

# Bearing Record: Nothing Compares to It!

Bonnie D. Parkin

---

*Wife, mother, grandmother; recently returned from England London South Mission where husband presided as mission president; former counselor in Young Women general presidency, Laurel advisor.*

© 2001 Bonnie D. Parkin. All rights reserved.

---

As I've thought during the past few months of what I'd like to have happen with the message I have for you, I focused on hoping two things would happen: first, that you would feel the Spirit of our Heavenly Father; and second, that you would have increased desire to bear record of our Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ.

Nearly four years ago, on a sweltering June afternoon, my husband and I stood at gate C3-11 in the Salt Lake International Airport, surrounded by our children, grandchildren, mother, brothers, sisters, and friends. Everyone's hearts were tender that day as we were saying our good-byes. Two months earlier we had packed half our empty nest into boxes and shipped them 4,860 miles from the Colonies to the Mother Country. In case of emergency, we'd added angel food cake mixes, instant vanilla pudding, and pounds of chocolate chips (chocolate chip cookies are a great motivator!). That day, I looked around at so many I loved and wondered how I could possibly leave for three years to embark on what one friend described as "chaperones of a three-year youth conference."

As the plane rocketed into the summer blue sky, I thought of all I was leaving behind. And then I saw my name tag: Sister Bonnie Parkin. It struck me that not only was I leaving behind the people, places, and things I loved but I was leaving behind my very identity and replacing it with a black plastic plaque. Over there, nobody knew me: I was no longer Bonnie, whose car whipping around the corner was often mistaken for an errant space shuttle; Bonnie, a longtime member of the Parleys Third ward family; Bonnie, a volunteer, a teacher, a friend, neighbor, sister, mother.

Peter described it perfectly when he said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

I glanced again at my name tag and only then noticed the rest: England London South Mission, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There was another name on my tag! One more important than my own, the name I took upon myself at baptism, the name of Him who calmed the seas and fed the masses, the name of God's Only Begotten, the name of my Savior.

My identity was not important; I was there to bear record of Him, even Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of the living God, that He was, that He is, and that He is to come (D&C 68:6). What a transcendent identity! What a transforming message!

A few months ago, we received a letter from one of our missionaries—Elder Riebe from Germany.

When he arrived in the mission, he was shy, self-conscious, and barely able to express himself in English. During his first meeting at the mission home, he declined even to talk. (Bearing record of the Savior is somewhat difficult when you don't open your mouth.) But Elder Riebe's heart was right. He worked hard, he was obedient, he was humble; he became an effective teacher and an inspiring mission leader. In his letter he wrote: "I loved my mission. Of course it wasn't all fun. I took my assignment very sincere. The memories I have of my mission make my heart burn. I feel very deeply about it. It has been a school of excellence! It refined my skills to teach, to serve, to love, and to listen. Nothing compares to it."[1](#)

In bearing record of the Savior, I agree with Elder Riebe: Nothing compares to it!

And yet despite the singularity of the experience, too often we allow unexpected obstacles, inhibiting fears, tenacious distractions, silencing uncertainty, misinformed others—the list is endless—to inhibit our sharing of the truths we hold so dear. We had been in London for two months when one morning at 4:00 A.M. the phone rang. It was our son Brett calling to announce the birth of twin babies, Andrew and Eliza. He was emotional and overjoyed at their arrival, grateful that they were well and healthy. "I wish you could see them," he said. After I hung up the phone, I sat looking out at that misty English morning, and I cried until 6:00 a.m. "I should be there to help with those new babies," I thought. "This is not fair."

Then I remembered the advice I had given our missionaries at zone conference a few days earlier. When President Gordon B. Hinckley was a missionary in England, he became so discouraged that he finally wrote his father, saying that he was not doing any good and might as well return home. His father's reply was straightforward and wise: "Gordon, . . . forget yourself and go to work."[2](#)

As I sat pitying myself, feeling so homesick for those twins, I knew I had to personalize Brother Hinckley's advice. We had made his statement the motto of our mission, so at each zone conference we stood and substituted our own name, saying aloud, "Sister Parkin, forget yourself and go to work." When bearing record of the Savior gets hung up in managing life, we must remember that all of us who lose our lives for Jesus' sake shall find them (Matthew 16:25).

Hopefully, all of us are praying for record-bearing opportunities. When Elder M. Russell Ballard visited our mission, he shared a faith-boosting perspective, saying that as we pray to find people to share the gospel with, we should remember that there are also people praying to find the gospel! I love Peter's be-prepared admonition for such opportunities. He advised us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Peter is saying, "if people ask you why they sense something different about you, have your testimony dusted off, polished up, and ready to unapologetically bear record of Jesus."

When such moments arrive, those who are not only spiritually prepared but enthusiastic have the truly meaningful experiences. In fact, President Hinckley challenged us to "become a vast army with enthusiasm for this work."[3](#)

We received an elder who frequently complained. He had an ability to find half-empty glasses everywhere. Maybe because we believe in opposition in all things, we also had a missionary with just the opposite gift: finding full glasses everywhere. Now, as the Lord would have it (and sometimes I think he must find some delight in this), my husband was inspired to call these two ends of the spectrum to serve as companions.

At the next president's interview with the elder who saw only half-empty glasses everywhere, five minutes passed without a complaint. This was nothing short of a record. Surprised, Jim asked what happened. "It's my companion," the elder said. "Whenever a door was slammed in our faces, I'd start complaining; my companion would say, 'What a great idea, elder! Complaining always helps! Why don't you complain for five minutes; then I'll complain for five minutes; then we can both complain for

five minutes. I'm sure things will get better."

Oh, the genius of nineteen-year-old elders! It didn't take long to recognize the futility of complaining. When the attitude changed, so did the experiences.

One of our new sisters was quite vocal about not liking to tract. Several months after her arrival, I was visiting with her and she mentioned how much she enjoyed tracting. Doing a double take, I asked what had caused this radical change. "My companion," she explained. "She loves to tract. Even when someone gets angry and slams the door on us, she says, 'Did you see her cute apron?' or 'Did you look at her lovely garden?'" One sister's attitude blessed another sister's work and those she met and taught.

Our conference theme connects attitude and testimony: "Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ" (D&C 68:6). Attitude determines altitude; happily obeying the commandments helps others to do likewise.

As women, we testify of the Savior in a myriad of unique ways. One of the most crucial is in preparing future missionaries. The other day, a young man bagging my groceries handed me a card that read, "You can't assume that kindness is an inherited trait; it is learned behavior." I was reminded of scores of elders and sisters who radiated kindness; I wondered how they did this. After asking many of them, I discovered that, just like Helaman's stripling warriors, they had learned it from their mothers.

Following zone conferences, while my husband was interviewing, I'd visit with the elders and sisters. I'd often say to them, "Tell me about your mother." Now, before you sisters get nervous about your children's answers, let me say that I can repeat almost all of them! Here are a few of their responses, which often included squeezed-back tears or a cracking voice: "my mother is always happy," "she's forgiving," "my mom's so selfless," "she's my best friend," "she's smart," "my mother demands obedience and order," "she's compassionate—she'd do anything for anybody," "she understands me," "she taught me the gospel," "she's like Christ."

One British elder said, "My mother is my hero." He described his large family, his less-active father, how they walked miles to church every week for ten years, how they held family home evening, how they all constantly prayed for their father. This young man related that because of his mother's faithfulness, his father became active again in the Church. With tears slipping down his cheeks, he told how they eventually went to the London temple and were sealed together as a family.

Through such moments, I gained a humbling vision of great women around the world lovingly, carefully teaching children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, students, neighbors just how to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. As mothers and grandmothers and teachers and ward members, we have a vital role in preparing missionaries to bear record of Jesus. We must help our children know that they were valiant in their first estate, that they were obedient to Jesus' plan, that they can influence others to follow that plan.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The obedience of our children will help others become righteous.

In his departing testimony, Elder Riebe said, "I have learned three things in the mission field: (1) Be Obedient. (2) Be happy. (3) If you can't be happy, be obedient." After three years and nearly six hundred missionaries, I noticed that the missionaries who were happy missionaries were obedient

missionaries. Teach our future missionaries to find happiness through obedience.

Parents with a testimony of obedience can help their missionaries in the field improve their obedience. One late evening the phone rang in the mission home. My husband answered it. A father from the United States asked whether his son was an obedient missionary. When Jim asked why the father was curious, the father replied that his older sons had served missions and were allowed to call home only on Christmas and Mother's Day. He added that his son in England was calling family and friends much more frequently. Jim replied that the rules regarding phone calls were the same in the London South mission as in every other mission. The father responded, "Are you telling me that my son is a disobedient missionary?" Jim replied, "I am not telling you that; your son already has."

Jim told that story in a zone conference. Afterwards a missionary approached him saying, "That was my father, wasn't it?" It was, and his father's call helped that elder become more obedient.

Missionary work is called that because it *is* work. Some mothers believe they are helping their children by cleaning their rooms, preparing all their meals, washing and ironing all their clothes, letting them play all night and then sleep till noon, and giving them endless spending money. That is not the real world, nor is it the mission field! Missionaries who arrived knowing how to get up in the morning, how to take care of their own needs, how to manage their money—in short, missionaries who knew how to work, who had parents who truly loved and blessed their lives (and the lives of their companions and even future spouses).

Here is a letter from the mother of one of our finest elders: "I was a convert to the church but [our son] is fourth-generation LDS on his father's side, quite unusual in [Britain]. His great-grandfather was the first to be ordained a high priest in this country (by Elder Hugh B. Brown), so he has a fine heritage. However, a fine heritage does nothing for you unless you have the works to match.

"As [our son] approached Melchizedek Priesthood age we emphasized that being ordained an elder was not something you did just because you were eighteen but it was a 'point of no return,' and that you shouldn't make covenants you aren't ready to keep . . . so he went away as a priest to university. However, over the course of his first year away from home, and especially over last summer when he was home, as a result of much soul-searching, private prayer and fasting, he decided to accept the responsibility of the Melchizedek Priesthood with all it entailed, including a mission. This decision was made knowing it might cost him his university degree. It is not common in this country to start a degree and take time off in the middle. . . . However, when he . . . asked the university authorities to defer his final year of study until October 1999 they accepted it quite happily and all fell into place.

"He is delighted to be called to serve in the London South mission. He would have been pleased to serve wherever he was called but as his mother, I'm happy he's going somewhere with flush toilets! . . . We know he will serve faithfully. He has made this decision to show his personal appreciation for our Savior's atonement."[4](#)

Do you see the powerful influence mothers have on the formation of the Lord's missionaries?

Preparing missionaries to serve is merely one of the ways we testify of Jesus. But we must become missionaries, too.

Have you ever heard the missionary discussions? Do you know just how simple, beautiful, and inspired they are? I am embarrassed to say that it was only after two of my sons had returned from missions and another was in the mission field that I heard the discussions taught.

Some time ago I was a Relief Society advisor to a group of young adult women. Lisa was a member

of our group. She was getting married to Rick—a great guy with that unusual Utah commodity called a nonmember. He and Lisa often came to our home, forming friendships with our sons. One day I asked Lisa if Rick had heard the discussions.

"Bonnie," she said, "I can't ask him! I can't do that yet."

I said, "How would you feel if I asked him?"

"Oh, would you?" she responded.

Only then did I wonder, *What have I gotten myself into?* because I didn't know how to ask him, either!

I asked one of our returned-missionary sons, who said, "Mom, it's easy. You just say, 'Rick, is there a day next week that would be good for you to meet with the missionaries in our home?'"

That didn't sound too hard, so the following Sunday we had Lisa and Rick over for dinner. I practiced my line over and over again. As they were leaving, I said to Rick, as casually as I could manage, "Is there a day next week, Rick, when you could meet with the missionaries here in our home?"

I don't know if I expected him to run off screaming or just laugh in my face. But sisters, do you know what he said?

"Wednesday would be great."

Now that wasn't so hard, was it?

Our family was richly blessed by having the missionaries teach Rick the gospel in our home. Sharing the miraculous Joseph Smith story with someone who had never heard it before reinforced for me the truthfulness of the restored gospel. The full-time missionaries taught the principles, and I had opportunity to testify of Jesus Christ. I learned what my sons had been teaching in the mission field. Our youngest son, David, who hadn't yet served a mission, felt the spirit of missionary work and saw missionaries in action.

But our blessings were far surpassed by the blessings Rick and Lisa received from hearing these discussions. Shortly after those sacred sessions in our home, Rick dressed in white and was baptized by our son Brett. And just a year later, Rick and Lisa, both dressed in white, were sealed as an eternal family. They have become our family by affection. And to think it was all because of a casual question we often lack the courage to ask.

Of course, some of our friends are not quite ready for the discussions. But bearing record does not just mean an invitation to be baptized.

It was my friend Louise Nelson's turn to host her neighborhood stock market study group for lunch. Louise was the only Church member in the group. When it came time to eat, Louise asked if it was all right to bless the food. It being her home and her food, no one objected. So she prayed. The following month, when the meeting was held at another friend's home, Louise was asked to bless the food; when she agreed, the hostess said, "Thank you—I liked the way that made me feel last time." Several others felt the same. What finer way to bear record of the Savior than through prayer in his holy name?

No matter how we share the gospel, such sacred moments leave lasting memories. Elder Maxwell

wrote: "Sharing is like gathering around conversational bonfires that glow warm and bright against the horizon. You will find the memories of these bonfires will achieve a lastingness—not of what you wore or of what the menu was, but rather because of shared expressions of love and testimony."<sup>5</sup>

The Lord promises that when we bear record of Him, not only are those who hear us edified but we are edified as well (D&C 50:22); our faith is strengthened with their faith;<sup>6</sup> our sins are forgiven us (D&C 62:3).

Certainly by choosing enthusiasm, preparing missionaries, and sharing the gospel with our friends and families, we become frequent recipients of these spiritual gifts.

But, my dear sisters, how marvelous would it be to receive these blessings daily? Consider for a moment: How has the gospel blessed your life, the lives of your children, the lives of your grandchildren? Where would you be without it? Who made sacrifices so that you might be here today? Helping others prepare to serve full-time missions is a most noble cause; serving a full-time mission ourselves is even more noble.

Senior missionaries make a unique difference in the mission field. With lifetimes of experience, as our son David explained, "They just know how to do it." All of our sons served with senior missionaries. These incredible brothers and sisters made hard sacrifices at inconvenient times to become full-time record bearers of Christ. They had real perspective on the challenges of life: marital discord, burnout, wayward children, trials of faith, illness, financial hardships, doubt. They helped members and nonmembers alike discover how to overcome the world through the Lord's plan.

In fact, those of you who are nervous about impending retirement, about nothing meaningful to do, about endless spare time on your hands—or worse, about a husband with endless spare time on his hands—what better way to transition into the next phase of life than a mission?

Beyond working with the members and the nonmembers, the young missionaries—especially those who have never seen a happy marriage—are fortified by the experienced examples of senior couples. One of our elders told of watching Elder and Sister Thiriot from Coalville, Utah, skipping towards the temple holding hands. "They did not know I was watching them," he said, "but someday, my wife and I are going to serve a mission and do just what the Thiriots are doing."

Another said, "I know the Church is true because of Elder and Sister Lybbert. I can see the blessings that come from living the gospel."

Sisters, now is the time to plan a mission as a senior missionary or as a couple. You'll need to ready yourself financially, physically, spiritually. And you know what? Heavenly Father will watch over you and your family while you are in His service. At 4,860 miles from home, we learned that to be true. And so did our children. The Lord might even double your blessings. We left six grandchildren at the airport that day and returned home to twelve. Maybe we should go again!

One day in our mission office, I noticed the shoes of one of our faithful, hard-working elders. They were literally falling apart; I had never seen shoes quite like them before. I said, "You need a new pair of shoes."

He said, "Sister Parkin, I haven't had time!"

I asked him for those shoes. Probably thinking they didn't match my ensemble, he asked why I wanted them. I just said that I needed them. These are those shoes. Someday I hope to send these to his sons and tell them what kind of a missionary their father was. He wore out his soles in the

service of his God.

Sisters, considering our own vast collection of shoes, couldn't we wear out at least one pair doing the same?

Ultimately, our testimony of Jesus is filtered through all that we do. During a leadership training session in England, Elder Henry B. Eyring taught us, "If you want to know if I know that Jesus is the Christ, watch the way I live."<sup>7</sup> We should choose to live lives which bear record of Him.

Sisters, I bear record of the goodness and divinity of Jesus Christ. For three years I wore His name next to my own; not only was my identity never lost but it was enhanced by His. I know that He lives and that He loves us eternally—which He demonstrated through His obedience to our Father and through His atoning sacrifice. In sharing our testimonies of these extraordinary truths, I join with Elder Riebe in saying, "Nothing compares to it!"

May we be of good cheer as we go forth and bear record of Jesus Christ, I pray in His blessed name, amen.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Letter in author's possession.

<sup>2</sup> Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, "Feed the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 110.

<sup>4</sup> Letter in author's possession.

<sup>5</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, "Jesus the Perfect Mentor," *Ensign*, February 2001, 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Words of Joseph Smith*, 159.

<sup>7</sup> Henry B. Eyring, notes in author's possession.

