Somehow, strangely, I feel outnumbered today. Thank you to the few ardent brethren who are here to back me up.

In a more serious vein, I've come from the bedside of a woman just like you. She has suffered from a brain tumor for seven years, but it seems to be causing more difficulty now. She is expecting a little boy—maybe two little boys—and after we gave her a blessing, I told her we had to hurry away to be here. She said, "We'll pray for you." I replied, "Well, we'll pray for you." Her name is Sister Sanderson, and we'll certainly pray for her.

I'm honored for the privilege to welcome you here. This is a break from your regular, daily duties. I bring to you the greetings of President Gordon B. Hinckley and President James E. Faust. And being your concluding speaker, I'm aware from reading the program with its illustrious speakers and their messages that by now your cup is indeed full—and perhaps running over. I pray for your faith and prayers as I stand before you. I'm pleased that my wife, Frances, and members of our family are present.

Sister Monson and I met when we were freshmen at the University of Utah. I had attended West High School in Salt Lake City, and she had attended East High School—arch rivals. We met at a Hello Day dance held on the University of Utah campus.

In my home I had a beautiful, older sister and beautiful younger sisters as well. My family was quite informal, so when my older sister, Marjorie, had a date, we would hide in the darkened kitchen where there was a window into the dining room and the living room beyond. We took turns standing on chairs to see if we approved of the boyfriends.

But when I went up to Frances Johnson's home, I found a more formal environment. She was the only daughter. Her mother and father were dressed up for the occasion. When she introduced me to her mother and father, her father said, "Monson. That's a Swedish name, isn't it?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "So is mine. Johnson. My wife and I were born in Sweden."

Then he went into the bedroom and brought from the bureau drawer a picture of two missionaries, formally dressed. You've seen the pose. He said, pointing to one of the missionaries in the picture,
"Are you related to this Monson?"

I said, "Oh yes, that's my father's uncle, Elias Monson." Then Frances's father began to shed tears. He said, "He's one of the missionaries who brought the gospel to my mother and father and twelve brothers and sisters and to me." Then he threw his arms around my neck and embraced me. Afterwards Frances's mother did likewise. Then I looked to Frances. She said, "I'll go get my coat."

Four years later, in 1948 we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. I had felt it necessary to serve my enlistment in the United States Navy, graduate from the university, and be employed before getting married. My, how today the sequence has changed!

It's been a wonderful marriage. We have three choice children, eight wonderful grandchildren, and our first great-grandchild—beautiful two-months-old Emily Ann.

Our lives have been somewhat different from many others. I was serving as the ward clerk when Frances and I were married. That was followed by my being called as a counselor in the bishopric and then six weeks later as the bishop. All of this was in the ward in which I had grown up. That ward had a population of more than a thousand members, including eighty widows.

About that time, an old-timer came to our home and said to Frances, "I'd like to speak to your father." She said, "My father is dead."

Whereupon he said, "Oh, no, my bishop is dead! My bishop is dead!"

She assured him, "No, the bishop is very much alive. I'm his wife."

After I had served five years in that assignment, there came a call to the stake presidency, followed by an assignment to serve as president of the Canadian Mission, with headquarters in Toronto, Canada. We had three weeks to prepare. My wife was expecting our third child. We'd never been to Canada. President Stephen L Richards said, "Can you be there in three weeks?"

I said, "Yes, sir." Then I did ask, "How long will we be away?" He replied, "Oh, we don't know. Three or four years."

There was no seminar, no training. Elder Mark E. Petersen said, "I want you to be a good president, Tom. Henry Taylor was a fine president. Why don't you go talk to him?" That was our mission presidents' seminar.

With our little family, snow falling, we journeyed to Canada, a land we had never visited before, as I have mentioned. Oh, how we love Canada and the many wonderful people we met there! I love a line of the Canadian national anthem: "O Canada, I stand on guard for thee."

In October 1963 came my call from President David O. McKay to serve as a member of the Council of the Twelve, followed by service in the First Presidency to three presidents of the Church. Frequently, my assignments took me away from home for weeks at a time, while Frances usually remained at home with the children.

I mention this chronicle of Church responsibility only that you may appreciate the strength of Frances, who has been called on to shoulder considerable responsibility and with never a complaint. Rarely have we sat together in a sacrament meeting during our married lives.

To illustrate my poor kitchen skills, I need only relate to you an experience I had when Frances was
called to the telephone one day while she had something cooking on the stove. She said to me, "Tom, please turn off the burner, will you?"

I stepped to the stove and, not knowing which button to push, promptly turned on the exhaust fan.

My skill with grocery shopping is about the same. Frances prefers that I do not go grocery shopping with her. In fact, she pleads with me not to do so. Hence, I can count on the fingers of one hand the times I've ever entered a supermarket since our marriage.

One example will illustrate: Frances had been hospitalized after suffering a devastating fall some time ago. She asked me to go to the grocery store and purchase a few items. As I walked around the store, I was enthralled by the beautiful array of fruits and vegetables. I had a shopping list, which included potatoes. I didn't think of a cart at first, but since I couldn't carry all of the potatoes, I found a cart and placed a number of potatoes in it. I knew nothing of the plastic bags that potatoes can be placed in. As I moved along, the potatoes fell out of the cart and onto the floor, exiting through two openings in the back of the cart. A dutiful young lady quickly hurried to my aid and called out, "Let me help you."

I tried to explain that my cart was defective. It was only then that I was told that all the carts had those two holes in the back and that they were meant for the legs of small children. Frances, please nod if this is true. [laughter]

Well, the young clerk then took my list and went to the canned food area to get some spaghetti with me following closely behind.

She asked, "Do you want plain spaghetti, spaghetti with meat sauce, or spaghetti with meat balls?"

Not knowing what to say, I replied, "Oh . . . ah . . . give me two of each." I was very happy to finish my task.

Then the young lady said, "You are Bishop Monson, aren't you?"

I answered that many years earlier I had indeed been a bishop. She said, "At that time, I lived on Gail Street and was not a member of the Church. You made certain the other girls who were members brought me out to MIA. I just wanted to let you know that the fellowshipping you arranged for me led to my being baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. I thank you for kindness."

With a smile I said to her, "I think I'd better go grocery shopping more often." The records of the Church may show your name as Diane Phillips or Heather Bradford. They may indicate that you are from Provo or St. George or Fillmore. But the revealed word of God tells you much more. From Genesis we read, "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them" (Genesis 1:26-29).

Heaven reflects His handiwork. Earth echoes His skill. Man and woman become His masterpieces created in the image of God. You cannot sincerely hold this conviction without experiencing a profound new sense of strength and power. As Latter-day Saints, we know that we lived before we came to earth, that mortality is a probationary period wherein we might prove ourselves obedient to God's command and therefore worthy of celestial glory. Thus we learn who we are.

Now, what does God expect us to become? The way will not be easy. The path of life has its pitfalls; the battleground, its ambushes. Dear sisters, may I suggest three guidelines for our times? First,
strengthen your home and family. Second, share your talents. Third, serve your God.

**Strengthen Your Home and Family**

To strengthen your home and family, you need to know how vital you are to this process. The words frequently quoted by President David O. McKay give a perspective of your importance. I love them. "Woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."[1] Honor his priesthood and he will honor your womanhood.

On one occasion, a writer referred to the family dwelling as "that ghetto called home." I reply, "Home is what the mother makes of it." Home, that beautiful word in our language, was never meant to be a ghetto but rather a haven called heaven where the Spirit of the Lord might dwell.

Too frequently women underestimate their influence for good. Well could you follow the formula given by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants pertinent to the construction of the Kirtland Temple: "Establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119). In such a house will be found happy, smiling children who have been taught the truth by precept and example. In a Latter-day Saint home, children are not simply tolerated but welcomed, not commanded but encouraged, not driven but guided, not neglected but loved. President Heber J. Grant counseled, "If we as parents will so order our lives that our children will know and realize in their hearts that we are in very deed Latter-day Saints, that we actually know what we are taking about, they, by seeking after the Lord, will get that same testimony."[2]

Oh, I recognize there are times when Mother's nerves are frayed, her patience exhausted, and her energies consumed, times when she says, "My children don't appreciate a single thing I do." Have you heard that phrase? Have you uttered it?

Well, I think they do appreciate you. One of the questions after a study of magnets at a junior high school was this: "What begins with 'm' and picks things up?" The obvious answer, of course, was magnet; however, more than a third of the children answered mother.

There is nothing more touching and beautiful than a mother kneeling with her child, teaching the little one to pray, then, arising from their knees, the child is tucked tenderly in bed and receives a goodnight kiss. Mother gently says, as she closes the door:

Goodnight.
Sleep tight.
Wake up right
In the morning light
To do what's right
With all your might.
I love you.

I think it is significant that usually the first word a child utters is Mama. In fact, one grandson's first word, pronounced while looking at his father, was Mama. He will soon be a BYU graduate, and I still tease him about that. Historians of battlefields of war, however, state that frequently the last word spoken by a dying combatant is Mama or Mother. Love of mother and her teachings has prompted more bad men to be good and good men to be better than any other motivational force.

Frequently, a son or a daughter is far away from home and the family hearth. Can you reach them? A telephone call is good; a letter is better. A sincere mother's prayer perhaps best of all. Prayers are
heard; prayers are answered.

Heartwarming to me as a navy man is an example of a mother in America who prayed for her son’s well-being as the vessel on which he served in World War II sailed into the bloody cauldron known as the Pacific Theater of the war. Each morning she arose from kneeling in prayer, in which she remembered her son, and served as a volunteer on those production lines that became lifelines to men in battle. Could it be that a mother's own handiwork might somehow directly affect the life of her loved one? All who knew her and her family cherished the actual account of her navy son, Elgin Staples, whose ship went down off Guadalcanal. Staples was swept over the side, but he survived thanks to a lifebelt that proved on later examination to have been inspected, packed, and stamped back home in Akron, Ohio, by his own mother.3

We move now to another aspect of strengthening your home and family. Feelings become strained, quarrels more frequent, and nerves frayed when excessive debt knocks on the family door. Elder Richard L. Evans once said, "That which is beyond our ability to pay ultimately proves to be beyond our enjoyment also. . . . No matter how good or how bad the reasons, no matter how avoidable or unavoidable, trying to figure out how to pay for yesterday's expenditures with tomorrow's prospects is a discouraging picture."4

When emergency situations arise, the difficulty may become drastic when resources stretched to pay for the rent, the food, the clothing, and in addition, the debt service. Resources challenged to make payment on debt do not put one crumb on the table, provide one degree of warmth in the house, or bring one thread into a garment. Many more people could ride out the storm-tossed waves in their economic lives if they had their year's supply of food and clothing and were debt free.

Many today have followed this counsel in reverse. They have at least a year's supply of debt and are food free. President N. Eldon Tanner suggested: (1) pay an honest tithing, (2) live on less than you earn, (3) learn to distinguish between needs and wants, (4) develop and live within a budget, (5) be honest in all your financial affairs.5 Pearls of great price, my dear sisters. Some families have numerous members; others are composed of single mothers and children; and yet others, an unmarried person only. All can benefit from President Tanner's wise counsel. We can be the recipients of that noble gift we sing about, namely, "love at home." Listen to the words:

Kindly heaven smiles above  
When there's love at home;  
All the word is filled with love  
When there's love at home.  
Sweeter sings the brooklet by;  
Brighter beams the azure sky,  
Oh, there's One who smiles on high  
When there's love at home.6

Share Your Talents
Occasionally, I visit nursing homes where long-suffering certainly is found. While attending Sunday services at one facility, I noticed a young girl who was to play her violin for the comfort and joy of those assembled. She confided to me that she was nervous but hoped she could do her best.

As she played, an elderly patient cried out aloud, "Oh, you are pretty, and oh, you play so beautifully!" The bow moving across the strings and the elegant movement of the young girl's fingers seemed inspired by the impromptu comment. She played magnificently. Afterward, I congratulated her and her gifted accompanist (often we forget to congratulate the accompanist).

They responded, "We came to cheer the frail, the sick, and the elderly. Our fears vanished as we played. We forgot our own cares and concerns. We may have cheered them, but they truly did
James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, advised, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Thomas Huxley observed, "The end of life is not knowledge, but action." To the Philippians the Apostle Paul said, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

But what comes next? What beyond thinking is so imperative? I quote, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9). What a blessing: the God of peace shall be with you. With Paul, as he wrote to the Philippians, I plead with you to be doers as well as thinkers and thereby translate your thoughts into deeds and lead your thoughts to the highest level of your ideals.

Time is the raw material of life. Every day unwraps itself like a gift, bringing us the opportunity to spin a fabric of health, pleasure, and content, and to evolve into something better than we were at its beginning. Success is contingent upon our effective use of the time given us. When we cease peering backwards into the mists of our path and craning forward into the fog that shrouds the future and simply concentrate on doing what lies clearly at hand, then we are making the best and happiest use of our time. Success is the ratio of your accomplishments to your capabilities.

Teaching is a talent we are frequently called on to share in various Church-related assignments. Henry Brooks Adams observed, "A teacher affects eternity; [she] can never tell where [her] influence stops."

An example in my life was a Sunday School teacher in my youth. As a boy I attended Sunday School in the Sixth-Seventh Ward of the Pioneer Stake. The ward population was somewhat transient, which resulted in an accelerated rate of turnover among teachers in Sunday School. There were other reasons as well. As we boys and girls would become acquainted with a particular teacher and grew to appreciate him or her, then the Sunday School superintendent would visit the class and say, "You have a new teacher." Disappointment would fill each heart, and a breakdown of discipline resulted. I was part of the breakdown.

Prospective teachers, hearing of the unsavory reputation of our particular class, would graciously decline to serve or suggest the possibility of teaching a different class in which the students were more manageable. We took delight in our newfound status and determined to live up to the fears of the faculty.

One Sunday morning, a lovely young lady accompanied the superintendent of the Sunday School into the classroom and was presented to us as a teacher who requested the opportunity to teach us. Can you imagine? She asked for us! Her name was Lucy Gertsch. We learned that she had been a missionary and loved young people. She was beautiful, soft-spoken, and interested in us. She asked each class member to introduce himself, and then she asked questions that gave her an understanding and insight into the background of each. She told us of her childhood in Midway, Utah, and as she described that beautiful valley, she made its beauty live within us, and we desired to visit the green fields she loved so much.

Those first weeks were not easy. Boys don't become gentlemen over night. You mothers know that. Yet she never raised her voice. Somehow rudeness and boisterousness were incompatible with the beauty of her lessons. She made the scriptures actually live. We became personally acquainted with Samuel, David, Jacob, Nephi, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our gospel scholarship grew. Our deportment improved. Our love for Lucy Gertsch knew no bounds.
We undertook a project to save nickels and dimes for what was to be a gigantic Christmas party. Sister Gertsch kept a careful record of our progress. Being boys with typical appetites, in our minds we converted the monetary totals into cakes, cookies, pies, ice cream. This was to be a glorious event. Never before had any of our teachers even suggested a social event like this was going to be. The summer months faded into autumn. Autumn turned to winter. The party goal had been achieved. The class had grown. A good spirit prevailed.

None of us will forget that gray Sunday morning when our beloved teacher announced to us that the mother of one of our classmates had passed away. We thought of our own mothers and how much they meant to us. We felt sincere sorrow for Billy Devenport in his great loss. The lesson that Sunday was taken from the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 25: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

At the conclusion of the presentation of a well-prepared lesson, Lucy Gertsch commented on the economic situation of Billy's family. These were depression times, and money was scarce. With a twinkle in her eyes, she asked, "How would you like to follow this teaching of our Lord? How would you feel about taking our party fund, and, as a class, visiting the Devenports and giving it to them as an expression of our love?"

The decision was unanimous. We counted the money carefully and placed the total in a large envelope. A beautiful card was inscribed with our names, and we were on our way. We didn't get permission from anyone. We just left Sunday School with our teacher and were on our way.

This simple act of kindness welded us together as one. We learned through our own experience that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

The years have flown. The old chapel is gone, a victim of industrialization. The boys and girls who learned, who laughed, who grew under the direction of that inspired teacher of truth have never forgotten her love or her lessons.

Our beloved Savior beckons us to follow Him. The choice is ours. You will recall the rich young ruler who asked the Savior what he should do to have eternal life. And when told to sell his possessions and give to the poor, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. "He preferred the comforts of earth to the treasures of heaven; he would not purchase the things of eternity by abandoning those of time; he made, as Dante calls it, 'the great refusal.' And so he vanishes from the Gospel history; nor do the Evangelists know anything of him farther." His riches and many possessions had become his god.

Remember the parable of the talents, how one was given five talents, another two, and another one? How pleased the Master was with those individuals who multiplied their talents and had put them to good use. How unhappy he was with the person who had one talent and who, out of fear of losing that one talent, buried it in the ground. Oh, that rebuke was one that would sting as well, wherein we heard this word: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30).

Serve Your God
When I was a newly called member of the Council of the Twelve, after a meeting of the First Presidency and the Twelve we were seated around a luncheon table. I was sitting close to President McKay because the seniority started on the other side of the table.

President McKay led me into conversation. "Brother Monson, did you read the story in the Reader's Digest entitled 'I Quit Smoking'?”
I answered, "Yes, I did. That man was inspired."

President McKay said, "The author was inspired, but the author was a woman not a man."

I thought, Well, blunder number one.

And then he asked, "Brother Monson, do you think the Bard of Avon really wrote the sonnets attributed to him?"

I replied, "Yes, I do."

He said, "Good. So do I." Then he said, "Do you read Shakespeare?"

I had to be truthful, so I answered, "Occasionally."

He inquired, "What is your favorite play?"

I responded, "Henry VIII."

He asked further, "What is your favorite verse?"

I said, "My favorite verse from Shakespeare is when Cardinal Wolsey was stripped from his power and his glory, and lamented from the depths of his soul, 'Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, he would not . . . have left me naked to mine enemies.'" 10

President McKay then said, "Brother Monson, that was wonderful. Would you pass the potatoes?"

No one has ever passed the potatoes with greater alacrity than I passed those potatoes.

I think of an account I read about a sweet lady, the wife of one of our early pioneers. Her name was Catherine Curtis Spencer. Her husband, Orson Spencer, was a sensitive man, well educated. She had been reared in Boston and was cultured and refined. She bore six children. The delicate health of that dear sister declined from exposure and the hardships after leaving Nauvoo. Elder Spencer wrote from the depths of his soul to her parents, asking if she could return to live with them while he established a home for her in the West.

Their reply? "Let her renounce her degrading faith and she can come back-but never until she does."

Sister Spencer would not renounce her faith. After her parents' letter was read to her, she asked her husband to get his Bible and read to her from the book of Ruth as follows: "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) Outside, the storm raged, the wagon covers leaked, and friends held milk pans over Sister Spencer's head to keep her dry. In these conditions and without a word of complaint, she closed her eyes for the last time. 11

This is the spirit of serving God. This is the spirit of putting Him first in our lives. Though we may not necessarily forfeit our lives in service to our God, we can certainly demonstrate our love for Him by how well we serve Him. He who hears our silent prayers, He who observes our unheralded acts will reward us openly when the need comes.

I love this truth penned by Albert Schweitzer: "I do not know where all of you are going or what you will do, but let me tell you simply this: unless you set aside some portion of your lives to help and serve those less fortunate than yourselves, you will really not be happy." 12 The beautiful statement
of King Benjamin from the Book of Mormon inspires our compliance: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

A few years ago, I paid a visit to a ward in Leeds, Utah. The newly called ward Primary president had been assigned to speak in sacrament meeting. During her remarks she said, "I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown before I saw President Monson come into the meeting. Now, I am well in to it." She continued, "I love my husband, who is here today, and I'm grateful to his pledge to help me be a good Primary president." I looked at her husband. The tears flowed.

She told of the bishop extending to her the call to be the president of the Primary. She indicated that she said to him at the time, "Oh, I really don't know if I can do this."

She reported that he then asked, "Who are you?" She said the thought came to her, He lives only a few streets away. He knows who I am.

She responded, "I don't quite know what you mean, Bishop. You know me."

He replied, "You are a daughter of God called to teach his precious children. To be a successful Primary president you need but to prepare yourself and your material and go to your Heavenly Father in prayer."

She continued, "I'll never forget who I am and the help which is available to me."

The Spirit was there. You could feel her love for the children she was going to watch over. I feel certain she made a very fine Primary president.

I thought of the statement made by Elder Marion G. Romney when he declared, "Will you please pray for me that no enemy shall dent the small sector of the line which I am assigned to defend?" Isn't that beautiful? May all of us and all with whom we have influence pray to God that no enemy will breach that portion of the line assigned to us. It matters little in which organization of the church we are called to labor. We have been given a portion of the line to defend, and ours it the responsibility to do so.

This, then, is the encouragement I leave with you today. Perhaps I will call it the "S" formula: Strengthen your home and family, share your talents, and serve your God. I pray with all the strength and all the fervor of my conviction that our Heavenly Father will guide and bless you in the important decisions which each one of you will be called upon to make.

If you want to see the light of heaven, if you want to feel the inspiration of Almighty God, if you want to have that feeling within your bosom that your Heavenly Father is guiding you to the left or guiding you to the right, follow the instruction from the passage, "Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved" (D&C 87:8). And then the Spirit of our Heavenly Father will be yours.

I bear this testimony to you, and I invoke upon you the promise of the Lord when he said, "I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end. Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory" (D&C 76:5-6). That this blessing may be ours, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes


3 Ronald H. Bailey, in Monson, *Favorite Quotations*, 158.


5 N. Eldon Tanner, *Constancy amid Change* [pamphlet] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979).

6 "Love at Home," *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 294.


