

BE YOUR OWN MOTHER

If I were to give a title to my remarks this morning, it would have to be something like, "Be Your Own Mother." Let me tell you what I mean by such an odd sounding statement.

When we went on our mission to Germany in 1976, we had 7 children and I was expecting #8. The oldest one was just turning 12. When Elder David B. Haight set us apart, he told me that I was not to be the Mission mother to our missionaries, but that I was to be a wife and companion to the mission president. With that responsibility, along with caring for our children, keeping up the mission home, preparing meals for arriving and departing missionaries and zone leader training meetings, attending zone conferences and district conferences, and trying to learn to speak the German language, I didn't have time to be a mission mother. I truly loved our missionaries and got to know them as well as I could, but I couldn't be their mother.

Six of our 10 children served on missions—4 sons and 2 daughters. Obviously I wasn't able to be with them to mother them during the time of their service in the mission field. I could just love and encourage from afar through letters and prayers. Our oldest grandson hopes to receive his mission call this coming week.

It won't be long before each of you will be receiving your own mission call. Naturally, your mother won't be able to go with you, even though it would be helpful to pack a mother assistant in your suitcase to take along with you for a couple of years. I am certain that the wife of your mission president will have enough to do so that she won't be able to take care of you like a mother would do, so I'd like to issue a challenge to each one of you to become your own mother. By that I mean to learn to do for yourself the things that your mother has done for you—and to start doing it right now would be one of the best forms of mission preparation.

You need to sharpen your ability to think for yourself—to make plans and stick by them—to follow through when you are given assignments—and most importantly, to gain your own testimony--if you haven't already done so.

It will be important to take increasing responsibility for your own temporal needs. I'm not suggesting that you need to move out of the house and do everything for yourself, but it would be a good idea if you were to try your hand at washing your own clothes and learn how to iron or press them. In talking to some of our sons, they indicated that these simple skills were very important to them both in the MTC and in the mission field. They also indicated that it helped to have done some cooking and to have compiled a few basic recipes. These are the kinds of things I'm talking about when I suggest that you become your own mother.

It would be important for you to know how to budget, both time and money when you reach the mission field, and now is a good time to start if you haven't done so already.

Talking about time, it would be good if you could start getting into the missionary schedule of going to bed early and getting yourself up by 6 or 6:30. Several missionaries I have talked to indicated that they wished they had done a better job of getting into that schedule early on. The MTC was a difficult experience because they weren't used to going to bed early so they couldn't go to sleep, and then getting up early made them too sleepy during those pressure filled days. Be your own mother and counsel yourself to get the sleep you need to be able to function at peak capacity.

Another temporal need that you should begin to be responsible for, if you aren't doing it already, is implementing an exercise regimine. Missionary work is hard work, physically, and you will be doing a great deal of walking or riding bikes. If you are out of shape, it will influence the way you work, and how you feel. An exercise routine is good for everyone – something that could be established as a lifetime goal.

I have seen bedrooms of teenagers, and I know how mothers like to keep things clean, so it would be important for you to begin to clean up after yourself. It will just be you and your companion in your missionary apartment, so start a cleanliness campaign right now—wash your own dishes, and those of other family members on occasion--wash your own bedding regularly and make your own bed every day. Unfortunately many missionaries have problems in this area. Feel an obligation to hang up your clothes or put them in drawers or on shelves, not on chairs or on the floor—throw away your own trash, don't leave it for others to take care of--and in addition to your bedroom, keep your bathroom clean. Be your own mother, because no one will be there to clean up after you during your mission experience.

As a missionary, you will be representing the Lord. Remember that cleanliness is next to Godliness. The Spirit of God cannot dwell in unclean tabernacles, and you surely want Him to be with you in your apartment. That in itself will be a good reason to keep it clean—and start right now with your own room and surroundings. Also, you will want to set a good example for anyone who will see your living quarters.

Some of you may end up with companions who don't know how to be their own mother. It will be important that you don't nag them, but help them like your mothers have helped you along the way. Start right now consciously striving ^{to} relate well with everybody that crosses your path, especially those you wouldn't normally choose as personal friends. Nothing damages missionary work as quickly and easily as contention. Your mother went down into the valley of the shadow of death to give you life, and she has undoubtedly sacrificed much to bring you happiness and success in your life. I would suggest that you begin thinking like mothers think, striving to help others be happy and succeed in life, and willingly going out of your way to assist others.

You will hear this many times, but let me say that it would be well for you to become like the sons of Helaman who had such great faith, because they had been taught by their mothers. You have been taught by your mothers, but now I challenge you to become your own mother and feel the motivation to prepare yourself spiritually and temporally to

serve faithful missions—and you'll make better husbands and father following your mission by accepting that challenge now.

Preach My Gospel

Exercise

Sleep

Communication skills—get along with others

Develop patience