy” that our children may know.

We don’t need to belabor what a break in that generational testimony can mean. It is apostasy. It can be personal apostasy, it can be familial apostasy, it can be dispensational apostasy—it’s apostasy—some break in that generational contact.

The dispensational bond against such a break is, of course, very important in our theology. Joseph Smith said that we might well have rendered this bond as *welding*, and maybe that’s a more graphic image than *sealing*. I think *sealing* has several applications, not the least of which is the royal seal by the King of kings and Lord of lords. Beyond that, there certainly is the image of being sealed together, locked, linked, bound, tied, in a way that does not let evil in, that does not allow for personal or familial or dispensational apostasy, and that keeps those generations intact for time and all eternity.

May I just read to you from the Prophet Joseph what I assume is the responsibility for the living as well as for the dead. You all know the language for the dead. You all understand our obligation to seal our families back through every generation. What I’m not sure we have understood—in those revelations about work for the dead and baptism for the dead and sealings and why temples are built—is the language from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith himself about what we’re obligated to do for the living, indeed the living in our own households, indeed, the children at our knee who eat at our table and pray at our beside. Let me give you that language from section 128: Quoting Malachi, the Prophet Joseph Smith said (I’m in verse 17 if anybody wants to follow):

*Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

Now, I think everyone understands, especially in terms of the work for the dead, the idea of turning the heart of the children to their fathers, but what is the meaning for your family in turning the heart of the fathers to the children? I think he goes on to talk about that.

*I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind. . . . It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this. . . [not only the dispensational ties, but in our time in 1981 on this campus, in your home] . . . not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.*

As I understand it, that latter portion of the scripture just read has nothing to do with work for the dead or sealing back through generations to Adam. No, it has to do with things that have been hidden from the wise and prudent and they are to be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times, in this, your home and mine, today.

Well, I don’t know whether that helps us understand why this Church talks so much about family, but it might. Why do we talk

so much about Family Home Evening and Home Teaching? Family Home Evening, Home Teaching, even Four-generation Group Sheets, certainly family and personal histories. Why does this Church take the stand it takes on things that relate to family—things like abortion and premarital chastity? Why does President Kimball want a picture of a temple on the wall of the bedroom of each of the children in our homes? Is it just a response to 1960s' pressure or 1970s' trouble? Is it really a twentieth-century phenomenon to offset movies and magazines and trouble in the schools, difficulty in the streets, problems in the community? I don't think so. At least not anything that I read suggests that it's so recent. It is, in fact, as old as the family of man.

I had a chance to suggest last spring to some of the women who gathered on this campus that Adam and Eve left the garden primarily for two reasons, and as I read it, they had a lot of other reasons to stay. They could backstroke in the lagoon every morning and pluck wild berries for lunch and avoid all these problems of growing up with all the difficulties you and I know about. I noticed the headlines on the front page of the paper this morning and just jotted them down. The front page of the paper this morning, moving clockwise around the page told of the U.S./Libyan shootout over the Mediterranean, the sentencing of John Lennon's murderer, the official indictment of President Reagan's would-be assassin, and the expulsion of Senator Harrison Williams for his "repugnant conduct in the Abscam affair." The only good news was the weather. It said it was going to be hot and muggy.

As I understand it, Adam and Eve could have avoided all of that if they stayed in the garden, but in pursuit of eternal progress they chose to leave for two reasons: family and knowledge. They would not have had children and they could not have become like the gods, knowing good from evil. And against all of those other very attractive and very

accommodating and very pleasant reasons to stay in the garden, they left to have a family and gain knowledge and pass that knowledge on to their family.

Is it just coincidence that the great biblical and scriptural stories are family stories? Was it happenstance that Satan began immediately to try to rend the family, to break the generation, immediately turning Cain against Abel? Why did Abraham's own father try to take his life? I'm sure Satan knew what Abraham was going to be. We see David's tragedy and then see it compounded in his son, Absalom. Then the difficult family experiences Solomon had that finally led to the rending of the kingdom. They are all part of the generational pattern. The Book of Mormon is from beginning to end a profound statement about a family which was involved in a warring experience of good against evil in an attempt to keep that generational experience intact. Ultimately in the end it was not, but for our dispensation, we are to learn from their failures and guard against repeating them. And as near as I can tell, if we learn from them, we will take advantage of Family Home Evening, we will write personal and family histories, we will accept the challenge of having a condensed schedule on Sunday that can provide time for teaching the gospel in our homes by parents who "must not wait."

### **Sally Bush's Example**

Well, I have 101 things I could say and should say about families. I read something once about what Abraham Lincoln's stepmother did for him. She felt she "must not wait."

*She was sometimes called Sally, a widow with three children. Perhaps life had been a little harsh and she would have welcomed a change for the better, the easier, if it came. She thought she saw it come when a man, a widower from her past, returned with a proposal of marriage in his nice suit of clothes and*

talk of a prosperous farm. The prospects of a better life grew, and she understood him to mention servants and to be a man of substance. She accepted and crossed the river with him to view her new possessions: A farm grown up to wild blackberry vines and sumac, a floorless, windowless hut, the only servants were two thinly clad barefoot children, the father of whom had borrowed the suit and the boots that he had gone a-courting in. Her first thought was the obvious one: go back home. But she looked at the children, especially the younger, a boy whose melancholy gaze met hers. For a moment she looked while a great spirit subdued the passions of the flesh and then, rolling up her sleeves, she quietly spoke immortal words which ought to be engraven on every parent or teacher's heart: "I'll stay for the sake of this boy."

"Oh, Sally Bush, what a treasure trembled in the balance that day," wrote one whose mother was a neighbor of the boy. And Sally Bush didn't know, when she looked at that melancholy face of ten years, that her stepson would someday save this nation, heal a generational breach, and become the immortal Abraham Lincoln. She uttered what should be engraven on every parent or teacher's heart, "I'll stay for the sake of this boy."

### **Suzanne Shakespeare's Example**

What if it isn't pleasant? What if it's more difficult than you or the children counted on? I'm not sure that Stan and Barbara Shakespeare are in the room, but I close with this from their daughter, Suzanne, age 16:

*Of all the ugly words conceived, chemotherapy must be the very worst. How I hated to see the number four person coming, knowing that after he was finished with his part, mine would begin: Nausea so violent I couldn't keep anything on my stomach, lips so cracked and raw it was like I'd been beaten every morning, my hair began falling [and to any girl nine or ninety, that's a blow to pride only we can understand].*

*How I hated to be thin and pale and have people look at me like I was going to disappear before their*

*very eyes. My parents prayed for a miracle. I prayed that it was a bad dream and that it wasn't really happening to me. I knew prayers were answered, and I wanted mine answered right now. Five long, painful learning years (I can see now) later the miracle had happened. I was alive. I was fourteen, and life was beginning all over again. I still remember the day the doctors told me I wouldn't have any more medicine and I was free of the disease. It's true I had a limp and one leg was several times smaller than the other, but I had a beautiful head of my own hair and life. Could anything stand in my way now?*

Well, life was wonderful. She went back to school and prepared to rejoin her friends. She began to be interested in boys and to think of driving a car, and in the midst of all of that, the hurt came again, same leg, same place, new examination, increased inflammation, pain that wouldn't go away, and now another type of cancer.

*Ridiculous. I was cured. September 13, 1978, I lost my left leg about 4 inches above the knee and with it many of the dreams only a sixteen-year-old has. I couldn't decide whether to pray for recovery or for complete oblivion. My world had shattered and I wanted to stop right now—stop because my leg was gone. Stop because I was facing chemotherapy again. Stop because I was once again going to lose my crowning glory. What was left? The Lord blessed me with two very special parents. How hard they must have prayed for me and pleaded that I would have the strength to forge ahead and learn to accept this happening as an opportunity and challenge. I didn't want to get out of bed, but my parents made me. I didn't want to face my friends, but my parents invited them in. I didn't want to go to school. You can imagine how I felt going that first day with my pant leg flapping, but my parents left me at the door and told me I could do it, and I did. Me, Suzanne Shakespeare, who thought my friends wouldn't like me now and that I wouldn't be able to do anything. I learned something those first few*

*days that is more precious than all my material possessions. I wasn't really different at all. I was still the same girl—the one who joined the clubs and had friends and loved to study. The only thing that had really changed was my capacity to understand and appreciate. What wonderful things to have learned. And guess what. I've had one date and I'm learning to drive and I'm going to try out for the school musical. I'm getting my new leg soon and I know there will be many hard adjustments ahead. I have had chemotherapy and I've been sick, but I'm alive, and the Lord must have something wonderful ahead just for me. And you know what? I'm going to find it. Signed Suzanne Shakespeare, age 16.*

Epilogue: Suzanne continued having chemotherapy until January 1979. On a routine visit to the Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City, a chest x-ray revealed widespread cancer cells in the lungs. There was nothing more medical science could do. Her mother is writing:

*How do you tell a sixteen-year-old girl she is going to die? Straightforwardly, with tears, with love and determination to continue as normally as possible. That's how. Time? Maybe two months.*

*Soon after she returned home, Suzanne went on a family trip to Disneyland, her favorite place. She attended a four-day forensic meet in Salt Lake, she auditioned and received a part in the high school musical, she asked a young man to the sweetheart ball and danced all evening without crutches on a newly acquired artificial leg. She carried a full load at school and, despite a record winter for snow and ice, rarely missed a day. There began to be shoulder pains, shortness of breath, then loss of appetite, but Suzanne would take nothing but aspirin because*

*pain pills might interfere with her school activities. On 15 March she began a three-week tour of the South with her grandmother. The pace of the tour and her increasing loss of strength made her extremely tired. Breathing became so difficult it was impossible for her to lie down. But still it was only aspirin and determination to see the trip through to Disneyworld. On 27 March her father flew to Miami Beach to bring her home. Her condition was critical. They arrived home early in the morning on the 28th. She had her first pain pill that afternoon and passed away in her sleep that night. On 29 March the rest of the group reached Disneyworld.*

These are my childhood friends, Stan and Barbara. I grew up with them, and my daughter has not had cancer. But theirs has and she's gone. And how do you tell a child that life isn't entirely a Disneyworld? Will there be times in your life or theirs that they will need the substance of the gospel in a way that only you can teach it? I close with the counsel of a prophet:

*I have spoken of reservoirs of faith, [said President Kimball] and who is to build these reservoirs? Is this not the reason that God gave to every child two parents? It is those parents who sired and bore them who are expected by the Lord to lay foundations for their children and to build the barns and the tanks and the bins and the reservoirs of faith?*

I testify of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the need for faithful teaching concerning it that indeed "our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins." It is in the name of that source, even Jesus Christ, that I do testify. Amen.