

SACRAMENT MEETINGS

09-28-03

When the Bishopric asked us to speak in Church, they asked that we introduce ourselves ~~and~~ ^{and tell} you a little about us.

Glen is originally from Salt Lake City, and I am from Southern Idaho.* We met following his mission and were married 40 years ago this past summer. My life has been wrapped up with his throughout this period of time. We have shared together in his work and priesthood assignments. Glen has been employed by the Church Education System for the past 36 years. His first assignment was in San Diego, California, where he taught and then was the director of the Institute of Religion at San Diego State. Next he worked at the Church Office Building in Salt Lake as a writer and then the director of College Age Curriculum. He taught at the Institute of Religion at Utah State in Logan for 21 years, and the past 3 years he has been working as Administrative Assistant in the Area Office for the Church Education System U. S. Area East and we lived in Virginia, close to Washington D. C. Brad Howell was the Zone Administrator for that Area, and we were with him in Tennessee for meetings a year ago.

During the time Glen was working in the Church Office Building, he was called to serve in the Murray Utah East Stake Presidency. In 1976 he was called to preside over the Germany Hamburg Mission for 3 years. It is interesting that many of our missionaries were from the Ogden area, including the brother of President Russell. As we moved to Logan following our mission, my husband was called as a member of the Logan Central Stake presidency where he served for 9 years, and then he was called as the President of the stake where he served for 9 ½ years. He was released from that just 4 years ago this month, and shortly afterwards he was called as a Patriarch for two of the University Stakes. He also served as a Patriarch in the Centreville Virginia Stake. These service experiences provided wonderful opportunities to know and love the Saints, as well as that unique growth that comes through service. As I joined with him in these special experiences and sustained him in the spirit of faith, I, too, was blessed. Our

mutual sacrifices through a period of almost 30 years were not sacrifices at all, but brought unspeakable joy into our lives.

During all of these years and the moves we made, I have been busy as a mother and now a grandmother. We have 10 children—4 sons and 6 daughters—and 27 grandchildren. Nine of the children are married, but only 4 live in Utah. Our youngest son, John, is almost half-way through his mission in the Texas Dallas Mission.

As we made plans to retire, we felt we should come back to Utah—since this is sort of our home base—but we didn't know where we should locate. We made it a matter of prayer, and feel that we were directed to this home in North Ogden. We feel very blessed to be here and are happy to be a part of this ward. You have made us feel so welcome.

When we were invited to speak today, the Bishop suggested that we might talk about Sacrament Meetings and the partaking of the Sacrament. Sunday is a blessed day for communion with God.

Brother Joseph B. Wirthlin said that we live in an age of instruments and digital information, and we view all of this through the use of windows. Our Church declared that through another type of window, the windows of heaven, we can access spiritual information from the Source of light and truth. "The Lord counsels us to become skilled in using these spiritual windows so we can seek and receive personal revelation for ourselves and our families."

"Windows must be washed regularly to clean away dust and dirt which block our light and darken the window. Just as earthly windows need consistent, thorough cleaning, so do the windows of our spirituality."

Brother Wirthlin said, "Weekly Sacrament meeting attendance helps us strengthen our resolve to keep our personal windows of heaven free from the obscuring haze of earthly distractions and temptations. By partaking of the Sacrament worthily to renew our baptismal covenants, we clarify our view of life's eternal purpose and divine priorities. The sacrament prayers invite personal introspection, repentance, and rededication as we pledge our willingness to remember our Savior, Jesus the Christ. This commitment to become like Christ, repeated weekly, defines the supreme aspiration of Latter-day Saint life."

In the D & C 59:9-10 it says: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day. For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High.”—in other words, we are commanded to attend Sacrament meeting.

In the 88th Section of the D & C the Lord commands, “Assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves. . . Continue in prayer and fasting. . . Teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. . . And my grace shall attend you that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand.”

Elder Boyd K. Packer says that when we meet to learn the doctrines of the gospel, it should be in a spirit of reverence. Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. That is why our Sunday meetings should include music, dress, and conduct that is appropriate for worship. He says, “Foyers are built into our chapels to allow for the greeting and chatter that are typical of people who love one another. However, when we step into the chapel, we must!—each of us must watch ourselves lest we be guilty of intruding when someone is struggling to feel delicate spiritual communications.” He goes on to say, “Irreverent conduct in our chapels is worthy of a reminder, if not reproof. Leaders should teach that reverence invites revelation.”

This reverence does not mean absolute silence. I’ve had enough children to know that babies and even toddlers make occasional outbursts—but those who should know better should behave better.

Music is a very important part of the worship service—in some ways it may influence the spirit of reverence even more than the speakers. The prelude music, played quietly, can help us go over in our minds the lyrics of the hymns, which teach the gospel and are as a course in doctrine.

Brother Packer also encourages us, both the leaders and the members, to sing the congregational songs, for they are an essential part of our worship. D & C 25:12 says: “My soul delighteth in

the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.” (That should give us reason enough to sing, shouldn’t it?)

Along these same lines, President Hinckley has said, “Every sacrament meeting ought to be a spiritual feast. It ought to be a time for meditation and introspection; a time for singing songs of praise to the Lord, a time for renewing one’s covenants with him and our Eternal Father, and a time for hearing the word of the Lord with reverence and appreciation.

“I plead with you who are responsible for these meetings that you strive a little more diligently to program them in such a manner that each Sacrament meeting will become a time of spiritual refreshing. I plead with all of you who participate in these meetings . . . to see that there is cultivated a spirit of reverence in these sacred gatherings.

“It is not easy to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Each of us needs all the help he can get. The Lord has given us direction in how to achieve this.”

As Church members it is not only important that we approach Sacrament Meeting in the spirit of faith and reverence, but that we also share in the responsibility for the content of these sacred meetings. At times we find ourselves responding to invitations to speak in Church and we are under the obligation to inspire and foster the spirit of worship. There is an obligation to teach the word of God by the Spirit in such a way that the saints are edified, and that they leave their Sunday meetings with the resolve to do a little better through the coming week.

We had an experience many years ago, which deeply impressed upon my mind the sacred nature of our obligation when we speak from the pulpit. During the mid-1960’s, there were tragic race riots in the Los Angeles area of Watts. Because of the unrest that swept through that urban area, a scheduled stake conference was cancelled, leaving Elder Harold B. Lee without priesthood responsibilities for that particular Sunday.

We were living in Salt Lake City at the time and were surprised at the unexpected appearance of Elder Lee in our afternoon Sacrament Meeting. Although missionary farewells are no longer formally scheduled as a part of our Sacrament Meetings, this was a time when departing

missionaries and their families were given opportunities to structure the content of the Sacrament Meeting prior to the missionary's departure.

I remember watching Elder Lee as he sat on the stand during lengthy talks—devoted not so much to the gospel but more to the recognition and honoring of the young man who was preparing to leave for the mission field. Some of the comments were generously spiced with humorous references to the young man's misdeeds while growing up, bringing several outbursts of laughter from the congregation and much embarrassment to the young missionary. There were also many tender and sentimental references—which would have been very appropriate in a family gathering—but less so in a meeting dedicated to the worship of the Lord. The talks were lengthy and the speakers seemed to forget the time frame reserved for normal Sacrament Meetings.

Finally, as the time was well spent, the meeting drew to its close. Almost as an afterthought or perhaps a courtesy, Elder Lee was invited to make closing remarks. There was a seriousness in his appearance, which suggested some personal dissatisfaction with the services. But without saying anything to hurt the feelings of family members or to detract from the missionary's personal experience on that important Sunday, he opened the scriptures to the Book of Mormon and read a few verses without commentary and abruptly closed his remarks.

These verses seemed to set forth that which had been missing in the meeting and drew the attention of the entire congregation to those things which are of central importance to our faith.

As I recall, this is the passage he cited: 3 Nephi 27: 13-16; 19-21.

“Behold, I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my father, because my Father sent me.

“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

“And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

“And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

“Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel.”

Testimony